ABSTRACT

Title of Document: PRINCIPAL SENSEMAKING OF

                            INCLUSION: A MULTI-CASE STUDY OF

                            FIVE URBAN SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

                            David DeMatthews, Ph.D., 2012

Directed By: Associate Professor, Hanne Mawhinney,
                            Department of Teaching and Learning, Policy
                            and Leadership

This study examined how five principals working in one urban school district made

sense of inclusion. I employed a multi-case study guided by the theoretical

framework of sensemaking. Weick's sensemaking theory was useful in examining

the way principals made sense of inclusion. Each of the seven characteristics of

Weick's sensemaking theory was present throughout the data. The findings from this

study revealed that principals were heavily constrained by their organizational

environment and that identity construction took a lead role in influencing the way

principals enacted their environments and made sense of inclusion. Principal

attitudes and values around inclusion were often ignored as principals struggled with

the constraints of budget shortfalls and severe behaviors from students with

disabilities. The findings from this study have implications for policy, school

leadership, and future research. Policymakers must be aware of the constraints within urban schools in order to effectively motivate principals to implement inclusion. Professional development for principals can utilize sensemaking theory to analyze case studies and help principals establish habits of mind to better make sense of their perceived constraints and organizational environments. Principals can learn from these case studies to budget and staff schools in ways that support inclusion and to construct alternative meanings to information they select from their school. Finally, future research on principal sensemaking of inclusion should include an assessment of principal knowledge and expertise of inclusion, a program evaluation of inclusion to determine the relationship of sensemaking to inclusion implementation, and the influence of gender, race, age, and experience on principals' identity construction.

PRINCIPAL SENSEMAKING OF INCLUSION: A MULTI-CASE STUDY OF
FIVE URBAN SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

By

David Edward DeMatthews

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2012

Advisory Committee:
Associate Professor Hanne Mawhinney Chair
Professor Paula Beckman
Assistant Professor Tom Davis
Assistant Professor Noah Drezner
Professor Patricia Richardson

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all of my current and former students, especially Antwan and Travon. I was motivated to complete this study for you. The challenges of writing a dissertation wither in comparison to what you have overcome before age thirteen. Your resilience and smiles give me strength and hope.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

In this opening chapter, I will explain my rationale for conducting and completing this study. I begin by providing a rationale for conducting this research and discussing how the problems and directions of previous research helped to frame my study's purpose and conceptual framework. I will provide a brief discussion of the literature that will identify gaps that I believe my research has addressed. Next, I will describe the research problem, purposes, design, and methods used in order to frame the study. Finally, I will conclude this chapter with a discussion on the significance of the study, study limitations, and a list of key terms and definitions.

Rationale for the Study

A researcher must have strong motivations to complete an endeavor as large and time consuming as a dissertation. My motivation for this study comes from my professional experiences and from an analysis of the research literature that created a strong desire to address questions left unanswered.

Personal Interest

I first became interested in understanding how principals made sense of inclusion while I began working as a central office administrator in the Office of Special Education. I helped to develop a variety of policies and procedures principals and schools were mandated to follow. Other policies were developed and rolled out while I was working in the central office. In some instances I trained principals and

special education coordinators on the policies. I often heard the complaints of principals and school staff in reference to some of the policies.

Some of my duties as a central office administrator required that I visit schools and speak with school staff and principals. I often was put in a position to visit schools to identify problems and support principals. Frequently, I was sent to schools by the Deputy Superintendent to solve problems in the area of special education. My experiences speaking with principals in the district led me to think more about how the policies the Office of Special Education were being understood by principals given all the demands and constraints principals faced. I saw principals struggling to deal with financial constraints, staffing constraints, extreme behavioral problems, terrible test scores, and a barrage of policies coming down from central office. I began to wonder about how principals made sense of the policies my office was developing given this challenging and demanding context.

Context of Study

The research landscape directed me to develop and complete this study. I felt as if I was a traveler following a path between great mountains of research surrounding me on all sides. As much as possible I used the mountains to guide me into valleys where research was needed. While navigating this valley, I believe I found a stream that ran through and connected the different mountains of literature that lead to a meaningful study. The three bodies or mountains of research I reviewed were inclusion implementation, principal leadership, and sensemaking theory. I will discuss each of these bodies of research in Chapter II. I will introduce inclusion

research and principal leadership research in this section and will introduce sensemaking theory later in this chapter.

The implementation of special education regulatory policies, particularly the least restrictive environment (LRE) component of *the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Improvement Act of 2004* (IDEA), had been steadily improving throughout the nation. The percentage of students with disabilities being educated in the general education classroom has been increasing over the past thirty-five years. The US Department of Education (2008) found that the national percentage of students with disabilities educated in general education classes for most of the day (outside of the general education classroom for less than 21% of the day) had increased from 46.5% in 1997 to 53.7% in 2006, while the percentage of students with disabilities educated outside the regular class from 21 percent through 60 percent of the day decreased from 20.4 percent in 1997 to 17.6 percent in 2006 (p. xxi). These data indicate tremendous progress for inclusion advocates. However, these broad data points mask some very troubling findings.

Data indicating that students with disabilities are increasingly being placed within general education classroom mask failure within certain populations, particularly high poverty and African-American student populations. Researchers have found significant variations in implementation of inclusion across schools (Carter & Hughes, 2006; Salisbury, 2006) and across race and socioeconomic backgrounds of students (Blanchett, 2009; Harry & Klinger, 2006; Losen & Orfield, 2002; USDOE, 2008). For example, in a study of eight schools implementing inclusion in the same school district, some schools were more effective than others at

including students with disabilities and some were not inclusive at all (Salisbury, 2008). In addition, the US Department of Education (2008) found that African-American students and poor students identified as having a disability were more likely than their counterparts to be placed outside of the general education classroom (p. 52).

Explanations for successful and unsuccessful implementation of inclusion in schools are partially related to principal leadership. The second large body of literature I reviewed was principal leadership. Salisbury (2006) found that schools with stronger principal support and commitment for inclusion reported including more students with disabilities in the general education classroom. This research indicates that effective principal leadership plays a critical role in creating a more inclusive school.

Researchers have done an effective job in illustrating the critical role of the principal in leading inclusive reforms that promote students with disabilities being educated in the general education classroom (Mantle 2005; Walter-Thomas & DiPaola, 2003; Will, 1986).   Researchers have established long lists of leadership actions, values, and orientations that influence inclusion implementation. For example, principals have been found to promote inclusion by conveying attitudes, modeling behaviors, and providing supports to help establish an inclusive school culture (Lewis & Doorlag, 2003; Salisbury & McGregor, 2002). Yet not all principals promote inclusion or convey positive attitudes and behaviors that support inclusion and inclusive cultures in schools. Additionally, some researchers have found that certain principals support inclusion for a certain population of students

with disabilities while limiting inclusion for students with other types of disabilities (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1999; Cook, Semmel, & Gerver, 1999).

Survey research focused on principal attitudes and perspectives of inclusion is muddled and has produced equivocal findings. For example, Praisner (2003) found that only 20% of principals held positive attitudes toward educating most or all students in the general education classroom while Barnett and Monda-Amaya (1999) and Cook, Semmel, and Gerver (1999) reported that a majority of principals believed that it was appropriate for students with mild disabilities to be educated in the general education classroom but not students with more severe disabilities. These findings are in part related to the questions posed to principals by researchers. Praisner's study focused on principals' attitudes of including all students while Cook, Semmel, and Gerver (1999) focused on principal attitudes of including students with mild disabilities in the general education classroom.

A review of studies on principal attitudes of inclusion (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1999; Carter & Hughes, 2006; Cook, Semmel, & Gerver, 1999; Downing, Eichinger, & Williams, 1997; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Praisner, 2003; Villa, Thousand, Miles, & Nevin, 1996) provides an explanation for the range of findings. Principal attitudes toward inclusion are influenced by the severity of the disability and the types of student behaviors. In most instances, principals are less likely to have positive attitudes of inclusion when students with disabilities exhibit extreme behaviors or require a significant amount of school resources. Principal attitudes have also been tied to the level of inclusion implementation within a school

(Downing, Eichinger, & Williams, 1997) also influences principal attitudes of inclusion.

Salisbury (2006) asserted the need for further research to provide "a focused examination of the principals' views and experiences [that] would give voice to the important group of change agents [principals] at a deeper level than what has previously been reported in the literature" (p. 81). In part, Salisbury's call for further research on the views and experiences of principals prompted this study.

Research Problem

Principals – particularly those in urban public school districts – face tremendous pressures to implement new policies in order to become compliant with laws and mandates (Fullan, 1993, 2001). Principals are held accountable for student performance on standardized tests, special education, attendance, suspension rates, and other factors determined by local districts and their state education agencies. Large-scale federal mandates, such as the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) and the *Individuals with Disabilities in Education Improvement Act of 2004* (IDEA), have placed pressure on state education agencies and local school districts to reform schools. These reforms have created a very public source of data on the academic success and inclusiveness of schools. Principals also face tremendous pressure from their community and staff.

When principals are tasked to implement new policies or face pressures within their schools or districts, researchers have found that principals engage in sensemaking (Anagnostopoulos & Rutledge, 2007; Coburn, 2005; Evans, 2007; Spillane, Diamond, Burch, Hallett, Jita, & Zoltners, 2002), the cognitive process in

which individuals and groups construct reality from an ongoing flow of events. Principal sensemaking research is currently a small body of scholarship (Coburn, 2005), which has almost entirely overlooked principal sensemaking of special education and inclusion.

Special education is one of the most challenging regulatory arenas in education.   Inclusion is a component of special education focused on appropriately placing students with disabilities in the general education classroom. IDEA has defined this concept as the least restrictive environment (LRE). Amendments to IDEA and case law have further clarified the necessity of including students with disabilities in the general education classroom .

This study examined principal sensemaking of inclusion and in doing so has contributed to our understanding of how principals make sense of complex regulatory environments, in particular those requiring schools to ensure that students with disabilities are appropriately placed in the general education classroom.

Research Questions

Scholars have shown that principals are a critical component for successfully implementing inclusion and principals can help promote inclusion by conveying important values necessary for inclusion to take root in schools. Yet, little attention has been paid to why certain principals value and promote inclusion in their schools and others do not. The purpose of this study was to address the shortcomings of previous empirical research on principal leadership of inclusion.

The research questions for the study were derived from the conceptual framework, which is further described in Chapter Two. The study is guided by one main research question and two sub questions:

1) How do principals make sense of inclusion in their schools?

     a. What are the factors the influence principal sensemaking of inclusion?

     b. What roles do principals play as the make sense of inclusion and interact with their school's organizational environment?

Theoretical Framework

Sensemaking is about creating a plausible understanding of situations and experiences that seem new, different, or peculiar. The focus of sensemaking is on the way individuals or groups use retrospect in order to understand their situations and experiences. Sensemaking is primarily linked to organizational sensemaking, which involves the way individuals – immersed in an ongoing flow of events – make sense of situations and experiences in their organizations.

Karl Weick's work on sensemaking has helped to create the theoretical underpinning for research focused on understanding and examining how individuals or groups make sense of events and experiences within organizations. Weick (1995) asserted, "the basic idea of sensemaking is that reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs" (p. 635). He constructed a sensemaking framework in order to analyze and explain the way individuals and groups make sense of organizational events and situations. The framework consists of seven characteristics: identity, retrospect, enactment, social, ongoing, extracted cues, and plausibility. These characteristics

together represent the formula for how individuals answer the questions, "what's going wrong?" or "what's different?"

Weick (1979, 1995) also developed a conceptual model of sensemaking that integrated the seven characteristics described in his sensemaking framework. This model is organized into four emphases: ecological change (e.g. identifying something as different or new), enactment (e.g. constructing what is sensed), selection (e.g. choosing a plausible explanation), and retention (e.g. holding on to the plausible selection for future reference). These emphases are not linear steps because they do not take place in lockstep order. Instead, multiple emphases may operate at any time during the process.

In most instances, policies governing special education trickle down to schools from the four main sources of law that exist at both the state and federal level: constitutional law, statutory law, regulatory law, and case law. As policy trickles down – from the US Congress, US Department of Education (USDOE), and federal courts, to statehouses, state education agencies, and state courts, to school districts – to individual schools, understandings and conceptions of a particular policy or law can change at each level. Spillane (2004) characterized this process as being similar to the telephone game:

> The player at the start of the line tells a story to the next person in line who relays the story to the third person in line, and son on… by the time the story is retold by the final player to everyone, it is very different from the original story. (p. 8)

If the telephone game were played out with all the parties involved in special education, schools would most likely be the final player to be told the story.

As special education policies flow into schools, state education agencies and school districts have already developed their own understandings of the policies and tools to monitor and regulate behaviors. School districts may provide trainings and information for school-level staff, in order to ensure policies are properly implemented. Principals and other school staff may already have their own perspectives on the policy. When a policy finally reaches the school, principals must wrestle with their own understandings of the policy within their existing experiences and the context of their school's organizational environment. When principals receive new policies or mandates on inclusion, they must answer the question: "is this new policy the same or different from what we are already doing?" This in turn triggers the sensemaking process.

Principal sensemaking is inherently linked to individual experiences and the school's organizational environment. Spillane et al. (2002) posited that principal sensemaking is "situated in their professional biographies, [school] building histories, and roles as intermediaries between the district office and classroom teacher" (p. 731). The meaning a principal creates relies on how individuals construct and interact with their environments (Weick, 1995). Thus, after answering the policy question: "same or different?" the principal will begin to interact with staff about the policy and begin to develop a sense of the policy.

Principals construct sense socially through interactions with teachers, staff, central office administrators, and their peers (Evans, 2007; Spillane et al., 2002).

From their experiences during social interactions, principals make sense of situations in ways they believe reflect their school's values and other key features of the school environment (Evans, 2007). In other words, principals make sense of a situation in a way that seems plausible to them given what they believe they know about themselves and their schools. Principals also construct sense through their own past experiences and existing knowledge.

Past experiences and existing knowledge enable individuals to understand ambiguous or new information (Weick, 1995), such as new special education policies or mandates. From new policies or mandates, principals construct hypothetical models and notions through their own personal and professional experiences. For example, a principal may draw on their previous teaching and leadership experiences, graduate-level coursework, professional development workshops, and personal experiences in similar or relevant situations to make sense of a current policy mandate from the school district. The experiences and knowledge an individual has access to influences the way they construct sense of a situation.

Research Methodology

I utilized a qualitative, multi-case study approach to examine the sensemaking of five elementary school principals. The research site for this study was one urban public school district located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The school district had a relatively high percentage of African-American students, special education students, and students receiving free and reduced meals (FARM).

The cases are focused on how each of the five elementary school principals

made sense of inclusion in their schools. The participants were selected to maximize differences in backgrounds and experiences in special education in order to offer unique insights into the factors that influence principal sensemaking. I will discuss in greater detail the selection criteria for the selection for the five principals in Chapter III.

This study had several limitations. First, the study was limited by a geographical boundary – one medium size urban public school district in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Second, the study focused in-depth on the experiences of five principals and did not include other staff members within the school. Third, the study included only principals of elementary schools. Finally, this study was limited by my ability to gain access to certain information and data, given that during the period of the study September 2010- June, 2011 this school district was under court supervision for failure to comply with IDEA.

Significance

This study made theoretical and practical contributions to the fields of sensemaking, principal leadership, and special education policy. Theoretically, the results of this study contributed to current research on sensemaking. The results of this study nuanced a small but important body of principal sensemaking studies by adding depth to an under-studied area of special education regulatory policy at the school level.

Weick's sensemaking theory was useful in examining the way principals made sense of inclusion in their school. Each of the sensemaking characteristics was present in the data and helpful in examining principal actions and reactions to

inclusion policy and changes in their school environment. Although Weick's sensemaking theory was useful in examining how principals made sense of inclusion, Jennings and Greenwood's (2003) sensemaking model adapted from Weick (1979) understated the significance of identity construction and the interactivity and interconnectedness of identity construction, extracted cues, and enactment.

Principals continually made sense of inclusion as ecological changes to their organizational environment were identified. Budget shortfalls and extreme student behavior triggered principal sensemaking. In these instances, principals didn't completely revise their sense of inclusion. The principals revised their sense to increase or decrease inclusivity for an individual student or classroom based on the identified ecological change.

Principal sensemaking was held captive by their organizational environments. The complexity and challenges presented to principals by their school environment influenced the way principals made sense of inclusion. The complex environment was so demanding and difficult to deal with that each of the principals ignored the special education accountability model implemented by the school district.

Each of the principals demonstrated a number of actions, played a number of roles, and extracted a number of cues that enabled them to implement inclusion in their school. Many of the actions, roles and cues described in this study were identified in previous studies. The sensemaking model connected these actions, roles, and cues to explain how and why principals make decisions around implementing inclusion.

Cognitive: mental processes individuals use to construct sense from reality.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act: *The Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965* (ESEA) was enacted by Congress to support public schools. The most recent reauthorization of ESEA was renamed as the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB). NCLB increased accountability and standards for schools and school districts across the United States.

Individuals with Disabilities in Education Improvement Act: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) was initially drafted by the US Congress as the Educational for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EAHCA). With this legislation, the federal government, for the first time guaranteed educational rights to children with disabilities. These educational rights included: (a) the right of all students to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE); (b) the right to due process for a complaint or alternation in a child's placement; (c) an individualized education plan (IEP) created by a committee of teachers, service providers, parents, and the student if appropriate; and (d) discipline requirements which mandate that students with disabilities cannot be removed from instruction for an indeterminate period because of a behavior stemming from their disability. In 1991, EAHCA would be reauthorized under the name, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. Subsequent reauthorizations to IDEA occurred in 1997 and 2004.

Inclusion: The concept of inclusion does not have a definition agreed upon by researchers or professionals. Definitions range from full inclusion of all students with

disabilities in the general education classroom regardless of cost and severity of disability to inclusion of only students with mild disabilities in the general education classroom. Both professionals and academics often use the terminology mainstreaming, inclusion, and least restrictive environment interchangeably.

Least Restrictive Environment: The least restrictive environment (LRE) is terminology in the IDEA. According to IDEA (2004):

> to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities … are educated with children who are not disabled; and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular education environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aides and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (612 (a) (5) (A))

LRE Scorecard: A tool used by the school district to assess inclusivity

Segregation: Students with disabilities being educated outside of the general education classroom.

Sensemaking: The human cognitive process in which individuals and groups construct reality from an ongoing flow of events

Special Education: Instruction and additional services provided to students with disabilities in order for students to receive a free and appropriate public education guaranteed by IDEA.

Special Education Coordinator: A full time school-based position whose primary duties and responsibilities include: monitoring special education compliance,

ensuring students are appropriately placed, and managing all special education teachers and staff to ensure IEPs are implemented appropriately. This position reports directly to the school principal.

Students with Disabilities: Students who have gone through the eligibility process in the described in IDEA and have been found eligible for special education and related services.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter I will review the literature that informed my approach to this research. Three bodies of research literature are reviewed below. First, I examine the literature on inclusion in order to provide solid background information to the study. Second, I examine the principal leadership literature in order to highlight the importance of principal leadership of inclusion. In this section, I weave together the general body of principal leadership literature with special education leadership literature. I also review the literature on the complexity of school leadership. Finally, I review sensemaking theory. I discuss the sensemaking theory, the conceptual model of sensemaking, and principal sensemaking studies. This section will provide an argument for the usefulness of a sensemaking framework for this study and describe Weick's (1995) model of sensemaking.

Inclusion

Inclusion policy is often confusion policy. Researchers, theorists, and lawmakers all have perspectives on inclusion. No one definition exists because nobody can agree on a universal definition. I do not wish to define inclusion for myself or provide the reader with a concrete definition. Rather, I want the reader to understand the multiple perspectives and concepts surrounding inclusion. The purpose of this section is to allow the reader the opportunity to develop their own sense of inclusion based on historical facts, opinions, research, and theory. I will

break this section into two sections. First, I will provide a brief history of special

education and inclusion. I will highlight key historical events, laws, court cases, and

articles in order to show the development of inclusion over time. Second, I will

highlight research on inclusion and provide definitions of inclusion from researchers,

theorists, and lawmakers.

History of Inclusion

In order to understand inclusion, one must understand the history of inclusion.

Since the 1800s teachers and education leaders have discussed where and how to

educate students with disabilities. Many of the current talking points about the

education and inclusion of students with disabilities were debated over a century ago

and many of these debates remain unsettled. Starting with the development of public

school systems in the late 19th and early 20th century, students with disabilities began

entering some schools and classrooms. As a result, a variety of segregated programs

to educate students with disabilities developed. These programs were often labeled

the "special classes" and the students within these programs had little or no access to

their non-disabled peers.

Many scholars, school leaders, and lawyers argue that this type of segregation

is illegal and immoral. However, at the time, most professionals and researchers alike

believed that segregated programs protected students with disabilities while at the

same time providing a more efficient and productive education for all students.

Although not all students with disabilities were educated in segregated programs. A

few districts around the turn of the 20th century would add an assistant teacher to

work with students with disabilities in classrooms consisting primarily of general

education students (Osgood, 2005, p. 32). Osgood's (2005) historical analysis of

inclusion concluded that some educators during this era believed integrating the

special class with students in regular classes would provide a healthy moral incentive

for students with disabilities to emulate their non-disabled peers. Similar arguments

predicated on social interactions are made today about inclusion. However, these

types of integrated programs were not the norm, most school systems at the time

provided only segregated programs for students with disabilities. Inclusion of

students with disabilities into general education classrooms would be a long journey

for students with disabilities and inclusion advocates. A journey that still remains

incomplete.

The history of inclusion over the past century included many landmark events

and actions taken by interest groups, families, school districts, and various levels of

government. The root of the inclusion battle began with the steps taken to ensure

students with disabilities had the right to an education back in 1902 when the

National Education Association (NEA) first introduced the term special education at

an annual meeting for educators. By the 1930s, many states had begun to pass laws

for the expansion of special education programs to help provide funding for students

with disabilities in local districts. Time and context would heavily effect the

implementation of these early laws, as the depression crippled the economy and

politicians diverted funds to other aspects of the government.

Moving into the 1950s, away from the depression and the World War II, state

legislators began passing laws that mandated the identification of students with

disabilities. Teachers and parents began questioning the efficacy of segregation and

the consequences segregation had on the academic and social development of all students. Advocates for students with disabilities found their arguments supplemented by advocates in the civil rights movement and their struggle for racial integration and equality. Advocates claimed that the current segregated system stigmatized students of color and students with disabilities and created a society averse to accepting outside groups.

The comparison of students with disabilities to students of color provided a powerful and compelling argument for special education advocates. Osgood (2005) quoted Haring, Stern, and Cruickshank's (1958) comparison of African-Americans and students with disabilities:

> In both instances a rejected and feared minority group is involved. The absence of specific experiences in either case causes diffuse anxiety. The effect of a formal attempt to modify attitudes…seems only to increase the anxiety and to provide a specific focus for the expression of rejection and the development of organized resistance… The confusion of fantasized imaginary conflicts… associated with anxieties stemming from anticipation of the unknown is much more difficult to resolve. (p. 81)

Civil rights and special education advocates continued their struggle to create an integrated society into the 1960s as researchers linked poverty, culture deprivation, minority status, and identification for special education together. Dunn's 1968 seminal article entitled, "*Special Education for the Mildly Retarded – Is Much of It Justifiable?*" claimed that minority and disadvantaged children were being over identified as students with disabilities and that segregated programs were ineffective

and morally corrupt. Dunn's heavily cited critique of special education led many to question the practices and processes of special education. Dunn's work spawned similar reports and critiques in both professional and academic journals. (Deno, 1970; Chrisoplos & Renz, 1969). These reports included further investigation into the over identification of minorities and disadvantaged students, special classes providing schools with the ability to banish difficult to handle students, the labeling of students, and legal arguments framed around the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954.

Congress passed the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1966* (ESEA, PL 89-10) in the midst of the heated debate over segregation. ESEA was enacted to create a more equitable education system by providing substantial resources to underprivileged children. Included in ESEA were grants to support state and local education agencies serving children with disabilities. Significant to this legislation was the over one billion dollars of federal funding.

The enactment of ESEA was a turning point for federal intervention into public education. Federal intervention would continue as parents challenged school district policy in federal courts under the equal protection clause of the US Constitution. For example, the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) brought a class action lawsuit against the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1971 on behalf of 14 children who were denied access to education because of their disabilities. The US Supreme Court held that students with disabilities had the rights to a free public education. The court held all states and school districts accountable for educating all students. In the *Mills v Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (1972)

decision, a federal court held that a school district must provide education to all children regardless of the disability or cost.

Further Congressional legislation in the 1970s would cement these decisions into law. In 1973, the *Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973* (VRA) was enacted. Specifically within VRA was section 504 which protected the civil rights of all peoples with disabilities, including children. VRA stated that disability was:

a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of American society" and that "[n]o otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States... shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. (VRA, Section 504, 29 U.S.C.§794)

Finally, in 1975 legislation was drafted specifically for students with disabilities with the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (EAHCA, PL 94-142). The federal government for the first time guaranteed educational rights to students with disabilities. The educational rights included: 1) the right of all students to a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE); 2) the right to due process for a complaint or alternation in a child's placement; 3) an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) created by a committee of teachers, service providers, parents, and the student if appropriate; and 4) discipline requirements which mandate that students with disabilities cannot be removed from

instruction for an indeterminate period because of a behavior stemming from the handicapping condition.

EAHCA had a profound effect on the way schools provide education to students with disabilities, but the law was far from perfect. Critics suggested that EAHCA perpetuated rigid classification categories of student disabilities and lacked the adequate funding and resources for many of its mandates (Osgood, 2005). Some terminology was also left vague, including an explicit definition of what LRE actually means. As a result, debate continues in both academic and professional arenas of the term least restrictive environment (LRE).

By the early 1980s, the terminology of choice for the integration of students with disabilities was "mainstreaming." EAHCA mandated a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment, but what exactly was a least restrictive environment? The activity of defining the LRE was left to the IEP team at the school level. Schools along with parents debated and decided both the programs and the placements of students with disabilities. However, parents do not have the exclusive right to demand placement in a certain program or physical location (see White v Ascension, 2003).

In 1990, the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) (PL 101-336) was enacted. Although this act was not specifically intended to address education for students with disabilities, the act was drafted to eliminate discrimination against individuals with disabilities, including people with contagious diseases or those who are sick in any way. ADA also provides a provision for monetary damages for past harm. During the same year, Congress reauthorized EAHCA, which was renamed the *Individuals*

23

with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA). IDEA was subsequently

amended in 1997 and 2004. Updates in the 1990 reauthorization of EHA/IDEA

included: 1) further protection for the rights of students with violent or dangerous

behavior; 2) improvements in parent participation; 3) added conditions such as

autism; and 4) language in the bill that complies with the *Board of Education of*

Henrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley decision which held that school

districts did not have to provide the best possible education, but instead reach only a

set baseline. The 1997 reauthorization of IDEA authorized courts to reward

attorney's fees to parents of children when the parents are the prevailing party.

With the addition of the multiple reauthorizations of IDEA and key decisions

made by federal courts, inclusion began to emerge as a major policy in education.

The 1999 *Olmstead v L.C.* decision held that federal, state, and local governments

must provide services to persons with disabilities in the most integrated, appropriate

setting. This decision along with IDEA provided inclusion advocates with a great

deal of ammunition.

Moving into the current millennium, special education and inclusion policy

advanced a long way. However, a new reform initiative focused on high stakes

accountability would soon be enacted which would have a significant impact on

special education and inclusion policy. In 2001, the US Congress reauthorized ESEA

and renamed this act the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*(NCLB) which centered

around improving all public schools in the United States and specifically focused on

the creation of better schools for traditionally underserved populations including

students with disabilities. Under NCLB students with disabilities were required to

take all tests and have their data reported. Students with disabilities where also required to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) with all other subgroups of students (e.g. race, students receiving Free and Reduced Meals, English Language Learners). If schools did not meet AYP, schools and districts could be subject to sanctions including the redistribution federal funds given to states and school districts.

NCLB radically changed the landscape of special education simply because the law mandated all students with disabilities be counted in high stakes assessments and that these scores would count towards AYP.   As a result, schools could no longer mask the low achievement of their special education population. Researchers have uncovered that schools that fail to meet AYP most often because of the students with disabilities subgroup (Eckes & Swando, 2009).

Great advances in the rights of students with disabilities have been made over the past 100 years. However, many problems still exist in the realm of special education. Inequality, segregation, misidentification and poor educational achievement of students with disabilities persists (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Blanchett, 2009; Harry & Klinger, 2006; Losen & Orfield, 2002; USDOE, 2008). IDEA remains only partially funded, not fulfilling its promise to fund 40% of the per pupil expenditure for students with disabilities. Terminologies are still unclear. Educators and scholars argue over a definition of inclusion and whether inclusion is morally, legally, or ethically sound as a practice (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Osgood, 2005).

Inclusion continues to be a highly political and debated topic (Brantlinger, 1997; Kavale & Forness, 2000). Some researchers have found that students with disabilities

in general education classrooms have completed more assignments and made significant gains in reading and academic functioning (Carlson & Parshall, 1996; Powell-Smith, Stoner, Shinn, & Good, 2000). Other researchers have failed to find significant gains in student achievement in an inclusion setting (Vaughn, Elbaum, Schumm, & Hughes 1998; Rice & Zigmond, 2000). One possible explanation for such disagreement may have to do with the implementation of inclusion. The practice of inclusion varies from school to school and district to district (Carter & Hughes, 2006; Salisbury, 2006).

Inclusion Defined

A universally accepted definition of inclusion does not exist. Instead, a continuum of definitions exists. In fact, the word inclusion does not exist in IDEA or any special education law. Definitions of inclusion are rooted in legislation and law, social and moral arguments, and pragmatic conceptualizations of education. The meanings of inclusion tend to vary in different contexts and settings since the definition of inclusion has not been operationalized. Two districts could implement an inclusion policy, but the two policies could vary widely (Slee, 2005). For example, District A could completely desegregate their schools by placing all students, including those with severe disabilities in general education classes in neighborhood schools. District B could integrate some students with learning disabilities but segregate students with emotional and more serious mental disabilities in separate classes or schools. Inclusion policy is often confusion policy.

To add to this confusion, other terms such as mainstreaming, integration, and full inclusion create more conflict and ambiguity. Thus, the concept of inclusion is

26

complex, multidimensional, and challenging to characterize (Riehl, 2000; Sands, Adams, & Stout, 1995; Salisbury, 2006). The concept of inclusion is also nuanced with other aspects of special education. For example, does special education include "gifted and talented" students and should these students be educated in segregated programs? Many programs that serve students who are hearing impaired promote a deaf culture. If students with hearing impairments are educated in general education settings will they be able to foster a deaf culture?

Regardless of the complexity of inclusion, scholars have consistently attempted to define inclusion. For example, Katzman (2007) defined inclusion as "an educational philosophy that calls for schools to educate all learners – including students with disabilities and other special needs – together in high quality, age-appropriate general education classrooms in their neighborhood schools" (p. 129 in Bursztyn). Stainback and Stainback (1990) defined an inclusive school as "one that educates students in the mainstream... providing appropriate educational programs that are challenging yet geared to their capabilities and needs as well as any support and assistance they and/or their teachers may need to be successful in the mainstream" (p. 3). Osgood (2005) described inclusion in the real world as "more of an ideal than an idea, one to which schools should continually aspire but also one that remains unobtainable in the foreseeable future" (p. 200). Inclusive schooling, according to Slee (2005) "is not the adaptation or refinement of special education. It is a fundamental rejection of special education's and regular education's claims to be inclusive. Inclusion demands that we address the politics of exclusion and

representation" (p. 164). These definitions highlight the variability of inclusion

definitions and also the role values, politics, and pragmatism play in inclusion policy.

Another perspective outside of academia is often left unexamined in the

literature. The legal aspects of inclusion defined by Congress and interpreted and

expanded by federal courts have provided alternative definitions and perspectives on

what inclusion should actually look like in schools or at the least, what schools are

obligated to provide to students with disabilities under the law. In 1997, a US District

Court in the *Hartmann v. Loudon County* case held that:

> [t]he mainstreaming provision (in IDEA) represents recognition of the value
>
> of having disabled children interact with non-handicapped students. The fact
>
> that the provision only creates a presumption, however, reflects a
>
> congressional judgment that receipt of such social benefits is ultimately a goal
>
> subordinate to the requirement that disabled children receive educational
>
> benefit." The court also provided the right of schools to regulate inclusion by
>
> holding "that mainstreaming is inappropriate when "the handicapped child is a
>
> disruptive force in the non-segregated setting .(Hartmann v Loudon decision
>
> 882 F.2d at 879 (quoting *Roncker v. Walter*, 700 F.2d 1058, 1063 (6th Cir.
>
> 1983))

 In another influential case prior to the Hartmann decision, the US Supreme Court

held that school districts did not have to provide the best possible education, but

instead reach only a set baseline.

In 2004, the IDEA provided additional grounding to the *Hartmann v. Loudon*

County decision by providing more explicit regulations in the law:

to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities . . . are educated

with children who are not disabled; and special classes, separate schooling, or

other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational

environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a

child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary

aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (612(a)(5)(A))

The federal government's stance on inclusion significantly departs from the

definition provided by scholars presented earlier.   The federal government

recognized that inclusion or mainstreaming of students with disabilities is an

important value, however educational benefits override a child's right to full inclusion

in a neighborhood school or in a classroom where the child's handicap can serve as a

disruptive force. Furthermore, school districts are not required to maximize

educational outcomes for students with special needs. Districts must simply provide

a good enough education. A sharp divergence exists between how proponents of

inclusion and federal courts believe students with disabilities should be served in

public schools. This federal law creates a continuum of placements for students of

disabilities. Figure 1 is an example of a continuum of places for students with

disabilities.

Figure 1. Model of the Continuum of Placements

	Placement Options
⇑⇑⇑⇑⇑ **More Restrictive** ⇑⇑⇑⇑⇑ —————— **Less Restrictive** ⇓⇓⇓⇓⇓	Residential or Hospital Program: Students receive specialized instruction and other supports twenty-four hour a day. These students have special needs that include: social, emotional, physical, health related, and/or emotional needs.
	Special Day Schools: Students attend a school that does not include any students without IEPs. Special Day Schools often offer a therapeutic learning environment and provides instruction and support to student with moderate to severe behavioral, physical, or emotional disabilities.
	Self-Contained Classrooms: Students attend a regular public school with general education students but receive specialized instruction separate from students without IEPs. Students do not receive instruction in the general education classroom.
	Resource Rooms/Pull-Out: Students are pulled out of the general education classroom for a portion of the school day to receive specialized instruction in a separate room with fewer students. Students still spend part of their day in the general education classroom.
	General Education Classroom: Students are educated in the general education classroom with support of a special education teacher and/or collaborative planning between special education teacher and general education teacher.
Note: Each placement option can look different and be more or less restrictive based on the program and options created or available to the school. For example, students in a self-contained classroom could take physical education or eat lunch with their non-disabled peers but receive all academic instruction in a self-contained classroom.	

An analysis of the history of special education and inclusion uncovers just as many questions as answers. What is exactly meant by inclusion? Does inclusion benefit students socially and academically? Can we truly educate all students in a general education environment? Given the variation of definitions leaders of schools have an important position in influencing the way students with disabilities are educated and whether or not they are educated with their non-disabled peers. The next section will examine principal leadership, principal training in the area of special

education, and how principals can support special education programs in their schools.

Principal Leadership

Principal leadership and school reform are intertwined. Several existing reviews of principal leadership literature have indicated that principals have measurable effects on student achievement (Bell, Bolam, & Cubillo, 2003; Cotton, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Walters, & McNulty, 2005; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Witzers, Boskers, & Kruger, 2003). These reviews have identified hundreds of studies that reported principals' effects on student achievement either directly through their own personal actions; indirectly through a number of factors such as school culture, family involvement, and structures; or reciprocally through interactions with teachers and staff.

Cotton (2003) reviewed eighty-one principal leadership studies between 1985 and 2000 and identified twenty-five categories of principal behaviors that have been found to positively affect student achievement and behavior, teacher attitudes and behavior, and dropout rates:

1) Safe and orderly environment

2) Vision and goals focused on high levels of student learning

3) High expectations for student learning

4) Self-confidence, responsibility, and perseverance

5) Visibility and accessibility

6) Positive and supportive climate

7) Communication and interaction

8) Emotional and interpersonal support

9) Parent and community outreach and involvement

10) Rituals, ceremonies, and other symbolic actions

11) Shared leadership, decision making, and staff empowerment

12) Collaboration

13) Instructional leadership

14) Ongoing pursuit of high levels of student learning

15) Norm of continuous improvement

16) Discussion of instructional issues

17) Classroom observation and feedback to teachers

18) Support teachers' autonomy

19) Support of risk taking

20) Professional development opportunities and resources

21) Protecting instructional time

22) Monitoring student progress and sharing findings

23) Use of student progress and sharing findings

24) Recognition of student achievement

25) Role modeling

Similarly, a synthesis of principal leadership research by Marzano, Waters, and

McNulty, (2005) identified twenty-one similar categories correlated to student

academic achievement. These reviews provide substantial evidence that principals

play a central role in school reform and improving student achievement.

School leadership experts (such as Fullan, 2001; Hallinger, 2005; Marzano et al., 2005) all place great value on the roles and responsibilities of the principal. Researchers have written widely about the different activities, behaviors, features, and leadership styles of effective principal leadership. However, school leadership experts have largely ignored special education leadership (Boscardin, 2004). With few exceptions, school leadership research has primarily overlooked the relationship between principal leadership and the achievement and inclusion of students with disabilities.

The body of research focused on principal special education leadership is sparse but indicates that principal behaviors and actions play an essential role in establishing the necessary conditions for creating more inclusive schools (Billingsley, Gersten, Gillman, & Morvant, 1995; Guzman, 1997; Hasazi, Johnston, Liggett, & Schattman, 1994; Mantle 2005; Walther-Thomas & DiPaola, 2003; Will, 1986). Hasazi et al. (1994) noted, "How leaders at each school site chose to look at the least restrictive environment was critical to how, or even whether, much would be accomplished beyond the status quo" (p. 492). Principal attitudes and perspectives are important.

Principal leadership research focused in the area of special education has highlighted many of the same effective leadership styles, behaviors, and actions described in the general body of principal leadership research (Collins & White, 2001; Salisbury & McGregor, 2002; Stanovich & Jordan, 1998; Wakeman, Browder, Flowers, & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2006). For example, Walther-Thomas and DiPaola (2003) found the following:

To help special needs students learn, principals can do the following:

create a positive school culture that supports their academic success,

use knowledge of special education laws that protect students' rights,

understand how teachers and specialists can better assist disabled

students, and work continuously and collaboratively with their key

stakeholders to address all students' learning needs. Principals must

also provide high-quality professional development for all personnel to

enhance disabled students' outcomes. (p. 125)

Principals have the power to directly and indirectly influence school culture.

Each school has a unique culture with a certain combination of values, beliefs,

and feelings (Hansen & Matthews, 2002). Establishing a school culture with the

values, beliefs, and feelings that promotes the inclusion of students with disabilities is

believed to be a vital element of an inclusive school (Cook, Semmel, & Gerber, 1999;

Salisbury & McGregor, 2002; Salisbury, Wilson, & Palombaro, 1998; Villa et al.,

1996). Effective principals can influence school culture and address the values,

beliefs, and goals of school personnel. According to Leithwood and Riehl (2003),

"Leaders sometimes do things, through words or actions, that have a direct effect on

the primary goals of the collective, but more often their agency consists of

influencing the thoughts and actions of other persons…"(p. 8). Marzano, Walters,

and McNulty (2005) suggested that principals affect culture by (a) promoting

cohesion among staff; (b) promoting a sense of well-being among staff; (c)

developing an understanding of purpose among staff; and (d) developing a shared

vision of what the school could be like.

Principals engage in specific actions to help establish the supportive culture necessary for inclusion. Principal leadership has been reported as the most powerful predictor of positive teacher attitudes for inclusion (Stanovich & Jordan, 1998; Villa et al., 1993). Principals promote inclusion by conveying attitudes, modeling behaviors, and providing supports to help establish an inclusive school culture (Lewis & Doorlag, 2003; Salisbury & McGregor, 2002). Salisbury and McGregor observed and interviewed principals and teachers at five elementary schools engaged in implementing inclusive practices for students with disabilities and found that each of the principals used a process of reflective inquiry to engage with teams and individuals and "engage[d] in discussions about the values and implications of diversity, inclusion, collaboration, and instructional practices" (p. 270). The processes these principals utilized also reflected similar methods described by school change experts (e.g. Elmore, 2000; Fullan, 2001).

Principals can also improve the education of students with disabilities and implementation of inclusion by ensuring resources are allocated fairly to students with disabilities and ensuring teachers and other staff have adequate instructional training and support (Salisbury & McGregor, 2002; Walther-Thomas & DiPaola, 2003; Walther-Thomas, DiPaola, & Butler, 2002). Allocating resources and providing instructional support are often described as instructional leadership practices. Spillane and his colleagues (2004) argued that instructional leadership included the direct handling of instructional matters (i.e. curriculum, evaluation, monitoring) and managerial roles (i.e. school budgeting, student discipline, and scheduling). This conception of instructional leadership highlights instruction and

managerial decision-making. Similarly, school leadership studies of inclusion have reported that instructional support and managerial decision-making are integral components to inclusive schools.

Principals are able to directly influence "resource allocations, staffing, structures, information flows, and operating processes" (Nanus, 1992, p. 142) which can help support successful inclusion in a school. Principals have been found to serve as facilitators of resources to ensure students with disabilities receive increased access to the general education classroom (Hughes & Ubben, 1994; Ubben, Hughes, & Norris, 2001). Additionally, principals can establish teacher schedules that enable special education and general education teachers' time to collaborate and co-plan, provide necessary classroom resources, regulate class sizes, and facilitate professional development that addresses the instructional needs of a wide range of learners.

Instructional leadership goes beyond effective management of resources. Special education teachers and general education teachers reported being undertrained in special education issues and research-based instructional strategies (Sands, Adams, & Stout, 1995; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). Principals can provide teachers with access to research-based instructional supports. Principals connect teachers with external expertise, support teacher initiatives, and create structures such as routine high quality professional development sessions that promote teacher learning (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Coldren & Spillane, 2007; Youngs & King, 2002). These instructional leadership practices can have significant impact on teachers and staff.

Historically, research has overwhelmingly demonstrated the centrality of principal leadership in school reforms. A long list of principal actions, behaviors, and responsibilities are described in the research literature for how principals can go about implementing special education reforms such as inclusion. These actions and behaviors impact school culture, resources, and teacher capacity. In turn, school culture, resources, and teacher capacity make up the necessary pieces that must be in place to successfully include more students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Influences on Principal Leadership

Complex School Environment

The previous section highlighted the importance of the principal in implementing inclusion and described specific principal actions and behaviors that contribute to inclusion implementation. However, merely listing or describing certain behaviors and actions that impact inclusion implementation simplifies the difficult and complex job of the principal. Principals are not miracle workers and cannot wave their hand and fix everything. School leadership is far more complex than just completing best practice managerial and instructional tasks. The complexity of school leadership has been well documented in the research literature over the past three decades (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Fullan, 2003; Greenfield, 1995; Johnson & Fauske, 2000; Spillane et al., 2002, Weick, 1976).

The organizational environment of the school is filled with regulatory and contextual pressures. Schools suffer from a torrent of unwanted, uncoordinated

policies and innovations raining down on them from hierarchical bureaucracies

(Fullan, 2003). As Fullan (2001) asserted:

> When so many demands are placed on the principalship, it is not just the sheer
>
> amount of work that is the problem, but also the inconsistent and ambiguous
>
> messages. Take control, but follow central directives; make improvements,
>
> but run a smooth ship, and so on. (p. 22)

These pressures and demands have implications on how principals make sense of

policy directives from above. To illustrate the complexity of the school's

organizational environment, Weick (1976) quoted an analogy made by March

(personal communication):

> Imagine that you're either the referee, coach, player or spectator at an
>
> unconventional soccer match: the field for the game is round; there are
>
> several goals scattered haphazardly around the circular field; people
>
> can enter and leave the game whenever they want to; they can throw
>
> balls in whenever they want; they can say "that's my goal" whenever
>
> they want to, as many times as they want to, and for as many goals as
>
> they want to; the entire game takes place on a sloped field; and the
>
> game is played as if it makes sense… If you now substitute in that
>
> example principals for referees, teachers for coaches, students for
>
> players, parents for spectators and schooling for soccer…(1976, p. 1)

The organizational structure of the school does not provide an environment

for principals to simply pull a lever and produce change in teacher behavior or student

outcomes. Weick (1976) and Bossert et al. (1982) asserted that the school's

organizational structure was loosely coupled which made the school environment challenging to change or manage. For example, the relationship between a principal providing professional development on research-based instructional practices and changes in the teachers' instructional practices are described as a loosely coupled relationship because teachers may or may not follow the professional development training once they return to their classroom or because measuring the outcomes of the training either by direct observations or student outcomes is problematic. The loosely coupled nature of the school increases the complexity of school leadership.

Greenfield (1995) described the school as a demand environment that included three distinct characteristics that influence principals. The first characteristic is the moral character of the school because of the normative nature of teaching and because children do not have the ability to decide what they will learn. Second, the school is a demand environment because it possesses a highly educated, autonomous, and essentially permanent workforce. Traditionally, teachers have received limited direct supervision, worked mostly independently, and were insulated from the administration by tenure. As a result, teachers can often function as street-level bureaucrats (Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977) with opportunities to disobey or half-heartedly implement policies or select particular aspects of change they are to include. Finally, schools are a demand environment because they are unstable and face regular and unpredictable threats to stability by "legislators, superiors, teachers, school board members, parents, or other community members" (Greenfield, 1995; p. 67). Further illustrating Greenfield's demand environment, Spillane and his colleagues (2002) have described a similar school environment that consisted of

overlapping social contexts, deep-rooted preexisting notions and understandings, and competing agendas by various stakeholders.

The work of the principal is highly complex, challenging, and mentally draining because of the school's demanding environment. Demanding and complex school environments generate numerous burdens on the principal and require specific actions and responses. Greenfield (1995) reviewed multiple studies of principal work and reported that the work of the principal was influenced by the demand environment and primarily involved:

> extensive face-to-face communication, is action oriented, the presented problems are unpredictable, decisions frequently are made without accurate or complete information, the work occurs in a setting of immediacy, the pace is rapid, there are frequent interruptions, work episodes themselves tend to be very brief in duration, responses often cannot be put off until later, resolution of problems often involves multiple actors, and the work is characterized by a pervasive pressure to maintain a peaceful and smoothly running school in the face of a great deal of ambiguity and uncertainty. (p. 63)

Principals are placed in a position to move rapidly through a variety of unrelated tasks throughout the course of their work.

Not only does the demand environment make leadership complex, researchers have found that principals react to this demand environment with implications on their leadership (Bossert et al., 1982; Greenfield, 1995; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Johnson & Fauske, 2000). Salley (1979) quoted by Griffith (1999) asserted:

principals are captives of their environments…The size of the school

system, size of the school, and number of grade levels in a school are

organizational variables that influence the principal's definition of his

or her own work [and] ethnic and socioeconomic characteristics play a

significant part in defining the work of the principal. (p. 269)

Johnson and Fauske's (2000) multiple case study of 18 successful principals

further illustrated how principals define their work in relation to their environment.

They found that principals responded to their environment in ways that increased

their own legitimacy as a leader and the legitimacy of their school. Principals were

concerned about how others perceived their leadership and their school. Johnson and

Fauske also found that principals used foreshadowing to identify potential threats and

diffuse potential threats to maintain their legitimacy. Principals targeted these

potential threats to protect their personal reputation and their school's reputation.

Johnson and Fauske's description of schools' environmental demands is

similar to that of Greenfield's (1995) conception but added an element of principal

agency. Johnson and Fauske reported that principals seek out and find opportunities

to enhance or protect their legitimacy. Therefore, principals are not only working

within a demand environment, they are also thinking about the environmental

challenges and leading in ways they believe will increase or protect their legitimacy.

For example, one of the principals explained a decision to invite the local

superintendent to the school for a visit.

The principal stated:

I told the faculty that I was bringing [the assistant superintendent] in to

show off our school . . . It provided me the opportunity to build morale

in and around my school . . . [and to] communicate with [the district

office] the positive things going on around here. (p. 162)

In this situation, the principal viewed the decision to invite the superintendent as a

win-win situation. The principal recognized that the school was in good shape and

wanted to show off to the school district while at the same time show teachers his

confidence in himself and the school. Although this principal took advantage of the

school's success, further down the road the same principal may encounter more

challenging situations where he or she could be forced to protect their legitimacy

rather than increase it.

Johnson and Fauske also found that principals sought out and paid close

attention to three specific but interrelated environmental challenges within their

schools. The first challenge is *dependency* in which the principal is dependent on the

school environment. A principal in the study succinctly captured the concept of

dependency in an explanation of the principal's role:

I don't see the role of principal as being a power position . . . [rather] I

find I'm excessively dependent on a host of environmental forces and

demands in fulfilling my role. I can't really do this job without the

cooperation and help from other people. To get the help and support I

need, they must believe in me and what I'm trying to do here. (p. 177)

The second environmental challenge is *uncertainty* and is caused by multiple

and continuing threats that can cause losses (or gains) of legitimacy. Principals are

constantly acting in an uncertain environment and these challenges keep principals on their toes and do not allow them to let down their guard.

The third environmental challenge is *vulnerability*, which focuses on dependence of the principal on others. Principals believed that certain issues or events could arise that would be out of their control. A principal in the study described a student walkout of the school in this way:

> There was nothing I could do about them walking [out].... The event
>
> created a lot of bad publicity for us.... I had to rely on my own
>
> reputation as principal and on the good faith that I had built up with
>
> teachers, parents, and the central office. (p. 179)

Principals in the Johnson and Fauske study were making sense of and responding to their positions, roles, environments, and experiences. The Greenfield and Johnson and Fauske studies are extremely helpful in understanding principal behavior and reconciling why certain things get done and other things do not. Furthermore, these frameworks have provided evidence that the school environment influences principals' leadership. Further investigation into how the school environment influences principal leadership is warranted and will be addressed subsequent sections of this chapter.

Urban Context

The urban context adds further complexity to the school's organizational environment. The majority of students eligible for free or reduced lunch, the educational proxy to measure for poverty, attend urban public schools (Hoffman, 2007). In addition, most urban public schools are comprised primarily of African-

American and Latino students. Students from low socioeconomic and minority

backgrounds, including those students who are English language learners, are

typically overrepresented in special education. Blanchett (2009) asserted that: "the

failure to provide students in urban settings, a disproportionate number of whom are

poor, and students of color with a high-quality equitable education has been identified

as a major contributing factor to the overrepresentation of students of color in special

education" (p. 381).

Researchers and activists have claimed urban school districts and their schools

face forms of structural racism and discrimination (Anyon, 2005; Kozol, 1992; Losen

& Orfield, 2002). Jean Anyon (2005) claimed: "It is widely acknowledged that one

of the most important causes of poorly funded, staffed, and resourced schools is the

poverty of the families and neighborhoods in which the schools are located" (p. 17).

Cooke (2007) argued that urban school districts face many obstacles including an

aging infrastructure, political issues, poverty, racial and cultural issues, English

language learners, rapid turnover of school administrators and teachers, and a low

quality teaching force. The structural challenges are extreme.

At the school level, principals in urban schools face many challenges. One

major obstacle for urban principals is staffing their school with qualified personnel.

Special education teachers in high-poverty schools are at high risk of leaving the

school (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Principal shortages also exist particularly in urban

school districts (Cistone & Stevenson, 2000), which make staffing for qualified

assistant principals extremely challenging.

In addition to staffing problems, principals in many urban schools face additional compliance and accountability requirements. Principals are forced to spend more and more time on paperwork and administrative tasks as school districts and schools fight their way out of special education lawsuits, measure and monitor teacher and student progress, and struggle to meet AYP benchmarks.

The urban school context adds additional challenges to the complexity of school leadership. Principals in urban schools face a long-standing status quo of underfunded schools, racially diverse student populations, rapid staff turnover, historical segregation of students with disabilities, piles of paperwork, a low-quality teacher force, and an ongoing struggle to meet accountability benchmarks. Research has not sufficiently examined principals' views or experiences of inclusion while taking into account the urban school context. Further investigation is needed not only to examine principal views and experiences but to also understand how principals make sense of and enact these experiences.

Special Education Responsibilities

Principal leadership is influenced by more than just the school environment. Policies adopted by federal, state, and local governmental agencies have increased the responsibilities of the principalship, thereby adding to the complexity and demands on school leadership. The roles and responsibilities of the principal have evolved. Principals are now responsible for ensuring the implementation of all provisions of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004* (IDEA), state and local statues, case law, and district policies and procedures that mandate students with disabilities be provided a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the

least restrictive environment (LRE). Principals face a daunting challenge in providing IDEA mandated provisions given historic failures of special education in serving students with disabilities and the ever changing policies that govern the special education system.

Over the past thirty-five years, special education policy and law have been changed and expanded. In 1975 the US Congress enacted the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (EAHCA), which for the first time guaranteed educational rights to students with disabilities. These educational rights included: (a) the right of all students to a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment; (b) the right to due process for a complaint or alternation in a child's placement; (c) an Individualized Education Program (IEP) created by a committee of teachers, service providers, parents, and the student if appropriate; and (d) discipline requirements which mandate that handicapped students cannot be removed from instruction for an indeterminate period because of a behavior stemming from the handicapping condition. As a result of providing these initial rights to students with disabilities, the roles and responsibilities of the principal were dramatically changed. Districts, schools, and principals were now responsible for ensuring all students had access to public education.

Concurrent with the enactment of EAHCA came a tidal wave of state and federal special education lawsuits and decisions that added further demands on the school principal. Within this tidal wave of lawsuits, EAHCA was reauthorized more than three times and eventually renamed the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 1991* (IDEA, 1991). IDEA was subsequently amended in 1997,

2004, and is currently being reviewed by Congress for another reauthorization. Updates to IDEA included: (a) further protection for the rights of students with violent or dangerous behavior; (b) improvements for parent participation; (c) added disability categories such as autism; (c) inclusion of students with disabilities on state and federal assessments; (d) school districts did not have to provide the best possible education, but instead reach only a set baseline; and (e) courts could reward attorney's fees to parents of children when the parents are the prevailing party.

In addition to ongoing reauthorizations of IDEA and key decisions made by federal courts, the concept of inclusion began to emerge as a major policy in special education. The Olmstead v. L.C. (1999) decision held that federal, state, and local governments must provide services to persons with disabilities in the most integrated and appropriate setting. The Olmstead v. L.C. (1999) decision created additional demands on the principal. As a result, principals were not only responsible for educating all students but also ensuring that students with disabilities would be included into the general education classroom as much as deemed appropriate by an IEP team.

In recent years special education policies, reforms, and demands have continued to evolve. However, the significant landmark reform that powerfully influenced the way students with disabilities were to be educated came from outside of the special education policy arena focusing more broadly on enhancing educational accountability. In 2001, the US Congress reauthorized the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) that was renamed the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (NCLB, 2001). NCLB focused on ensuring that all public schools in the United

States met the needs of all students, including traditionally underserved populations and students with disabilities. Under NCLB (2001), students with disabilities were required to take all tests and schools were required to report the outcomes of their testing. Students with disabilities where also required to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) with all other subgroups of students. If schools did not meet AYP, schools and districts could be subject to sanctions including the redistribution of Title I funds given to states and school districts.

NCLB radically changed the landscape of special education primarily because the law mandated all students with disabilities would be counted in high stakes assessments and that these scores would count towards a school's AYP.   As a result, schools could no longer easily mask the low achievement of their special education population. NCLB supplemented and extended IDEA requirements by requiring principals to analyze the performance of all students, including students with disabilities. In addition, principals were held accountable for AYP in a variety of subgroups, one being the subgroup "students with disabilities." Therefore, principals were held accountable for the education of students with disabilities, if this subgroup of students fails to perform the principal's job could be in jeopardy.

Recent survey research has revealed principals' awareness of their increased roles and responsibilities to educate students with disabilities. According to Wakeman, Browder, Flowers, & Ahlgrim-Delzell (2006), 98.6 % of principals agreed that they were responsible for the education of all students. However, the degree to which principals are committed to inclusion of students with disabilities is unresolved in the literature. Survey research on principal attitudes of inclusion has produced

equivocal findings (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1999; Cook, Semmel, & Gerver, 1999; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Praisner, 2003; Villa et al., 1996). For example, Praisner (2003) found that only 20% of principals held positive attitudes toward inclusion while Barnett & Monda-Amaya (1999) and Cook, Semmel, and Gerver (1999) reported that a majority of principals believed inclusion was appropriate for students with mild disabilities. Salisbury (2006) asserted the need for further research in this area to provide "a focused examination of the principals' views and experiences [that] would give voice to the important group of change agents [principals] at a deeper level than what has previously been reported in the literature" (p. 81).

IDEA and NCLB have created a more complex school environment and expanded the traditional roles and responsibilities of the principal. Principals are responsible to comply with a variety of ever-changing federal laws, case law, and policies along with federal, state, and local agency accountability systems that monitor and evaluate special education compliance. Currently, the research has not sufficiently examined principals' views or experiences on inclusion while taking into account this complex school environment. Further investigation is needed not only to examine principal views and experiences but to also understand how principals make sense of and enact these experiences.

Special Education Training and Expertise

Principals work in a complex and demanding school environment with expanded special education roles and responsibilities. Principals need to be highly trained in a variety of disciplines, including multiple aspects of special education in

order to lead and manage effectively. According to Walther-Thomas and DiPaola (2003) principals need knowledge and skills to create a positive school culture that is inclusive for students with disabilities, must have knowledge of special education laws, and understand and promote effective instructional practices that support students with disabilities. Decades of research on principal training and special education knowledge provide insight into what principals actually know about special education.

Most principals do not feel prepared to lead in the area of special education. The need for high quality professional development for principals in the area of special education has been well documented in the literature (Cline, 1981; DiPaola & Tschnannen-Moran, 2003; Hirth & Valesky, 1989; Kaye, 2002; Martin, 2005; Patterson, Bowling, & Marshall, 2000; Salisbury, 2006; Valesky & Hirth, 1992; Weinstein, 1989). Martin (2005) asserted that, "Nowhere is the challenge of redefining the roles, strengthening the competence, and providing adequate support for leaders more crucial than in the area of urban special education (p. 1). School principals reported that they have not received sufficient training during administrator preparation programs (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Katsiyannis, Conderman, & Franks, 1996), administrator licensure requirements typically have not required coursework in special education (Valesky & Hirth, 1991, 1992), and in-service training has often failed to provide principals with the necessary information on instructional strategies (Monteith, 2000; Patterson, Bowling, & Marshall, 2000) and special education law (Davidson & Algozzine, 2002; Davidson & Gooden, 2001).

Principals without special education experience and background receive little or no preparation before stepping into their jobs.

Poor training and support for special education spans the career of the principal. Davidson and Algozzine (2002) surveyed pre-service principals and found that most reported not being satisfied with their special education training. Monteith (1998) surveyed over one hundred acting school administrators and found that 75% had no formal training in special education. Wakeman et al. (2006) surveyed 363 principals nationwide and found most principals reported having limited knowledge of best instructional practices for students with disabilities, special education program evaluation, alternate assessments, and other instructional and assessment-based activities. DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) reported that more than 75% of principals identified special education law and special education policy implementation as a problem area.

Many principals lack the specific knowledge and skills necessary to ensure all students with disabilities are educated sufficiently in the least restrictive environment as a result of poor principal special education training. However, principals influence the implementation of special education and inclusion policies in their schools. The current context leads to an important question. How are principals understanding inclusion and making decisions about inclusion policy if they are not sufficiently trained or prepared? As I will discuss next, a sensemaking framework could usefully guide research to address our lack of knowledge about how principals make sense of and respond to their roles as special education leaders.

Sensemaking theory is about how a group or individuals make sense of something that was initially unclear. Yet, sensemaking theory has received little attention in the literature on school leadership. Education policy researchers have started to use sensemaking theory to expand understandings of policy implementation beyond motivation and capacity (Coburn, 2005; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). Researchers have also focused on how principals make sense, frame, derive, and interpret the multiple messages, contexts, and threats they receive from their school environments (Anagnostopoulos & Rutledge, 2007; Coburn, 2005; Evans, 2007; Spillane, Diamond, Burch, Hallett, Jitta, & Zoltners, 2002). However, before I examine principal sensemaking studies I will provide a description of sensemaking theory and a sensemaking model. Then, I will conclude this chapter with a review of principal sensemaking research.

Sensemaking Defined

Sensemaking is described as a human cognitive process in which individuals and groups construct reality from an ongoing flow of events. Weick (1993) stated, "the basic idea of sensemaking is that reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs" (p. 635). Senesemaking is grounded in social constructivism, in which people make sense of their past experiences of the world through mental activities that enable them to construct plausible, hypothetical models to understand ambiguous information. The process of sensemaking occurs when an individual or group attempts to understand actions and events that are surprising or confusing (Louis, 1980; Weick,

1995). Sensemaking is revealed through written and spoken narratives of the world, with sense occurring as individuals come to understand or make sense of events that they are currently experiencing or have experienced in the past. The process of constructing sense is both a conscious and unconscious activity that can seem significant, insignificant, or go totally unnoticed.

Sensemaking theory has been applied to expand understandings of how individuals and groups in a variety of settings and contexts. Sensemaking studies have focused on the placement of stimuli into preexisting frameworks (Louis, 1980; Starbuck & Milliken, 1988; Thomas, Clark, & Gioia, 1993). Theories of sensemaking have also been applied to a variety of unique situations, such as focusing on life-threatening circumstances (Weick, 1993) and flight attendant behaviors (Murphy, 2001). In business, sensemaking has been used to examine corporate executives (Parry, 2003), middle-managers (Dutton, Ashford, Oneill, Hayes, & Wierba, 1997), work-related identities (Pratt, Rock, & Kaufman, 2001), and daily activities within corporations (Bean & Eisenberg, 2006). Theories of sensemaking are multidisciplinary and cross into a variety of disciplines.

Sensemaking studies have highlighted the differences between sensemaking and other cognitive activities, such as interpretation and decision-making. According to Weick (1995), interpretation is one of many components within a sensemaking framework but is not synonymous with sensemaking. Mailloux (1990) defined interpretation as an "acceptable and approximating translation" (p. 121). From this definition, interpretation is a static, estimated, and passive rendering of cues or stimuli. Sensemaking goes beyond this one dimensional, rational translation.

Instead, sensemaking is a dynamic process of construction and reconstruction that is not only concerned with interpretation but also understanding how cues are initially singled out or flagged from an infinite flow of information, experiences, events, cues, and stimuli. Sensemaking is real and active, when people make sense of things "they read into things the meanings they wish to see; they vest objects, utterances, actions and so forth with subjective meaning which helps make their world intelligible to themselves" (Frost & Morgan, 1983, p. 207). They see the world through their own experiences, structures, and expectations.

Sensemaking is also different from decision-making. Decision-making is conceptualized as a rational, static, and concentrating heavily on isolated events. A decision-making perspective emphasizes the individual decision maker and mostly ignores the contextual features that may have led to a decision (Snook, 2001). According to Chia (1994) decision-making is "a product of a post-hoc rationalization process… [and creates a] projection of purposive and intentional behavior" (p. 794-795). An emphasis on decision-making fails to focus attention on the experiences of the decision-maker leading up to the event. Conversely, sensemaking allows us to ask the question, "What's the story?" (Weick, 1995). Sensemaking allows us to understand the circumstances that led to a decision. It allows us to put ourselves in the place of the actor, to animate and bring their experiences and story to life in order to better understand powerful contextual features that shaped the decider's experience leading up to decision.

Sensemaking theorists have argued that individuals and groups partake in "creative authoring" (Brown, 2000, p. 46) or retrospective inventions or creations of

sense (Weick, 1995) in which actors construct meaning from cues that do or do not mesh with established understandings. Actors create narratives in order to construct and make sense of events or actions. Individuals and organizations utilize narratives as tools or blueprints to make sense of events and to predict the occurrence of future events (Gephart, 1991; Martin, 1992). Narratives allow individuals to comprehend relationships in ways that enable understanding, predicting, and possibly controlling reality (Sutton & Kahn, 1987). However, narratives are not always reliable or accurate. Experiences are filtered and events are resorted and given sequence throughout the sensemaking process (Zukier, 1986). Narratives are edited and contain flawed, partial, and inaccurate information that is not entirely accurate.

Individual and organizational factors help to shape these narratives. When individuals discuss events they use a mixture of different vocabularies to tell their stories. They use vocabularies from occupations and professions, organizations, ideologies, predecessors, and from experiences (Weick, 1995). These vocabularies are used interchangeably and enable people to tell their stories and make order of the world from their past experiences. Multiple vocabularies become problematic for researchers studying sensemaking because these vocabularies make discourse analysis very difficult. Researchers must try to attribute meaning from vocabularies used by study participants, but these vocabularies are unique and are perpetually created, co-created, and edited. The ever changing and complex vocabularies used by actors makes parsing out explanations for behaviors and actions very difficult to uncover for researchers.

To further explain sensemaking, I will next examine Weick's (1995) seven properties of sensemaking. This examination will show that sensemaking is more than a theory, rather it is a combination of theories or a meta-theory. These characteristics are rooted in the work of social constructivism and provide further detail on the process of sensemaking.

Weick's Sensemaking

From Weick's perspective, sensemaking is about answering the question, "what's going on here?" People attempt to make sense of events or information when something isn't right. According to Weick, (1995) sensemaking possesses at least seven distinguishing characteristics that set sensemaking apart from other explanatory processes. These seven characteristics are defined as *identity, retrospect, enactment, social, ongoing, extracted cues, and plausibility*. These characteristics operate as a guideline or recipe for investigation into sensemaking and enable people to answer the question, "what's going wrong?" when they feel something just isn't right.

Identity construction. Sensemaking is interested in what Mead (1934) called the "parliament of selves" or the multiple and continually shifting definitions of self. Definitions of self identity are constructed both at the individual level and at the organizational or group level. Identity at the individual level translates into the question "who am I?" and at the organizational level, "who are we?" (Weick, 1995; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). These identities have a need for self-enhancement, self-efficacy, and self-consistency and are created and modified in part by how people believe others view themselves and their organizations (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Weick, 1995). According to Weick (1995), "the sensemaker is

himself or herself an ongoing puzzle undergoing continual redefinition, coincident with presenting some self to others and trying to decide which self is appropriate" (p. 20). Therefore, the sensemaker is a different self in different situations, environments, organizations, and around different people. For example, a person standing next to a tall and muscular person may feel weak or small. If the same person who earlier felt weak or small stands next to somebody significantly smaller than his or her self, he or she may now feel big and strong. Opportunities to reaffirm or reconstruct identities are constantly available as people interact with others and the world. A sensemaking perspective emphasizes how we construct the world based on notions of self and focuses on how these notions shape our identities.

Retrospect. Sensemaking is about how we look back at lived experiences and attribute meanings. This perspective illuminates how individuals examine their own actions in order to learn what they have done and the significance of their actions (Weick, 1995). Retrospect involves short time spans between acts and reflections, helps make the past clearer than the present and future, and helps to create a feeling of order, clarity, and rationality that will in turn stop the retrospection process (Starbuck & Milliken, 1988; Weick, 1995). The answer to the question "what's the story?" emerges from the process of retrospect (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Retrospection is used not only to learn the story but also to predict the future. Present and future decisions in part are informed by retrospection by serving as a framework for prediction (Weick, 1979).

Paget's (1988) study focused on a mistaken patient diagnosis provided an excellent analysis of retrospective thinking. In this study, a nurse noticed that a

patient's symptoms have changed over the course of a few hours. The nurse became aware of these changes, which signaled her to feel that something was not right. Some piece of information just did not fit and was flagged. She realized that these symptoms were not related to the current diagnosis but instead to a different medical problem she was familiar with from past experiences. She used short-term observations of the patient and preexisting knowledge to bring clarity to a piece of information that seemed out of place and in turn enabled her to predict the future; her claim that the patient was in danger. To learn what she thought, the nurse looked back in time to what she thought earlier that day and from past experiences. With an outcome in hand, we retrospectively make sense of an outcome.

Enactment. Sensemaking is about action and interplay between the individual and the surrounding environment. A sensemaking perspective views the environment more as created than discovered. Enactment is about answering the question, "what do I do next?" (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 412). We can view enactment in two parts; first, people partially construct their environment and second, people act in response to the environment they have co-constructed. In relation to the way individuals construct and respond to environments, Weick (1977) suggested that "[t]he process of sensemaking… is better understood by examining what is in people's heads and imposed by them on a stream of events than by trying to describe what is out there" (p. 277). Enactment emphasizes the actions of co-constructing reality and acting in response to perceived reality. Reality outside of the individual or organization does not exist in the sensemaking process. Instead the individual and environment are reciprocally transforming in relation to each other.

Social.   Sensemaking is about shared meanings, common languages, and social interactions within surrounding environments.   Sensemaking is interested in social context, which is why researchers pay particular attention to talk, discourse, and other social interactions. Sensemaking is more of a social process in which individuals need interactions with peers in order to translate what is going on in an environment (Maitlis, 2005). Interactions include face-to-face conversations, previous discussions, offhand remarks, meetings, protocols, and other types of interactions that spread across an organization. Social interaction establishes an organizational environment, which is constantly changing because of social interaction.

Weick (1985) concluded:

> organizational environments consist of nothing more than talk,
>
> symbols, promises, lies, interest, attention, threats, agreements,
>
> expectations, memories, rumors, indicators, supporters, detractors,
>
> faith, suspicion, trust, appearances, loyalties, and
>
> commitments…Words induce stable connections, establish stable
>
> entities to which people can orient, … and signify important
>
> information. (p. 128)

Social interactions influence the environment and they way sense is constructed.

Ongoing.   Sensemaking is an ongoing activity. From a sensemaking perspective, actors are always in the middle of things (Weick, 1995). Actors wake up each morning, brush their teeth, look in the mirror, shower, eat, drive to work, and do an assortment of other tasks each day. Infinite streams of events and inputs surround

59

actors, including both significant and insignificant actions, events, and observations (Chia, 2000). Within this infinite flow, actors can at times be aroused or interrupted by something perceived as out of place or dissimilar. Once an actor notices something is out of place, they chop out these moments of noticing and extract cues (Weick, 1995). This extraction can also be referred to as bracketing or bounding. Part of the sensemaking process includes parsing through a continuous flow of raw inputs, bracketing perceived interruptions, and extracting them.

Extracted Cues. Sensemaking is focused by extracted cues pulled from a continuous flow of inputs that in part are used to develop a sense of what has just occurred (Weick, 1995). Cues are important because they are central to understanding what people notice (Starbuck & Milliken, 1988). Cues prompt the sensemaker to bracket and extract experiences that stand out. Cues are coupled with previous experiences to help make sense of an event or experience. Weick (1995) stated:

> the combination of a past moment + connection + present moment of
> experience creates a meaningful definition of the present situation…If
> a person can construct a relation between these two moments, meaning
> is created…the content of sensemaking is to be found in the frames
> and categories that summarize past experience, in the cues and labels
> that snare specifics of present experience, and in the ways these two
> settings of experience are connected. (p. 111)

The cues extracted by an actor have significant implications for how he or she will make sense of a situation.

Plausibility. Sensemaking is about an actor being able to develop a reasonable explanation for what they have experienced Determining what is reasonable is central to sensemaking; accuracy takes a back seat in the process. Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld (2005) suggested that, "to deal with ambiguity, interdependent people search for meaning, settle for plausibility, and move on" (p. 419). Therefore, when we are confused we attempt to reduce ambiguity by constructing a plausible or possible explanation. Plausible explanations don't need to be exact or accurate, but they do need to provide a reasonably possible explanation in order for us to move forward. People need to actually believe what they are seeing and feeling to make sense of an extracted cue. Sensemaking highlights the need people have to make sense of the world in a reasonable but not necessarily accurate manner.

Sensemaking Model

Jennings and Greenwood (2003) adapted a conceptual model of sensemaking that integrated the seven characteristics of sensemaking (Weick, 1979, 1995). This model was organized into four "emphases," ecological change, enactment, selection, and retention. These emphases should not be confused as stages because as Weick (2001) suggested, the properties of sensemaking "do not always occur in lockstep sequence and because more than one emphasis tends to operate at any one point" (p. 96).

In the first emphasis of this model the individual asks the question, "same or different?" If the answer is "same" than the individual continues forward and nothing changes. If the answer is "different," the individual is experiencing a situation of

discrepancy (Orlikowski & Gash, 1994), surprise (Louis, 1980), breakdown (Patriotta, 2003), disconfirmation (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001) opportunity (Dutton, 1993), or interruption (Mandler, 1984) and thus continuity is breached. This moves the sensemaking process forward. As a result of noticing some form of difference, "efforts are made to construct a plausible sense of what is happening" (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005) but first the individual must answer the question, "what is different?" The individual must retrospectively go back and bracket items within their continuous flow of experiences. Once the item or items that are "different" are identified, the actor can then begin to make sense of it.

The second emphasis of this model is enactment, which Weick (1995) described as "the activity of 'making' that which is sensed" (p. 30). Individuals enact their environments by responding to what they perceive as reality. This process plays upon existing structures and experiences in which individuals draw on to shape their behaviors and actions. We act in response to the way we perceive our environment and then attempt to rationalize why we took those actions. These actions in turn effect the environment. Enactment assumes that individuals and the environment are both affected by ecological change and have a reciprocal relationship that creates a constant process of change in both the individual and the environment.

The third emphasis is selection, which is when individuals select meaning retrospectively based on extracted cues. This selection is made based upon the individual's own personal experiences and knowledge. In part, the selection is linked to the actor's identity. The fourth emphasis is retention. The selection is retained and can be utilized in the future to make sense of or predict future events and actions.

However, in order to retain a selection, the selection must be plausible given the personal identity and past experiences of the individual. This retained selection will make sense to the individual given their personal experiences and understandings.

Principal Sensemaking

Only recently has sensemaking theory been utilized to study K-12 public education. Education policy researchers have begun to use sensemaking theory to expand understandings of policy implementation beyond motivation and capacity (Coburn, 2005; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). Recently, researchers have started to focus more on how principals make sense, frame, derive, and interpret the multiple messages, contexts, and threats they receive from their school environments (Anagnostopoulos & Rutledge, 2007; Coburn, 2005; Evans, 2007; Spillane, Diamond, Burch, Hallett, Jitta, & Zoltners, 2002).

A signal in the significance of sensemaking theory to principal leadership may be emerging in a small but growing trend of principal sensemaking studies produced by doctoral students. A search of doctoral dissertation abstracts on ProQuest (PQDT) connected to principal leadership and sensemaking from 1980-2011 revealed 15 dissertations (Blanch, 1989; Callan, 2009; Callison, 2009; Elliott, 2007; Emmil, 2011; Fehsenfeld, 2010; Gorius, 1999; Grodzki, 2011; Grubb, 2006; Howell, 1998; Ikemoto, 2007; Kinoshita, 2007; Meloche, 2006; Pierce, 2009; Saltrick 2010). Nine of the fifteen dissertations have been published in the last five years. None focus on my central questions: How do principals make sense of inclusion in their schools? This finding may indicate that researchers are increasingly becoming interested in

principal sensemaking and that principal sensemaking of inclusion and special education is an understudied area within the research literature.

Principal sensemaking studies have made many contributions to understand how principals think, view themselves, understand, and act in their schools. For example, Evans (2007) examined the ways in which principals defined and made sense of issues of race and demographic change in K-12 public schools. The study highlighted the significance of the social characteristic of sensemaking revealed through principal interactions with the school community and the way the principals constructed their own identity through these interactions. Evans reported that "school leaders … defined and made sense of school situations and issues in ways that they believed reflected organizational ideology, values, or other key features of the school environment" (p. 183). The role identity principal selected and found most reaffirming and the desires of the community had influence on their sensemaking and actions.

The significance of principals' identity construction coupled with the other characteristics of sensemaking has been noted in other studies. Spillane and his colleagues (2002) conducted a 4-year long longitudinal study of elementary school leadership in Chicago Public Schools and found that principals' sensemaking is "situated in their professional biographies, building histories, and roles as intermediaries between the district office and classroom teacher" (p. 731). One example provided in the study was of a newly appointed and unpopular principal, Ms. Wen. Ms. Wen was charged by the district to enact a new accountability policy. She attempted to implement the policy but sensed a great deal of push back from her staff.

She worried about her own legitimacy as a leader and attempted to protect that legitimacy. Finally, she decided to find a balance between the policy, her own beliefs, and the opinions of her teachers. Ms. Wen's decisions and actions were dependent upon many contextual factors and her own identity construction. Spillane et al. concluded:

> Cognizant of teacher resistance coupled with her dependency on them for her legitimacy as a leader, Ms. Wen has to manage a delicate balance between district policies and her desire to improve test scores, on one hand, and the opinions of classroom teachers on the other…the sense that Ms. Wen makes … is a function of multiple overlapping contexts including Chicago School Board policies, the demographics of the neighborhood, the LSC [Local School Councils], Wen's own beliefs and struggle for legitimacy, and the teaching staff's practices and beliefs. Each of these elements makes up a portion of the "sense-making context" …[and] nestled inside this context, Ms. Wen struggles to make sense of policy initiatives while formulating the best route for instructional leadership, a challenge to say the least. (p. 749)

The example of Ms. Wen provides further evidence that principal leadership is driven by a variety of factors in which sensemaking theory helps to illuminate.

Anagnostopoulos and Rutledge (2007) studied how principals make sense of school sanctioning policies linked to NCLB. The researchers did not highlight Weick's (1995, 2001) characteristics of sensemaking in this study. However, they did examine a schema that influenced the way principals made sense of policies and

how principals enacted their environment based on their sense of the problem. Anagnostopoulous and Rutledge found that principals preexisting interpretative schema influenced the way the made sense of challenges and enacted their environment. This study gives further credibility for studying other policies where preexisting schema can influence principal sensemaking and action.

Kioukis (2008) applied a sensemaking conceptual model to study how principals made sense of supplemental educational services (SES) in their underperforming schools. In this study principals made sense of SES policy in different ways. One principal related SES policy to NCLB, which she framed as a negative policy that was burdensome to her school culture. This principal did very little to support the SES policy. Another principal in a different district had experience with SES policy. His sense of SES policy was that it provided the same resources his school provided but outside of the school day. Since he knew his students had academic deficiencies that additional support might remedy, he actively recruited SES providers to his school. This study highlights how different background experiences with SES influenced the way principals made sense of and implemented the policy.

Saltrick (2010) also applied sensemaking theory to study how urban school principals make sense of high-stakes accountability systems. Saltrick found that principal sensemaking is heavily influenced by their professional experiences and beliefs but are also aided by habits of mind, professional relationships, and self-renewal strategies. Saltrick found that principals made sense of the complexity of the work by:

adhering to policy mandates and directives, although only to a small degree;

understanding which directives require strict compliance, and which could be

deferred or delegated – and knowing where and who to go to for help in

making sense of the situation and options; and making sense of things

according to their understandings of the local culture and capacity of their

schools. (p. 317-318)

Each of these studies provides justification for applying sensemaking theory

to study principal leadership of other school-based reforms. Researchers have not yet

applied sensemaking theory to understand how principals make sense of inclusion

within the context of their schools. A recent study on principal knowledge of special

education issues (Wakeman et al., 2006) helps to illustrate the additional value a

sensemaking framework can have in examining the variety of experiences that affect

principal decision-making and policy implementation of inclusion. Although the

study did not examine principal sensemaking, the findings revealed that principals,

most of whom reported receiving little or no pre-service education in special

education, are learning about special education issues through their own personal and

professional experiences.

A sensemaking framework lends itself to investigating and understanding the

processes by which a principal learns and acts from experiences. The cognitive

processes of sensemaking are the "missing link" between the school environment, the

principal, and his/her experiences and the enactment of school leadership.

Sensemaking theory provides an appropriate theoretical framework for understanding

how principals make sense of changes and enact an inclusion policy in their schools

and can contribute to principal leadership research in two ways. First, it can help identify key variables related to school organizational environment that effect the way principals perceive themselves, students with disabilities, and inclusion policy. Second, it can help illuminate and describe the cognitive factors that are important to a principal when inclusion policy signals are being pushed out to schools from the central office.

Chapter 3: Design and Methodology

In this chapter, I discuss the research design and methods used during this study. I will begin by presenting the research questions that guided this study. Next, I will outline the research design and my rationale for choosing to conduct a qualitative, multi-case study approach. Then, I will discuss the data collection and analysis methods I utilized. Finally, I will conclude this chapter by discussing validity, transferability, and the ethical issues I addressed.

Research Questions

I had a longstanding interest in how urban principals navigate through the complexity of their school and district – particularly how principals come to understand policies and reforms and implement them in their schools. I decided that my dissertation would focus on the principal's experiences, perspectives, and voice and not on policy implementation. Ultimately, I decided sensemaking theory (Weick, 1995, 2001; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005) would be the lens in which I would study a reform or program in a school. In this study, I explored how principals made sense of a given policy. My interest in inclusion and my experience working in school districts struggling to include students with disabilities prompted me to look at how principals make sense of inclusion in their school.

In this study, I sought to answer one main research question: How do urban elementary school principals make sense of inclusion? I also sought to answer the following sub questions:

1) What are the factors the influence principal sensemaking of inclusion?

2) What roles do principals play as the make sense of inclusion and interact with their school's organizational environment?

Research Design

In this section I will describe my choice of research methodologies and case study approach and provide a rationale for my choices. My methodological decisions were based on prior research, the type of data I needed to collect given my research question and conceptual framework, and preexisting standards of research.

Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

I was interested in how principals make sense of the inclusion in their schools. I was lead to this interest by reviewing a body of literature on principal attitudes and perspectives of inclusion and special education. Scores of studies have surveyed principal perceptions of inclusion, special education, students with disabilities and different disability types (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1999; Cook, Semmel, & Gerver, 1999; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Praisner, 2003; Villa et al., 1996; Wakeman, et.al, 2006). These studies have controlled for principal race, gender, training and education, and experience.

Researchers have extended findings from the existing survey research on principal attitudes of inclusion by utilizing interviews, focus groups, and observations to further understand principal perceptions and practices of inclusion. (Bentolila, 2010; Daunarummo, 2010; Johnson, 2011; Schoger, 2007). I conducted this study to extend the current literature by applying sensemaking theory to principal leadership

of inclusion. I reviewed literature on qualitative research and different approaches to qualitative research in order to develop my study. I found no exact or precise formula for conducting my study. Instead, I found that qualitative research is a thoughtful process that requires the researcher to make a number of decisions to inform his or her study and that this process continues throughout the course of the research.

In order to be informed as a researcher I conducted a review of literature on the qualitative approach. In my review of qualitative research I found a number of descriptions of qualitative methodology. Below is Table 1 that provides definitions and explanations of qualitative research that were relevant to my study.

Table 1. Definitions of Qualitative Research

Author	Definition
Denzin &Lincoln (2003)	Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. … Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials … that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. (p. 5)
Marshall & Rossman (2006)	pragmatic, interpretive, and grounded in the lived experiences of people (p. 2).

Maxwell (2005)	Quantitative and qualitative researchers tend to ask different kinds of casual questions. Qualitative researchers tend to be interested in whether and to what extent variance in x causes variance in y. Qualitative researchers, on the other hand, tend to ask how x plays a role in causing y, what the process is that connects x and y. (p.23)
Shank's (2002)	Qualitative research is a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning (p. 5).

I found that qualitative research could also be defined by how it differs from quantitative research. Quantitative researchers are most interested in measuring causal relationships while qualitative researchers are most interested in "how humans arrange themselves and their settings and how inhabitants of these settings make sense of their surroundings through symbols, rituals, social structures, social roles, and so forth (Berg, 2007, p. 8). After reviewing the literature on qualitative methodologies I confirmed my decision of conducting a qualitative study to answer my research question. However, I still needed to select the appropriate approach to conducting my study.

Rational for Qualitative Case Study

I selected a qualitative multiple case study approach because I was interested in how principals make sense of inclusion in their schools. Sensemaking can be described as a human cognitive process in which individuals and groups construct reality from an ongoing flow of events. According to Yin (2009), case studies are a preferred approach when attempting to answer "how" or "why" questions regarding a

particular phenomenon. Bodgan and Biklen (2003) provided a simpler definition of case study: "a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event" (p. 54).   Often, the case study will consist of one or a few in-depth, illustrative cases (Hagan, 2006).   Case study approach fit my aim, which was to understand how principals make sense of inclusion in their school.

Many decisions need to be made after a researcher selects the case study approach.   Case studies are classified by size of the case, whether the case involves an individual, several individuals, a group, a program, or an activity (Creswell, 2007). Case studies can also be classified based on their purpose. Berg (2007) identified three case study design types: exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive. Exploratory studies are typically utilized as a pilot study to help the researcher develop a research project. Explanatory studies are often used to examine a plurality of influences within a given case, which can provide causal explanations (Berg, 2007). Descriptive case studies help to describe a phenomenon. Each of these case study types can be single-case or multi-case study. In addition, each of these case study types bound the study by time and place and can utilize multiple sources of data.

This study can be classified as an explanatory multi-case study because I examined the way five principals made sense of inclusion individually (bounded by the school) and across one school district (i.e., five principals in five different schools, in one district). To be clear, this study was not about school context or inclusion policy implementation even though these are important components of principal sensemaking and the study.

The cases are also bounded by time (data were collected between September 2010 and June 2011) and place (the elementary schools and school district in which each of the principals worked). The study drew on multiple sources of data. Interviews with principals were the primary data source. Observations were conducted and field notes were analyzed. Documents were collected and analyzed.

Assumptions

Qualitative researchers position themselves closely to participants, conduct their studies in the field and then reflect on their own assumptions, and actively report their values and feelings (Creswell, 2007). My research was guided by certain assumptions. Creswell (2007) identified five assumptions: (a) ontological: the nature of reality; (b) epistemological: the relationship between the researcher and that being researched; (c) axiological: the role of values; (d) rhetorical: the language of the research; and (e) methodological: the process of research.

I considered these assumptions in the process of completing this study. I was guided by my literature review to assume that principal sensemaking is influenced by the principals' lived experiences and organizational environment. I assumed that different settings and experiences influenced principals' cognitive processes of sensemaking. I privileged the voices of the principals in the data collection and analysis processes. However, I recognized that while I privileged principal voices, my own values and biases in part shaped the study's findings. Therefore, I sought to be reflective and question my own assumptions.

I also assumed that the principal voices could not be understood outside of the context of the school and district they work within. These assumptions came from

my main research question that directed my examination of how principals make sense of inclusion and the influences that their lived experiences and organizational environments had on their sensemaking. Therefore, my research took place within the school.

Site Selection

The study was situated in five schools within one urban public school district located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The site was a realistic site to conduct a study on principal sensemaking. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006) a realistic site is where:

 (a) entry is possible; (b) there is a high probability that a rich mix of the processes, people, programs, interactions, and structures of interest is present; (c) the researcher is likely to be able to build trusting relations with the participants in the study; (d) the study can be conducted and reported ethically; and (e) data quality and credibility of the study are reasonably assured. (p. 62)

Access to research sites and participants in the school district was facilitated because at the time of the study I had worked in the school district for over three years and I had served as a central office administrator and school administrator. I discussed the proposed study with the district office prior to submitting a research request and received positive feedback. I was asked by the district to complete the district's procedures for applying for research. Entry was granted by the school district for this study.

The site had a rich mixture of schools, principals, and students with different programs and reforms. In school year 2010-2011, the school district had over 75 elementary schools serving over forty-five thousand students of different racial and socio-economic backgrounds. The pseudonym for the school district is Essex City Public Schools (ECPS). Table 2 indicates the student demographic breakdown for the district.

Table 2. ECPS School District Demographics

Category	School Year 2010-2011 Percentage
African-American	69%
Hispanic	13%
White	16%
Other Ethnicities	2%
Special Education	18%
English Language Learners	9%
Free and Reduced Meals	61%

Elementary schools across the district were extremely diverse and varied from location to location. Some elementary schools are extremely high performing while others are deemed failing year after year. In school year 2010-2011, elementary school students in grade 3-5 scored forty-two percent proficient or advanced on the state mathematics assessment and forty-three percent proficient or advanced on the state reading assessment. Schools within the district ranged from below ten percent

to above ninety-five percent proficient or advanced on both state assessments. In this study, state assessment scores range from below twenty five percent proficient or advanced to above ninety percent proficient or advanced on both state reading and mathematics assessments.

The proportion of students with disabilities also varied from school location. Across the district, approximately eighteen percent of students had a disability according to IDEA. Some of the elementary schools had high proportions of students with disabilities while others did not. In this study, Dewey ES had four percent of their student population identified as having a disability. Howell ES had nineteen percent of their student population identified as having a disability. Some of the variation between special education populations can be explained by certain schools hosting programs for students with disabilities. In this study, two of the five schools hosted at least one type of special education program that accepts students from outside of their neighborhood. Howell ES has a program for students with autism and a program for students with intellectual disabilities. Martin ES has a program for students with emotional disturbance.

The structures and policies of the SEA and LEA have created a site with a rich mix of school policies and programs. The SEA and LEA inclusion policies were vague, broad, and contradictory. Certain aspects of the policy restated text directly from IDEA. The SEA inclusion policy defined inclusion as:

> An environment in which all children, including those with significant
> disabilities, have an equal opportunity to receive a high quality instruction in
> the general education classroom, to the maximum extent possible, with the

necessary supplemental aids and services the child needs to be successful in

the general education classroom. Placement in an inclusive environment must

be made available to every child with a disability. A general education

classroom is inappropriate only if the child cannot achieve positive learning

outcomes while receiving needed supplementary aids and supports services.

Positive learning outcomes are measured by progress toward the goals of the

child's IEP and not mastery of the general education curriculum. The LEA

should not wait for the child to fail in the general education classroom before

considering an alternative placement. (SEA, Inclusion Policy, 2009)

The district's policy was no less confusing. The district's webpage defined

inclusion as: "a way of thinking, a mindset, where teachers and staff take

responsibility for all students – including those with special needs (LEA Webpage,

2011). The webpage also stated:

[ECPS] has no intention of arbitrarily placing students in environments that

can't properly support them. We will not be moving students into classrooms

that do not provide the necessary supports for their success. As the name

suggests, special education is not a one size fits all approach; each student's

plan will be individualized to his/her needs. (ECPS Webpage, 2011)

The vague, broad, and contradictory policies enabled principals to shape

inclusion in their own ways which created an interesting site location to study

principal sensemaking. Principals have not been given guidance in how to structure

their inclusion program. Yet, principals in the district are motivated to implement

inclusion because they are partially evaluated on the inclusiveness of their school.

ECPS measures the inclusiveness of each school along with other special education timeliness measurements. These measurements are tied to a principal's evaluation.

Participant Selection Criteria

After securing IRB approval and approval from ECPS, I began the process of recruiting elementary school principals for their participation in this study. First, I emailed a recruitment letter to all elementary school principals in ECPS (approximately 75 principals). In total I received 33 responses. Seventeen principals responded that they would be interested in participating in the study. Seven principals responded that they would not be interested in participating in the study. Six principals stated they would participate only if I absolutely needed them to participate otherwise they were too busy. Three principals stated they would get back to me at a later date but did not. I decided not to select any principal who stated they were busy. I selected from the seventeen principals that indicated their interest.

I utilized a stratified purposeful sampling strategy to select five principals after identifying a pool of possible willing participants from the recruitment email. A stratified purposeful sample supports comparisons across cases (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994). I used publicly available information provided by the school district and the state education agency to select principals.

The literature review for this study helped in focusing the sample selection. One subgroup I created was the school's racial composition and socio-economic status. Researchers have found that minority students, particularly African-American males and students receiving free and reduced meals (FARMS) remained highly segregated (Blanchett, 2009; Carter & Hughes, 2006; Harry & Klinger, 2006; Losen

& Orfield, 2002; Salisbury, 2006; USDOE, 2006). I created this subgroup to compare and contrast principal sensemaking of inclusion across schools with different racial and socio-economic student populations.

A second subgroup I created to select participants was school improvement status. Under NCLB, schools that fail to meet AYP over multiple years face sanctions and are placed into a school improvement status. The research literature provided insight into how challenging school contexts and experiences in areas of special education can influence principal sensemaking. The literature directed me to select schools with different AYP statuses in order to be able to compare and contrast principal sensemaking in different school contexts.

A third subgroup I created to select participants was based on principal experiences. Research on principal perceptions of inclusion had mixed results. However, some studies found that principal experience or training was related to whether or not principals viewed inclusion as positive or negative (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1999; Cook, Semmel, & Gerver, 1999; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Praisner, 2003; Villa et al., 1996). I selected principals with different experiences and training to compare and contrast the possible influence these attributes have on principal sensemaking.

The final subgroup emerged during the study. Two of the five schools selected for this study had special education programs for students with Autism, intellectual disabilities, and emotional disturbances. I did not realize these schools had such programs until after the first interview when principals described their schools. The district or schools did not provide this information on their websites.

I selected the five participants. Then, I spoke with each principal in person or via

telephone to describe the study in greater detail and answer any questions. The

principals asked questions about the amount of time the study would take and their

role and also about the purpose of the study. Table 3 provides a profile of the five

principals who participated in my study.

Table 3. Participant Profile Data

Principal/ School	Principal Experience *	Free and Reduced Meals	Racial Composition	Test Scores	School Improvement Status **	Special Ed. Population
Mrs. Smith *Dewey ES*	17 years	Less than 5% FARMS	Above 75% Caucasian	Above 85% proficient	Met AYP	4%
Ms. Violet *Howell ES*	5 years	Above 90% FARMS	Above 95% African-American	Below 40% proficient	Restructuring II	19%
Ms. Allen *Martin ES*	3 years	Above 75% FARMS	Above 90% African-American	Below 40% proficient	Need of Improvement Year I	12%
Mr. Oliver *Wilson ES*	6 years	Above 75% FARMS	Above 40% Hispanic; Above 25% African American	Below 50% proficient	Need of Improvement Year II	6%
Mrs. Sorenson *Kraft ES*	2 years	Above 75% FARMS	Above 95% African-American	Below 40% proficient	Restructuring I	9%

*Years as principal
**School Improvement Status According to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

Met AYP: The school meets all AYP goals.
Need of Improvement Year I: The school has failed to meet AYP goals for three
consecutive years.
Need of Improvement Year II: The school has failed to meet AYP goals for four
consecutive years.
Restructuring I: The school has failed to meet AYP goals for five consecutive

years

Restructuring II: the school has failed to meet AYP goals for six consecutive years

Data Collection Methods

The data collection process was guided by my case study methodology, qualitative interview methodology (Berg, 2007; Bodkin & Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005; Yin, 2009), and a review of existing studies in the fields of sensemaking (Blanch, 1989; Callan, 2009; Callison, 2009; Emmil, 2011; Elliott, 2007; Fehsenfeld, 2010; Gorius, 1999; Grodzki, 2011; Grubb, 2006; Kinoshita, 2007; Howell, 1998; Ikemoto, 2007; Meloche, 2006; Pierce, 2009; Saltrick 2010) and principal leadership and perspectives of inclusion (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1999; Cook, Semmel, & Gerver, 1999; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Praisner, 2003; Villa et al., 1996). This study drew data from multiple sources. Data collection in case studies is typically extensive and draws from multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2007). Yin (2009) suggested six major sources of data that can be used in case studies: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts. In this study I relied on three of these sources: interviews, direct observations, and documentation.

My decision to rely on these three data sources was driven by the need to explore the specific context of the case and what other researchers suggested in the sensemaking literature. This study was about the principals' lived experiences, not on policy implementation or leadership actions. Interviews and observations were the primary method of data collection because by observing and conversing with principals I was about to learn about how they make sense of their context, their

personal experiences, professional skills, and how these factors influenced their sensemaking of inclusion.

The final data source collected was documents. Document collection consisted of district level documents about special education and inclusion, school data and documents, and agenda items from previous meetings and professional development sessions. I used these documents to help provide direction for interviews and to improve the credibility of interview and observation data and data analysis.

Interviews

Prior to starting data collection, I conducted a pilot interview with a critical friend who is also a principal within ECPS. After completing this interview I transcribed and reviewed the data. Then I reviewed and revised the interview protocol based on the pilot interview and feedback from my critical friend. The experience of conducting a pilot interview prompted me to develop a protocol that enabled the participant and me to have a conversation.

As Table 4 below indicates, the interviews took place in cycles, with the first round occurring from November 2010 through December 2010. The second round of interviews took place at the end of the school year in June 2011. The second interview took place after two observations. The length of time between the interview cycles, in particular the second round of interviews, provided evidence of the impact of studying very busy people. However, interviewing the participants at the end of the school year was beneficial in this study. Principals were in the process

of reflecting on their school year and planning for the next school year. The timing

provided for a rich opportunity to capture the sensemaking of the principal.

Table 4. Participant Interview Venues and Dates

Participant Pseudonym	Interview 1	Interview 2
Mrs. Smith	Date/Time: 12/22/10 at 3:25pm Length: 95 minutes Location: Dewey ES Setting: Mrs. Smith's Office	Date/Time: 6/25/11 at 12:30pm Length: 82 minutes Location: Principal's Academy (PD Site)* Setting: Classroom
Mrs. Allen	Date/Time: 12/13/10 at 10:30am Length: 72 minutes Location: Martin ES Setting: Mrs. Allen's Office	Date/Time: 6/20/11 at 10am Length: 51 minutes Location: Martin ES Setting: Mrs. Allen's Office
Mrs. Sorenson	11/9/10 at 9:30am Length: 94 minutes Location: Kraft ES Setting: Mrs. Sorenson's Office	6/20/11 at 2pm Length: 67 minutes Location: Kraft ES Setting: Mrs. Sorenson's Office
Mr. Oliver	Date/Time: 12/16/10 at 9:00am Length: 78 minutes Location: Wilson ES Setting: Mr. Oliver's Office	Date/Time: 6/25/11 at 3:30pm Length: 56 minutes Location: Principal's Academy (PD Site)* Setting: Classroom
Ms. Violet	Date/Time: 11/29/10 at 3:30pm Length: 88 minutes Location: Howell ES Setting: Ms. Violet's Office	Date/Time: 6/19/11 at 2:45pm Length: 73 minutes Location: Alternative school setting ** Setting: Office

* Mrs. Smith and Mr. Oliver both requested to have final interview at district wide
principal professional development location due to their busy schedules.
** Ms. Violet requested to have final interview at an alternate school location

I used interviews as the primary method of data collection to understand how

principals made sense of inclusion. I selected interviews because they are essential

sources of case study information (Yin, 2009). I utilized a dramaturgical interview

approach to conduct a very fluid and flexible interviews that enabled me to establish

rapport and positive feelings between researcher and the participant (Berg, 2007).

Interviews utilizing a dramaturgical approach and guided questions are often more

conversational and fluid which can be more useful in case studies (Berg, 2007; Yin,

2009). The interviews were conducted as conversations between two people and

focused on the participant's perceptions and experiences. Guiding questions helped

direct the interview rather than a pre-determined set of structured questions.

The dramaturgical interview approach was focused by guiding questions and

prompts captured the sensemaking and the lived experiences of the participants by

allowing the participant to tell his or her story without much structure from the

interviewer. For example, I asked each principal the following question: "Can you

provide me with an example or examples of a student who struggled academically or

behaviorally in an inclusion setting? What happened?" Each principal responded

with long and rich descriptions to this question. The conversation I had with Ms.

Violet over this question consisted of twenty-three paragraphs and consisted of over

one thousand words. Mrs. Sorenson and I had a conversation that consisted of forty-

eight paragraphs and over sixteen-hundred words.

The first interview protocol (See Appendix 1) included five introductory

questions to help start the interview and build rapport between the researcher and

participant. The introductory questions were followed by six guiding questions that

were linked to the conceptual framework of this study. Each guiding question had

additional prompts that helped lead the conversation between the participant and me.

I utilized the prompts to guide the interviews and to keep focused on pursuing a

consistent line of inquiry. The questions and prompts were linked to Weick's (1995) seven characteristics of sensemaking and to the process in which sense is made.

The second interview protocol (Appendix 2) was completed after the first interview and two observations of the principal in their school. I developed a revised interview protocol based on a review of the data collected. The second interview protocol prompted principals to provide detailed examples of cases of inclusion, implementation, and successes and barriers to inclusion. I developed prompts linked to the conceptual framework to enable principals to reflect on their sensemaking and tell their story.

During each of the interviews I used an interview protocol and took notes. For example, in my first interview with Ms. Violet (11/29/10), stated that her goal was to exit students from special education before they left her school. I made a note on my interview protocol and later used this data to develop a prompt on the second interview protocol to get greater detail about her goal to exit students. In Ms. Smith's first interview (12/22/10), she stated that her school's foreign language population and ELL teachers helped to promote a vision of inclusion for all students. I followed up with other principals in this study about if their ELL program contributes to a vision of inclusion in any way.

All interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants. I transcribed each of the interviews and entered the transcripts and notes into NVivo 9 for analysis. I printed backup copies of all the transcripts and notes and saved them to a flash drive. Each saved file has been dated and named using pseudonyms in order to protect the anonymity of the participants, school, and district.

Observations

I conducted two rounds of observations. The two rounds of observations took place after the first interview and prior to the second interview. As Table 5 below indicates, the observations took place in cycles, with the first round occurring from March 2011 through May 2011. The second round of observations took place at the end of the school year in June 2011.

Table 5. Observation Venues, Dates, and Purposes

Participant Pseudonym	Observation 1	Observation 2
Mrs. Smith	Date: 4/1/11 at 1:30pm Length: 100 minutes Location: Dewey ES Setting: SEC's Office Purpose: Discuss special education services for ELL student in preparation for an upcoming meeting with parent and attorney.	Date: 5/31/11 at 1:00pm Length: 135 minutes Location: Dewey ES Setting: SEC's Office Purpose: Discuss a special education student who was removed from the school after the parent filed a complaint. The team was preparing for a scheduled hearing with a hearing officer.
Mrs. Allen	Date: 5/16/11 at 11:30am Length: 75 minutes Location: Martin ES Setting: SEC's Office Purpose: Special education team meeting to discuss upcoming IEP and MDT meetings.	Date: 6/15/11 at 12pm Length: 45 minutes Location: Martin ES Setting: Mrs. Allen's Office Purpose: Discuss the SEC's final evaluation and expectations for next year.
Mrs. Sorenson	Date: 4/26/11 at 8:50am Length: 100 minutes Location: Kraft ES Setting: Mrs. Sorenson's Office Purpose: Weekly special education team meetings with SEC (also serves as AP) and special education teachers. Mrs. Sorenson also	Date: 6/16/11 at 12pm Length: 90 minutes Location: Kraft ES Setting: Mrs. Sorenson's Office Purpose: End of year special education meeting with special education teachers and SEC.

	provided me with a school tour from classroom to classroom.	
Mr. Oliver	Date: 3/28/11 Length: 76 minutes Location: Wilson ES Setting: Mr. Oliver's Office/Parent Resource room Purpose: Parent of student with IEP asked to meet. Mr. Oliver asked parent if I could sit in. Parent agreed. Also, parent meeting for parents interested in enrolling students in Pre-K program. Mr. Oliver also provided a school tour from classroom to classroom.	Date: 5/12/11 Length: 80 minutes Location: Wilson ES Setting: Conference Room Purpose: Meeting led by SEC to discuss all upcoming IEPs and all students participating in the SST process (a team that meets to develop interventions for students who are struggling behaviorally, academically, or with attendance).
Ms. Violet	Date: 3/15/11 at 7:45am Length: 120 minutes Location: Howell ES Setting: Library/SEC's office Purpose: Ms. Violet went between a meeting of early childhood special education teachers and providers led by an inclusion consultant and a meeting with the SEC and 6th grade team focused on co-teaching and co-planning. Ms. Violet also provided me with a school tour from classroom to classroom.	Date: 5/19/11 at 10am Length: 90 minutes Location: Howell ES Setting: SEC's office Purpose: Special education team meeting with central office staff to discuss the inclusion model at Howell ES in SY 2011-2012.

I paid particular attention to agenda items, length of time spent on agenda items, and dialogue on inclusion, and principal preparation, attention, and participation. I took field notes unless requested not to by the participants. All field notes were written on an observation protocol (Appendix 3), which included the date, time, and place of the observation; specific facts, numbers, and details of what happened; specific words, phrases, summaries of conversations, and insider language;

and questions about events and behaviors that may be useful in follow up observations and interviews (Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein, 2001).

Berg (2007) has identified for distinct elements that go into creating full and detailed field notes. I utilized each of the four elements in my own field notes: 1) cryptic jotting: the researcher captures brief statements, sketches, short notes, and odd terms or phrases heard in the field; 2) detailed descriptions: the researcher undertakes this element upon exiting the field and includes as much texture and detail to the field notes as memory permits including how people appeared, what they said, and what they did during the observation; 3) analytic notes: the researcher jots down ideas that occur during the observation; and 4) subjective reflections: the researcher's personal observations and comments about their feelings while in the field.

I completed my field notes immediately following my exit from each observation setting in order to ensure I didn't forget any ideas, descriptions, and observations and to maintain detailed and accurate field notes. Field notes were often completed inside my car in the parking lot of the school or in any available space at the conclusion of the observation. All field notes have been stored on a word-processing program and entered into NVivo 9 for data analysis. I did not tape record observations or include any student level data, documents, or conversations that occurred during the meeting in my field notes. The observations occurred before and after the first interview to help inform the interviews and document analysis. Permission to observe the participants was agreed upon prior to the observation.

Prior to the first observation, I assumed that each school had a Special Education Coordinator (SEC) and that each principal met with their SEC once a week

to discuss special education compliance and matters of inclusion. My assumptions were not totally accurate because one of the schools in this study (Kraft ES) had cut the SEC position due to budgetary restraints. I also concluded that many principals were not having weekly meetings with their SEC. I came to this conclusion when trying to schedule an observation of the meeting. Some principals stated off the record that they did not conduct a formal weekly meeting with their SEC. My critical friend confirmed that many principals did not conduct these formal meetings. After I recognized that most principals were not meeting with their SECs on a weekly basis I began to discuss with each principal other meetings I could attend. I attended and observed Student Support Team meetings, parent conferences, planning meetings to address due process complaints and hearings, team meetings to discuss upcoming IEP meetings, and special education planning meetings for the following year. The principal and SEC were present in all meetings I observed.

The SEC was a 12-month administrative level employee who directly reports to the principal of the school. The job responsibilities of the SEC included: 1) monitoring special education data points measured by the school district such as IEP timeliness, assessment timeliness, due process complaints, and school inclusivity; 2) providing professional development for special education and general education teachers within the school; 3) evaluating special education teacher IEP drafts and documents; 4) participating in all IEP meetings as the LEA representative; and 4) attending monthly ECPS trainings at on off site location.

These observations were an essential data source because they provided me the opportunity to be in the natural setting of the case. Data collected from

observations helped to add new dimensions of understanding to the context of the study or the phenomenon being studied (Yin, 2009). The observations also enabled me to triangulate data uncovered in interviews and document analysis (Creswell, 2007). For example, Mrs. Sorenson referenced herself as an expert in special education and double certified in special education and early childhood education (11/9/10). Later, in the second observation (6/16/11) Mrs. Sorenson conducted a special education team meeting where she referenced aspects of IDEA verbatim and handcrafted the master schedule for special education teachers on a white board based on enrollment projects. She also answered a variety of teachers' questions about testing accommodations, the least restrictive environment component of IDEA, and referenced special education deadlines the teachers needed to meet by the end of the year. From this observation I was able to triangulate that Mrs. Sorenson was knowledgeable in special education and actively involved in the management of special education.

Document Collection

The documents collected and analyzed in this study were limited. The documents included a meeting agenda, school level data on AYP, demographics, LEA and SEA inclusion policies, and other publically reported data. During the observations, I was granted access to some student level data, evaluations, and other reports during certain observations or interviews. I did not include any of these data in the document collection or analysis. The documents collected for data analysis are provided in Table 6 and were used to supplement interview and observation data and help to refine the interview protocols.

Table 6. Documents Collected for Analysis

Document	Provided by	Purpose
Special Education Team Meeting Agenda	Mrs. Sorenson during Observation 2 (6/16/11)	A meeting agenda of school year close out, a review of practices, and proposed changes for next school year.
Dewey ES School Report Card	ECPS Website (Publicly Available)	Data on school demographics, attendance, school performance, and other data relevant to the school.
Martin ES School Report Card	ECPS Website (Publicly Available)	Data on school demographics, attendance, school performance, and other data relevant to the school.
Kraft ES School Report Card	ECPS Website (Publicly Available)	Data on school demographics, attendance, school performance, and other data relevant to the school.
Wilson ES School Report Card	ECPS Website (Publicly Available)	Data on school demographics, attendance, school performance, and other data relevant to the school.
Howell ES School Report Card	ECPS Website (Publicly Available)	Data on school demographics, attendance, school performance, and other data relevant to the school.
ECPS Inclusion Policy Statement	ECPS Website (Publicly Available)	Provided a broad definition of inclusion and highlighted inclusion may not be appropriate for all students.
SEA Inclusion/LRE Policy	SEA Website (Publicly Available)	Provided a broad definition of inclusion with terminology very similar to IDEA.

I prepared for interviews by reviewing all publically available documents on a school's demographics, AYP and school restructuring status, and school programming. Document analysis can provide the researcher with important knowledge of history and context in a specific setting (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). I used these data to provide more targeted prompts, questions, and follow up questions in interviews.

Data Analysis

In this section, I describe the ways in which I analyzed the data collected from this study. Since this study was a qualitative study, the processes of data analysis unfolded throughout the course of the study. I simultaneously began analyzing data once data collection started. The data collection process was influenced by this analysis. I changed or revised interview protocols and probed for different concepts or ideas based on early analysis. However, for purposes of structure and form I choose to organize this section based on Marshall and Rossman's (2006) seven analytic phases of data analysis: (a) organizing the data; (b) immersion in the data; (c) generating categories and themes; (d) coding the data; (e) offering interpretations through analytic memos; (f) searching for alternative understandings; and (g) writing the report.

I collected interview transcripts and audio files, observation notes, and documents. I had ten audio files from ten interviews. All audio files of interviews were transcribed and uploaded onto Nvivo 9. Each transcription was edited to remove all names and replaced with pseudonyms. All interview transcripts and audio files were stored in one folder labeled "interviews" in Nvivo 9. All observation field notes were typed and uploaded into Nvivo 9. I had ten observation field notes uploaded onto NVivo 9. All observation field notes were stored in one folder labeled "observations" in NVivo 9. All documents were uploaded into NVivo 9 and stored in one folder labeled "documents." All files were backed up on a separate computer and on a flash drive.

The data collected from interviews alone were voluminous. The interview transcripts exceeded 500 pages. I used a systematic approach to reviewing each piece of data. I read through each transcript at least five times while listening to the audio file. The main purpose of the reading and listening to the transcripts was for me to become intimately acquainted with the data. I used the opportunity to make corrections to the transcripts where words were misspelled and began preliminary analysis. I noted themes, key ideas, or concepts and highlighted key quotes that appeared interesting and warranted further review. I kept short notes and also listed ideas for follow up questions and probes for future interviews. I followed a similar procedure for reviewing the field notes and documents collected in the study.

In reading and listening to transcripts I began noticing a few simple patterns and themes. First, principals talked about inclusion in different ways within the same interviews. Second, principals talked about implementing inclusion in different ways. Finally, many of the characteristics of sensemaking were present in the data. I began memoing about the different experiences of each principal and the way they described their implementation of inclusion in their schools. I began to think about categories and themes after listening to audio files and reading transcripts, documents, and field notes.

I began questioning my data and reflecting back on my conceptual framework. I thought about potential patterns, themes, and categories in my data. I recognized that I needed to take a deductive approach to analysis. Patton (2002) described deductive analysis as analytic categories that are tied to an existing framework. I stepped back from the data and reviewed my literature review and recent literature in

the area of sensemaking and inclusion. I generated an analytic plan (Appendix X) in the form of a matrix to generate new insights and to further explore the data. I developed an analytic matrix for inclusion and for sensemaking theory. From these matrices I began thinking about potential codes.

I began the coding process using Nvivo 9. I determined I would begin the coding process using big buckets to first identify Weick's seven characteristics of sensemaking. When I coded data I captured the question stem and response. I used my analytic plan to identify data to be coded for a sensemaking characteristic. For example, Mrs. Smith was discussing her school's inclusion program and the relationship between her leadership style and the progress the school has made toward inclusion. She stated:

> I think because I am a leader that is – that generally puts what's in the best interest of children before the rules and the regulations and the sort of programmatic pieces, I think, again, in the building I lead for conversations about kids that are just real and not defined, again, by a diagnosis or by a status or by something else. And so in that regard, I think we do have this very sort of round, holistic way serving kids, and I think that that benefits our special education students. (Smith Interview, Interview 2)

I coded this segment of the interview as identity construction. Identity construction is about who we think we are as organizational actors how this conception of self enables us enact our environment, which affects what outsiders think we are and how they treat us, which stabilizes or destabilizes our identity (Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 416). Ms. Smith found success with inclusion and her staff had

bought into her open approach to leadership and her vision of a holistic and inclusion school.

After coding all transcripts, observations, and documents I reviewed all data coded. Using Nvivo 9, I determined that some characteristics of sensemaking were more prevalent than others. Below, Table 7 indicates the codes and number of times coded at each sensemaking characteristic.

Table 7. References by Sensemaking Characteristic

Sensemaking Characteristic	References
Enactment	46
Extracted Cues	67
Identity Construction	63
Ongoing	37
Plausibility	47
Retrospect	32
Social	51

I recognized that identity construction and enactment had the greatest amount of references. I revisited my research question after reviewing the number of references coded for each sensemaking characteristic. I began to construct questions for possible queries to run in Nvivo 9. I looked for patterns of how different characteristics of sensemaking interacted as principals made sense of inclusion. I asked myself, what are the different roles or identities that principals take as they make sense of inclusion? Do certain extracted cues or social stimuli trigger principals to take on these roles? When a principal is engaged in a certain role or identity, in what ways does he or she enact the environment? I also coded the interviews by the questions in each interview protocol. I used the framework matrices tool in NVivo 9

after each question and response was coded in Nvivo 9. The framework matrices tool allowed me to look across each principal for each interview question and answer. I was able to compare and contrast principal responses to the same questions. Coding the data and using the framework matrices tool enabled me to lay out the context of the study. I was also able to compare and contrast different principal actions and understandings of inclusion. This process provided a solid foundation for me to interpret the data in a meaningful way.

An important process for me in this study was memoing. The memoing process enabled me to move beyond the obvious to a greater understanding of what was in my data. I wrote memos for each sensemaking characteristic and for each interview question. The memos for each sensemaking characteristic were extremely useful. The process of writing memos for each sensemaking characteristic was deductive and incorporated multiple steps.

First, I created memos for each of the characteristics of sensemaking. Second, I reviewed each quote coded at a specific sensemaking characteristic and interpreted the meaning of the quote in the memo. Third, I created a section for each principal within the memo and reread each quote and interpretation. I wrote a summary for the sensemaking characteristic for each principal based on each quote and interpretation. Finally, I reviewed each principal summary and compared and contrasted the way principals used the sensemaking characteristic to make sense of inclusion. I repeated this process for each sensemaking characteristic.

The process of writing analytic memos on each of the sensemaking characteristics enabled me to analyze and interpret my data. I began to identify

specific understandings based on the analysis. I realized I had become deeply

involved in the process of analysis and may be missing alternate understandings of

my data. I recognized I needed to take a step back and search for alternative

understandings of my data. I took two steps to help search for alternate

understandings. I involved a critical friend to review my data and findings and

moved back to reading transcripts and listening to audio files to make sure I was

questioning my own interpretations.

I wrote the report by organizing and synthesizing the findings and

interpretations in my analytic memos. I also used the framework matrices tools in

NVivo 9 to help me lay out the policy context and school context for each principal. I

continually read and revised my report to eliminate redundant findings and

information and to provide evidence and support to key findings.

Standards of Quality and Validity

In this section I will discuss how I addressed the standards of quality and

validity in this study. Researchers have provided standards of quality and validity for

qualitative studies. However, the quality and validity of a study cannot be determined

by following a regimented set of procedures or guidelines. Quality and validity

depend on the relationship of the researchers conclusions about reality and cannot be

assured by any research method (Maxwell, 2005).

Quality

Lincoln (1995) identified eight standards for evaluating the quality of

qualitative research. I attempted to meet each of these eight standards in this study:

1.) standards set in the inquiry community; 2.) positionality; 3.) community; 4.) participant voice; 5.) critical subjectivity; 6.) reciprocity; 7.) respect, and; 8.) sharing privileges. I attempted to meet the standards set by the inquiry community by reviewing a variety of studies in the field of sensemaking, principal leadership, and special education and inclusion. I was directed by my review of these studies to follow the guidelines established by researchers in order to legitimate my research. The process of reviewing studies started during the research proposal phase and continued throughout the course of the study. I frequently revisited my literature review to make methodological decisions in my study.

My position in this study was important. I was an insider within the school district and had relationships with many upper level central office administrators. When I developed this study I was employed in the district as a central office administrator in the Office of Special Education. I was recruited by the Deputy Superintendent of Special Education and developed some of the policies described in the study. I had frequent interactions with local superintendents, principals and special education coordinators around the special education policies described. In some instances, I directed principals and school staff to follow protocols and procedures in district policies.

My relationship to the Deputy Superintendent of Special Education and my position in the Office of Special Education was known by each of the participants in the study. When I began data collection, my position in the district had changed. I moved to a school leadership position in one of the district's middle schools. When I became a school administrator I was charged with implementing many of the policies

I had developed as a central office administrator. I spent time in trainings with some of the participants in this study. I used memos to capture my own stance, biases, and thoughts about my own position throughout the course of the study.

I believed that my first hand experience as a central office administrator and school administrator enabled me to develop interview protocols that would provide rich data for the study. I also acknowledged that my own personal background and experiences may have influenced the questions I asked, what I observed, and how I interpreted the data. I wrote memos throughout the course of this study to check and reflect on my own assumptions. I also wrote on how my positions in the district influenced the participants in the study. I believed that being a school administrator during the data collection process helped establish trust with the participants. I cited text from interview transcripts to capture honesty and authenticity in my report in order to ensure my own position and experiences wasn't biasing the voice of the participants.

I acknowledged the importance of conducting research in the community in which sensemaking took place. I was interested in how principals made sense of inclusion within their schools. The research took place in an urban public school district and primarily within the principal's school. The importance of this research will be shared with the school district.

One of the main purposes of this study was to give voice to principals. Principals were interviewed and observed and I cited the principals throughout the text of the report. I wanted to privilege the voice of the principal but realized that I may bring my own baggage or issues from my job as a school administrator. I

attempted to meet the standard of critical subjectivity by being aware of my role and continuously reflecting on my own psychological and emotional states before, during, and after the research process. I often wrote memos about my own feelings and ideas. For example, I took time to reflect and memo prior to going to Kraft ES for an observation on April 26, 2011 because one of my school's students was murdered earlier in the week. I had felt very disengaged and distant from the importance of my job and from this study.

I attempted to establish reciprocity with my participants. I recognized the participants in my study were colleagues and hardworking individuals. I did not know them prior to the study but recognized that our relationship was important for my research and as an administrator in the district. I shared transcripts with all participants to ensure they were comfortable with the progress of the study. I kept in contact with all participants throughout the study to build and support a trusting relationship.

I attempted to respect my participants during and after the study. The participants in my study were extremely busy and under tremendous stress. The participants were always willing to schedule interviews and observations to fit my schedule. I did not take advantage of their kindness. I respected our relationship by showing respect for their time and energy. We postponed meetings due to unforeseen events that occurred at different schools and scheduled meetings around certain deadlines principals in the district were held accountable to. For example, December 1, 2010 was a major deadline in the district for principals to complete their staff evaluations. We planned the first round of interviews to be completed two weeks

prior to the deadline in order to ensure they had adequate time to complete their evaluations. We also did not plan any contact during the two weeks in April when the state assessments were being conducted.

I recognized that the participants in this study afforded me the opportunity to complete this dissertation. I am truly indebted to each of the participants. I do not anticipate receiving any monetary rewards from the completion of this study. However, any rewards I may receive I will share with the study's participants.

Validity

All qualitative research must address questions of validity. Maxwell (2005) defined validity as "the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account" (p. 106). In a qualitative study, the use of the term validity does not represent an absolute truth, rather it gives both the researcher and consumer of research some grounds for distinguishing accounts that are credible from accounts that are not (Maxwell, 2005). Maxwell (2005) has identified two specific validity threats: researcher bias and reactivity. Researcher bias can influence the data the researcher identifies as important and the conclusions drawn from the study. Reactivity is the possible influence the researcher has on the study.

The validity of a study can be threatened by ignoring discrepant data or by selecting data that fits the researcher' existing theory or preconceptions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Maxwell (2005) suggested that a qualitative researcher must understand their particular values and expectations and how these values and expectations influence the conduct and conclusions of the study. Then the researcher

must explain possible biases and how these biases will be dealt with throughout the process of the study.

I wrote reflective memos to control for my own bias during data collection. I returned to those memos to check my own biases during data analysis. I also used respondent validation to ensure that I captured the participants' voice and did not privilege my own assumptions. Each participant had the opportunity to read all transcripts and review the analysis about their particular case. I also solicited feedback from two critical friends, one who is a principal within the school district Critical feedback was an important part of checking my own biases. I quickly came to the assumption that principals were not conducting weekly meetings with their SECs because my participants kept trying to invite me to a meeting other than the weekly principal-SEC meeting. My critical friend, who is also a principal in the district, shared with me that she rarely met with her SEC on a weekly basis but instead checked in with him as she felt needed. My critical friend also stated that she had asked other principals and they had responded that they typically did not meet weekly with their SEC.

Reactivity is the influence of the researcher on the research. In a qualitative study, the goal of the researcher is not to eliminate this influence, but rather to understand it and use it to our advantage (Maxwell, 2005). Some reactivity is unavoidable given the background of the researcher, participants, and what is being studied. The type of data collected provides some insights into how the research can be influenced by the researcher. In this study, I collected interview data, observation data, and documents.

I recognized that I have an influence on the participant since I was a school administrator in the school district at the time of the study. Some participants may have felt more trusting of me since I was a colleague while others may not trust me because we share mutual acquaintances and supervisors. When a researcher is a part of the world he or she studies they have a powerful influence on participant.

Participants may have taken for granted that I knew what they were talking about since we shared the same district vocabulary and were knowledgeable about a slew of acronyms (IEP, CAS, AYP, LRE, SES, SBT, PIP, OSE, SST, SEDS, DIBELS, SPDI, TLF). I may have inadvertently led the participants to answer questions in ways that fit my own perspective and experiences. I attempted to maintain neutral ground by providing each principal with an explanation of the purposes and process of the research, explaining and having the participants complete consent forms, and allowing participants to pass over any questions that made them feel uncomfortable. Also, I constructed interview protocols containing non-leading questions to allow participants to provide open-ended responses. I allowed the participants to see copies of their transcripts and allowed them to remove any statement they felt was too revelatory or inappropriate. However, no participant asked me to remove anything from the transcripts. I reflected in a memo to myself that the participants may have been too busy to fully review their transcripts.

My presence during observations may have influenced participants. Becker (1970) found that the researcher has a smaller influence on the participant during observations situated in the research environment) since participants may be more comfortable in their own environment and the naturally occurring phenomena in that

setting can keep their focus away from the researcher. I attempted to maintain neutral ground by utilizing many of the same steps used in the interview process. I explained the purposes and process of the research, participants complete consent forms, and did not tape record observations. I also did not take copious notes during observations. Instead, I focused on listening and jotting down key words and events that occurred. I limited my writing in order to avoid signaling what I felt was important during observations. I strategically avoided places in the room that put me in the middle of a conversation or made my presence highly visible.

Reactivity during document collection was limited. I decided that I would ask participants for copies of any documents present during observations or referenced in interviews. All other documents were collected from the district and state education agency. Most meetings utilized documents that were specific to students (psychological and speech evaluations, IEPs). I did not collect these documents.

I may have influenced the participants in this study due to my different race, ethnicity, age, and gender. The participants and I come from different backgrounds. A number of the principals differed in race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, country of origin, and so on. I am sure that these differences influenced what we said to each other but I did not feel these differences were significant barriers. All of the participants and I were able to build research relationships. All of the participants provided me with full access to their schools and always invited me back at any time. Additionally, each of the participants offered professional advice and support given that during the data collection phase I was in my first year as a school administrator.

I valued their wisdom, knowledge, and support for enabling me to complete this study.

Transferability

Limitations for this study are derived from the conceptual framework and the study's design. Patton (2002) noted, "There is no perfect research design. There are always trade-offs" (p. 223). This study was limited to five principals and their sensemaking of a policy within one school district. Other principals in the same school district or other school districts may make sense of inclusion in different ways. However, the study highlighted the ways in which leaders in a challenging organizational context make sense of a policy.

The purpose of this study was not to evaluate how principals implement special education reform, such as inclusion, in a school. Rather, I intended to identify the factors that influence principal sensemaking of inclusion. The hope is that these findings are transferable to other policies and contexts.

Ethical Issues

Researchers must always be aware of the impacts their research may have on the community and on their participants. Two main concerns lead discussions of ethics in the research arena: voluntary participation and participant safety. Participant engagement in any research should be voluntary and participants must have the right to not participate without fear of retribution. In addition, participants must be well informed about the study in order to give their consent. In this study, each of the participants was informed about the purpose of the study, participation was voluntary,

and participants were required to sign an informed consent form in accordance with the University of Maryland's Institution Review Board (Appendix 4) and the ECPS review board.

The safety of the participants and the school district was protected. Schools and school districts can be very political and high-stakes environments. My description of the district was focused on highlighting the substantial problems within the district but the description was left somewhat broad to ensure the district's anonymity was protected.

I did not record the names of schools or administrators in transcripts of interviews or observation field notes. I replaced all names with pseudonyms. I eliminated all contextual data, such as exact number of students or exact student achievement scores that could expose the principal or school. Principals had the option to withdraw from the study at any time. No principal withdrew from the study. I shared the final report through an informal discussion and with copies of the report.

Chapter 4: ECPS and Case Descriptions

Principal sensemaking of inclusion was influenced by Essex City Public

Schools' inclusion policy context, principal biographies, and school context. The

purpose of this chapter is to lay out the policy context, principal biographies, and

school context. I will begin this chapter with a description of the ECPS and the

inclusion policy context. Next, I will provide a description for each principal in the

study. The description of each principal will include a brief principal biography, a

description of the school, and the history of inclusion at the school. Finally, I will

conclude this chapter with a summary of key takeaways from the chapter.

Essex City Public Schools

Essex City Public Schools was a high profile urban public school district that

had been historically recognized for failure. Local and national media consistently

reported on Essex City's failures. News stories included the continuous hiring and

firing of superintendents. ECPS went through more than five superintendents in ten

years. The US Department of Education and the state education agency often

reported that ECPS schools were dangerous, outdated, and in disrepair. Test scores

were among the lowest of all urban public school districts. Student dropout rates

were among the highest of all urban public school districts. The majority of schools

and students were failing.

Special education was a disaster in Essex City Public Schools. The district

had three long-standing class action lawsuits in the area of special education, each

with consent decrees. The district was under court supervision and reported to federal courts on a monthly basis. Due process complaints were filed at higher rates than any other school district in the nation. Special education complaints were so commonly brought against the district that law firms specializing in special education law grew into existence. The district had problems providing students with disabilities transportation, completing IEPs and evaluations in a timely fashion, providing related services and specialized instruction listed in IEPs, and complying with various special education laws.

Essex City was extremely segregated in terms of special education students. The district had six special education schools. Three schools were designated for students with Emotional Disturbances. Two schools were designated for students with severe Intellectual Disabilities. One school was designated for students with Specific Learning Disabilities. Essex City also had a variety of self-contained programs in different schools where students were bused to each day. A large portion of students with disabilities attended non-public schools or lived in residential facilities scattered across the United States. Some placements cost the district more than one hundred thousand dollars a year per student. The district spent an enormous portion of the overall district budget to pay for non-public and residential placements and transportation costs.

In 2007, the school district began a massive overhaul after the school board was dissolved and Essex City's mayor took control of the school district.   The mayor appointed a new superintendent. The superintendent arrived with a mandate to overhaul the school district as quickly as possible. The central office staff was

quickly replaced. The new superintendent focused heavily on accountability and

school performance. Many teachers and principals were fired for poor performance.

One local newspaper reported that approximately eighty principals had been

dismissed, resigned, or retired between school year 2008-2009 and school year 2009-

2010. The media continually reported on firings. Policies of increased accountability

were developed and rolled out. The superintendent's reputation for toughness gained

national attention. Principals felt the pressure.

Special education was one of the priorities for the new superintendent and

mayor. One major priority of the district was to decrease the number of students

being served outside of ECPS. The mayor directed the superintendent to significantly

decrease the number of students in non-public schools and residential facilities. The

mayor and superintendent also pushed for more inclusion in the district. ECPS

consistently rated among the most segregated districts in the nation in reports

prepared by the US Department of Education. In response to the mandate for change

in special education, a slew of policies were developed and rolled out by ECPS.

Table 8. below highlights the new policies.

Table 8. Timeline of Special Education Reforms

Policy Title	Requirements	Informed
ECPS Inclusion Policy Date: NA	A formal policy was never finalized by the district. Commitments and statements were listed on ECPS websites and in other policies and guides.	Principals were not informed.
SEA Inclusion Policy March 2009	The policy is not specific or clear but prompts LEAs and schools to promote inclusion.	Principals were not informed.
Updated Performance	Measure of special education compliance and inclusiveness at	Principals received training session with

Evaluation August 2009	each school. Each principal set annual goals with the superintendent* for the purposes of accountability.	their local superintendent***.
Neighborhood School Initiative August 2009	Local schools must admit any student in their school's boundary regardless of the student's disability or needs.	Principals were e-mail by deputy superintendent** and were provided with a 30 minute presentation.
LRE Review Team January 2010	A member of central office will make the final determination on whether or not a student with a disability will be moved to an alternate placement.	Principals received the policy via e-mail from the deputy superintendent. Principals were trained on the policy in a 30 minute session.
ECPS School Closures June 2010/June 2011	Majority of students with severe emotional disturbances returned to neighborhood schools.	Principals were notified that some special education schools would be closing via training sessions.

*Superintendent: Chief Executive Officer of school district
**Deputy Superintendent: Second in command to the Superintendent. ECPS had two Deputy Superintendents.
***Local Superintendent: Direct supervisor over a cluster of elementary schools within the school district. The district had thirteen instructional superintendents.

ECPS Inclusion Policy

ECPS did not have a policy on inclusion or adopt any specific stance on inclusion. ECPS had multiple statements and commitments in different documents and websites. In August 2009, the Office of Special Education produced a reference guide available to all school-based staff. In the reference guide inclusion was described as:

The concept of inclusion is to ensure that children with disabilities are

educated alongside their non-disabled peers to the greatest extent possible…

Segregation of a student with special needs should only occur rarely and only

when the nature or severity of a student's disability is such that educating the student in the general education environment, with the use of supplementary aids and services, cannot be satisfactorily achieved. The law does not allow a student to be removed from the general education environment solely because the general curriculum needs to be modified for the student. (ECPS Special Education Reference Guide 2009)

In 2010, ECPS created another statement on inclusion. The statement partially conflicted with the statement made in the 2009 Reference Guide. The later statement appeared to be created to ease tensions with families and their representatives around moving students into less restrictive environments. The statement was posted on the district's website.

[ECPS] has no intention of arbitrarily placing students in environments that can't properly support them. We will not be moving students into classrooms that do not provide the necessary supports for their success. As the name suggests, special education is not a one size fits all approach; each student's plan will be individualized to his/her needs. (ECPS Webpage, 2010)

Principals were not informed about these statements via a formal training or e-mail. Principals were prompted to promote inclusion through other policies that the district implemented.

SEA Inclusion Policy

In March 2009, the SEA finalized an inclusion policy for the LEAs in the state to implement. The policy was extremely vague and strikingly similar to the text of IDEA. The SEA inclusion policy defined inclusion as:

An environment in which all children, including those with significant

disabilities, have an equal opportunity to receive a high quality instruction in

the general education classroom, to the maximum extent possible, with the

necessary supplemental aids and services the child needs to be successful in

the general education classroom. Placement in an inclusive environment must

be made available to every child with a disability. A general education

classroom is inappropriate only if the child cannot achieve positive learning

outcomes while receiving needed supplementary aids and supports services.

Positive learning outcomes are measured by progress toward the goals of the

child's IEP and not mastery of the general education curriculum. The LEA

should not wait for the child to fail in the general education classroom before

considering an alternative placement. (SEA, Inclusion Policy, 2009)

Principals were not trained on the policy and were not notified of the policy's

creation. Special Education Coordinators were notified of the policy and encouraged

to view the SEA's special education webpage to view the policy on their own time.

Principal Evaluation System

Historically, principals or schools in ECPS were not evaluated on special

education data and success. ECPS did not have the data management systems to

track and manage special education data at the local school level. The superintendent

pushed ECPS to develop a variety of data management systems for purposes of

accountability. In August 2009, the district rolled out a school report card that was

used for the principal's performance evaluation. The report card included a variety of

school data, such as suspension, attendance, state assessment performance, and

special education compliance (timeliness for IEPs, assessments, eligibility determinations, and the implementation of Hearing Officer Decisions, Resolution Sessions, and Settlement Agreements) and inclusivity of the school (percentage of students with IEPs in the general education classroom for more than 61% of the school day).

Principals were informed about the new report card during principal trainings conducted by the central office prior to the start of school year 2009-2010. They were also informed that they would need to use their school report cards to set goals for the year. The goals would be finalized in a one-on-one meeting between the superintendent and the principal that took place each fall (between September 15th and November 1st). Principals were expected to meet their goals or face a possible termination from their position.

The special education measurements were displayed to principals in the form of a star rating. Schools could score between 0.25 stars to 4.0 stars in intervals of 0.25. Table 9 below indicates how the star ratings were distributed by category. The inclusivity star was not a mandated policy but instead an incentive to increase the inclusiveness of the school. Schools were awarded from 0-1 star for inclusiveness. The star for inclusiveness was extra credit and was added to the Compliance Star Rating. The extra credit star rating could help a school struggling with compliance. For example, a school struggling to complete assessments on time with an overall star rating of 3.0 could increase their star rating by placing more students with disabilities in the general education classroom for a larger portion of the day.

Table 9. Compliance Star Rating Distribution

Measurement	Star Weight
Timely Completion of IEP	1.0
Timely Completion of Eligibility Determination	1.0
Timely Ordering of Assessments	0.5
Timely Completion of Assessment	0.5
Timely Compliance of Hearing Officer Decision or Settlement Agreement	1.0
Total	4.0 Stars

The inclusivity star was measured by the district's Office of Data and Accountability. The office audited all IEPs in the district's electronic IEP system to calculate the school's inclusivity star rating. Schools could juke this stat by drafting IEPs that documented specialized instruction and related services being implemented in the general education setting but not following the IEP in practice.

Neighborhood Preference

Prior to August 2009, principals were able to deny students access to their school based on their own determination of whether or not their school could meet the needs of a student with a disability. In August 2009, ECPS implemented the Neighborhood School Preference. Principals were notified of this new change in procedure via principal trainings by central office staff on professional development days prior to the start of school year 2009-2010. Staff in the local superintendent's office was assigned to oversee the implementation of the policy. The district's

superintendent made statements to the local media on the policy and promised parents at public forums that families now had the right to enroll at their neighborhood school.

The Neighborhood School Preference mandated that all local schools needed to enroll any student within their boundary regardless of the student's disability and needs. Then, the school had to attempt to implement the student's IEP for at least thirty school days. After thirty days, the school could reconvene an IEP team meeting and make a determination of whether or not the current school was the most appropriate placement for the student. (By January 2010, schools could not make the placement decision without central office oversight. If schools wanted to change placement, a member of the district's LRE Review Team would observe the student, interview staff, and review records to make a determination of whether or not the student would need an alternative placement. I will describe the LRE Review Team in greater detail later in the section.) Many principals were upset with the new mandate because they were not promised any additional resources or staff for students with disabilities that may be enrolling in their school.

The enforcement of the neighborhood school preference policy was enforced by principals communicating with each other and their local superintendent's office. Principals were informed that any out of boundary student would only be placed in their school after the change in placement was approved by the special education specialist working for the local superintendent in order to ensure local schools did not continue the practice of not enrolling students with disabilities. A principal would contact the local superintendent's office if the parent of a student with a disability

attempted to enroll from out of boundary address. The policy could be avoided by principals working together to move a student between their own schools without asking permission of the local superintendent's office. Some principals did not cooperate with the mandate and attempted to maneuver around the policy.

LRE Review Teams

IEP teams within local schools had placed a large portion of students with disabilities in special education schools, self-contained classrooms segregated by disability categories, and in non-public and residential facilities. In January 2010, ECPS developed a central office based placement review team called the LRE Review Team. The LRE Review Team came with a specific policy for moving students with disabilities into more segregated placements. Any school that believed a student needed to move into a more segregated placement outside of their school had to submit a referral to the LRE Review Team at least thirty days prior to the IEP team meeting. Within thirty days, a central office staff member would be assigned to the case. The LRE Review Team member observed the student in the current school, interviewed teachers and staff, and collected and analyzed student data. Then, team member made a determination of whether or not a change of placement was warranted and provided a rationale for the decision. In many instances, the LRE Review Team member would attend the IEP meeting and serve as the LEA representative on the IEP team to ensure the IEP team did not change the student's placement.

Principals were initially informed about this policy through their special education coordinators and through a policy directive from the deputy superintendent

in January 2010. Principal training on the LRE Review Team were scheduled from February to March at principal training sessions. Many principals were upset and angry with the policy because they felt they did not have the necessary resources to serve many of the students in their schools.

The LRE Review Team did not have any sanctions or accountability measurements. If a school did not follow the LRE Review Team's recommendation, a member from the LRE Review Team would have to communicate this failure with the deputy superintendent. The deputy superintendent or a designee would follow up with the building principal. Principals could avoid using the LRE Review Team if they could bargain a deal with another principal to enroll the student they are trying to remove.

School Closures

ECPS had six special education schools to serve students with more severe disabilities. Three of the six schools served students with severe emotional disturbances. These schools were stand alone schools and were not co-located in a traditional school setting. Students in the special education schools had no access to students without IEPs. In June 2009, one of the district's six special education schools was closed. The school served students with emotional disturbances in grades 1-8. The majority of the students were placed in their neighborhood schools with some or no additional supports to the school. In June 2010, the district closed two more special education schools serving students with emotional disturbances. The majority of these students were returned to their neighborhood public schools.

All principals in the local public schools were notified of the school closures in January in principal training sessions. Many principals had already heard rumors of school closures and that students with severe behavioral problems would be placed in their school. The local newspaper ran stories about the proposed school closures and how schools would be impacted. In early March, principals were starting to be notified about students that would be placed in their school in the following school year. Many principals inquired about additional supports their school would receive to service the students. Most schools did not receive any additional supports.

On the first day of school, students from the closed schools arrived at their neighborhood schools. The schools had no option but to attempt to serve the students. If they felt they could not implement the student's IEP, the IEP team would have to work with the LRE Review Team to change the student's placement.

ECPS Summary

The special education policy context in Essex City Public Schools was complicated, unclear, and confusing. At the time of the study, ECPS was in the process of a very public large scale reform where many principals and teachers were removed for ineffectiveness. In the area of special education, ECPS and the SEA were attempting to reform special education and prompt schools to become more inclusive for students with disabilities. ECPS and the SEA had inclusion policies but each policy was broad and not clearly communicated to principals or schools.

The context was further complicated by a number of ECPS initiatives targeted at principals and schools. Principals were being held accountable for compliance indicators measured by a star rating while at the same time students from special

119

education schools and non-public placements were being returned to their schools. Many of these students had extreme behavior problems and were diagnosed as having emotional disturbances. Principals and IEP teams were also losing their ability to place students in more restrictive settings outside of the school. The LRE Review Team limited the school's ability to move a student into a different school or program.

Principals in ECPS had a lot of policies from above to contend with in the area of special education. However, many of the problems principals faced were not levied from the school district or state education agency. Principals faced a number of unique problems related to their own personal biographies and expertise and their school's context. The principal's biography, expertise, and school context influenced the way principals made sense of inclusion. In the next section of this chapter I will describe the principal's personal biography, school context, and the history of inclusion at the school.

Mr. Oliver and Wilson Elementary School

Mr. Oliver was a white man in his mid-forties. He was a stylish man and was always impeccably dressed. He wore always wore a suit with polished dress shoes. His haircut was trimmed and he always had a smile on his face. Mr. Oliver's office was the cleanest and most organized of all the participants in the study. Everything in the office appeared to have its place in the room. He was outgoing and prided himself on knowing research and best practices. He was always direct with his staff and had high expectations. In interviews, he was extremely polite and helpful. He was also curious about my study and always asked questions about the dissertation

process following interviews and observations. He was also frustrated and frequently shared his frustrations with ECPS central office and the staff capacity with me throughout interviews and observations.

Mr. Oliver had been in education for over twenty years. He began his career as an elementary school teacher in rural Louisiana. He moved to a large high-performing suburban school district in Maryland where he taught second grade, fourth grade, fifth grade, and sixth grade. Then, Mr. Oliver took a job working with the district's central office where he helped to manage Title I funds and services. Mr. Oliver stayed in the position for about a year before moving back to a school-based position. Mr. Oliver became an assistant principal for two years and then a principal for five years prior to being hired as principal at Wilson ES. He was recruited away from the high-performing school district to work in ECPS. All of Mr. Oliver's principal experience has been within elementary schools.

Mr. Oliver's undergraduate degree was in elementary education. He earned a master's degree in school administration and supervision and a doctorate in educational leadership. Mr. Oliver never went by doctor. Mr. Oliver believed that his experience as a central office staff member had the largest impact on his principalship. He stated, "mostly because of the connects I had made in understanding the system as a whole… I got to know how all the departments can work together to impact schools."

Mr. Oliver was not a special education teacher but did teach students with disabilities during his teaching career. He had some experience teaching in an inclusion classroom. He primarily worked with students with other health

impairments, specific learning disabilities, and speech and language disabilities. Mr. Oliver felt he was successful and always helped support his students meet their IEP goals. He stated that while he was a teacher he really didn't understand the special education process. "I really didn't understand IEP process as a teacher. It wasn't until as a principal I started to chair IEP meetings and as an assistant principal and I start to sit in on IEP meetings and really get myself ingrained in the IEP process that I learned more about the IEP process."

Wilson Elementary School

Wilson Elementary School was recently renovated and had a modern building style. The building was located in the commercial and government area of Essex City. The building was clean, well-lit, and filled with new furniture and equipment. All classrooms had whiteboards and LCD projectors. The school had no outdoor field space and had an underground parking lot. The building was tight and had narrow hallways. The narrow hallways consisted of classrooms in nooks and corners throughout the building. The building had five stories and students and staff frequently used the elevator.

Wilson ES had 375 students enrolled at the time of the study. The majority of the students was English Language Learners and spoke either Spanish or Mandarin Chinese in the home. About fifty percent of the school was Hispanic, twenty-five percent Asian, and ten percent African-American. Approximately seventy-five percent of students received free or reduced meals. Test scores in math and reading had been static over the past few years at around 45-50 percent proficient.

The staff was diverse in experience. "The staff, I would say there's brand new and extremely veteran. So there are both extremes. Very few people in the middle of the road with years of service. Very diverse." Mr. Oliver felt that about half his staff were effective and half were ineffective. He had two special education teachers. One was effective and one was ineffective. Mr. Oliver was expecting staff turnover because he believed he had high expectations and pushed teachers outside of their comfort zones. He stated, "I've set the bar high enough, so yeah, I'm expecting turnover this year."

Parental involvement was low. Mr. Oliver attributed low parental involvement to the language barrier and income status. "They have multiple jobs. A lot of the parents that I see actually work in the downtown district, but they drop off their kids at eight and don't pick up until six and we don't see them. They'll turn up at the cultural heritage nights, but that's about it." Mr. Oliver believed that parents were constrained by their responsibilities and didn't blame parents for their lack of involvement in the school.

Mr. Oliver believed that his school had sufficient resources to be successful, however, he struggled with the district's procurement system which he found as a barrier to improvement academic performance. He believed he was overstaffed and very happy with the positions he had allocated to his school. "We probably have the best staffing model in terms of student to teacher ratios that you're going to find anywhere... I think we're lacking interventions in this district, which does impact special education. So the fact that we don't have interventions means that I can't intervene on specific skills." Mr. Oliver was frustrated that he had the money in the

budget but couldn't purchase the needed interventions and supports to increase academic performance.

Mr. Oliver believed that he had made progress in his school with collaborative planning which did not take place before he arrived. He felt that more and more special education students were being included in general education classrooms and that instruction had improved. However, he was not satisfied with his progress and did not find measurable results. He felt that his biggest obstacle was not having a curriculum in the district and the teaching staff's lack of skill in providing high quality instruction. He believed that if the district had a curriculum in place that his job and his teachers' jobs would be much easier and more progress could be made.

History of Inclusion

Mr. Oliver did not believe in full inclusion. He described his belief: "I don't believe in full inclusion. I think there are opportunities where kids can be pulled out if there is a thoughtful plan, and if it's an intervention." When Mr. Oliver arrived at Wilson Elementary School he did not see a thoughtful plan. The school's special education program was struggling. Students with disabilities were not performing well on the state's standardized assessment. Special education teachers and general education teachers did not collaborate or co-plan lessons. Most of the special education students were segregated from their peers. Mr. Oliver described the school's special education program when he arrived:

At this particular school it was pullout. So classroom teachers and special ed teachers barely even talked. So it was just a matter of let's meet their goal and

124

check it off the box and put them back in the classroom, fix anything. The thing is they're never fixed. It's a process for kids.

Mr. Oliver believed that many of the teachers at the school were not interested in serving the best interests of the students. He felt the school was run to accommodate adults, not students. He felt that the special education staff at the school was primarily to blame for the failures of the special education. Specifically, Mr. Oliver felt the staff had low expectations for students and were not interested in doing the hard work to support students with disabilities. He stated:

Because the kids were not expected to do grade level curriculum, they were expected to do whatever the teacher wanted them to do. Like, if you look at the IEP goals, they're really tailored at a lower standard, so the kids were never able to pass the high stakes test. And so the same thing happened for my ELL students, so everyone was being pulled out. So it was obvious to me in that moment why my test scores were bad as they were, especially for the special ed population.

Mr. Oliver immediately recognized that changes needed to be made to support students with disabilities. He took some immediate actions upon his arrival at Wilson Elementary School. First, he put a "moratorium on pullout." Teachers were no longer allowed to pull students out of the general education classroom unless Mr. Oliver approved the pullout. Second, Mr. Oliver changed the teachers' planning schedules to enable co-planning. Third, Mr. Oliver mandated that IEP goals had to be tailored to the grade level standard.

Mrs. Smith and Dewey Elementary School

Mrs. Smith was a White woman in her early fifties. She was tanned and spoke frequently of traveling with her family. She was kind and greeted everyone with a smile. Her office space was cluttered and filled with books on teaching strategies, student work, and pictures of her family and current and former students. I could not make out the color of her desktop because it was covered with papers, books, a laptop and other items. The office was an organized mess and Mrs. Smith was very comfortable in the space. She always appeared to be working at a frantic pace and worried about deadlines but she could also be very calm and controlled. When we walked through the building she knew every students name and would often tell stories about their families or success stories. She loved her building, her staff, and her school. She was not focused on why students were not in classrooms or sitting on the floor. She liked the busy and energetic vibe in her school. She lacked the bravado or ego of a principal. She didn't act like she was in charge. She had an open door policy and was very informal with staff.

Mrs. Smith did not plan to be an educator. She attended Harvard University as an undergraduate student and planned on becoming an attorney like her father. However, Mrs. Smith was influenced heavily by two people in her life to enter into the field of education. She was influenced by her father who was a prominent attorney. After retiring from practice, her father earned a teaching certificate and taught in the Cleveland public schools before starting his own charter school. He would later become a school board member in Cleveland Public Schools. She was also influenced by Professor Ted Sizer whom she had a conversation with when she

was in her final year of college. She told Professor Sizer she was becoming interested in changing how education happened for kids. After a long telephone conversation Sizer said, "go be a teacher." She enrolled in a yearlong teacher certification program. Later in her career she would complete a master's degree in education.

Her passion for education began when she started teaching. She became excited about education and wanted a career in education. "And that [teaching] really launched it. And it is about that sense of the ripple effect of a pond and how as a classroom teacher, you have such a certain impact on kids. And now, what keeps me, despite ills and issues and whatever, what keeps me in this principal's job is the sense that I have an even bigger sort of pond in which to have that ripple effect. That I can actually influence parents. I can actually influence teachers and the work they do. And certainly, in that regard, then have a chance to impact what happens to kids across their life."

Mrs. Smith was a veteran educator. She was a teacher for twelve years and taught in both public schools and private schools. Mrs. Smith primarily taught in high-performing private schools but also taught in challenging urban schools.   She had taught third, fourth, and fifth grade for most of her teaching career. She spent one year teaching in a Title 1 reading program with early elementary students. Her experience spanned two large urban public school districts (Charlotte-Mecklenberg and Boston) and two high performing private schools prior to coming to Essex City Public Schools. Throughout her career, she had limited exposure to students with disabilities. "I can say that we had kids that might have had a written expression disability, but nothing on a spectrum by any means at all. So I've had pretty limited

experience." Given her lack of experience in special education, she is a wiz in an IEP meeting and capable of understanding and questioning different assessments and evaluations.

Mrs. Smith had more school leadership experience than any other participant in this study. She had been an assistant principal or principal for more than seventeen years in both public and private schools. She also had experience working as a principal coach in the university setting. She had a reputation in ECPS for being an expert in school leadership and sat on panels for principal selection, superintendent advisement, and special education advisement. She was known as a "Wiz" by colleagues and central office staff.

Dewey Elementary School

Dewey ES was located in an upper-class neighborhood filled with large and historic single family homes. Dewey ES was an old building that had not been renovated in years. The building had historic charm inside and out. The school consisted of two stories with one main hallway on each floor. An annex was attached along the side of the building housing some additional classrooms. The building was filled with student work, science projects and experiments, and had fish tanks with fish and turtles in two different areas in the building. Dewey had a new Astroturf multi-purpose field with a track. Community members frequently jogged around the track and played on the field with their children. The school also had a small playground with slides and swings. The school was a cozy fit in the neighborhood.

Dewey ES was an extremely high-performing school in a wealthy area of Essex City. The school had 277 students in grades Pre-K-5. Sixteen of the students

had IEPs primarily in speech and language. The school had many international students. Many of the parents moved to Essex City to work for high profile non-governmental organizations and non-profits. Mrs. Smith stated her school had an excellent reputation within this elite community. "We absolutely have a reputation for being a school that serves international families well, so I would say that a part of the reason why this neighborhood has so many is that they literally moved to the school in order to come to the school. I think probably at least 10 times across one year, I hear from international families who say I'm coming to work [in Essex City]. They say yours is the school that I should come to, and so I'm going to move into the - so they do." The school also had a large number of applicants. Each year Dewey received over 200 applications for the Pre-K program.

Dewey consistently scored above ninety percent proficient or advanced in reading and math. Attendance was high and many students participated in after-school activities. The school had two special education teachers, one of the special education teachers also acted as the school's special education coordinator. Dewey had 13 classroom teachers and an art and music teacher. The school also had a handful of instructional assistants. The total instructional staff was thirty-three in School Year 2010-2011. A portion of the staff is ELL teachers.

Parental involvement at the school was high. "It is steady and with lots of expectation. Families that are here, many have chosen the area because of the school. Many have the financial resources to choose something else but have chosen this school. And with that comes a tremendous amount of appreciation for the school, but also a tremendous amount of expectation." About ninety-five percent of parents

come to parent-teacher conferences. Parents frequently emailed staff and chaperoned field trips and events.

Mrs. Smith believed that the school had adequate resources, except in the area of special education due to a recent increase in due process complaints. The PTA was booming and raised a large amount of money each year. Mrs. Smith invested her money into staff and not technology. "I'll say 90 percent of whatever funds come to me, I use for personnel. And this was true I think of the prior principal, too. I just know that every time I spend a dollar on a quality person who can be accessible to kids, I've done something much more important than by spending my money on a program or a new set of books or whatever." Fancy technology like LCD projects, flat screen televisions, and touch screen computers were not available.

Mrs. Smith felt that her biggest success as principal had been the expansion of after school programs. "I made it convenient maybe for families because we offer foreign language classes and some sports programs, and we're much more sort of open to hosting things, ballet class, music lessons, than the prior principal was." She wanted her school to be more of a community oriented school.

Mrs. Smith believed her biggest obstacle was balancing test score performance with creating an inclusive and joyous school. Mrs. Smith didn't want teachers to feel threatened by test scores and move away from teaching all aspects of the school's curriculum in favor of only teaching tested areas.

> I think that's the challenge is finding that way of balancing the precise work
> of our data driven world and very public performance and what we all,
> parents, the district, myself, the teachers and kids want, which is the sense of

being - we're an elementary school. And there should be joy, and there should be playfulness, and there should be not the hurry up, hurry up, hurry up, but the chance to do a little meandering because it's elementary school. And so I think that's been a challenge.

History of Inclusion at Dewey Elementary School

Mrs. Smith believed that inclusion was about having options for students. She described her vision: "We really have been practicing to be a peg board that has tons and tons of different shapes so that no matter who you are as a learner, there is that readiness to be ready for you." Mrs. Smith inherited a school that was managed tightly by the former principal and did not have different places for students with different needs. The former principal was rigid and limited the options teachers, staff, parents, and students had in the school. The school was focused on academic excellence. However, the school lacked afterschool programs and activities, students were pulled out for special education and related services, and the school lacked enrichment programs. Mrs. Smith described the school as: "being run by the book, rigid, everything is in its box."

Mrs. Smith had a very positive outlook on her staff. She found that her staff was very open and receptive to change and wanted to move outside of the box and the rigid systems the former principal put in place. The special education team, including related service providers, had been working with the school for more than ten years. The team was cohesive and believed in inclusion. Once Mrs. Smith sat down and became comfortable with her staff she found the teachers wanted to implement an

inclusion program. The school's special education coordinator was the lead advocate for inclusion and was a highly respected member of the school's staff.

> Mrs. Smith described what started to happen early in her tenure at Dewey:
>
> The team, myself, the SEC, the social worker, and my SST team, did the melding, all kinds of mind training. Again, sort of trying to create more of a holistic look at all of the possible things that both of our reasoning behind a learning issue and more responsive ways to work with them so that we aren't the school that has round holes on a peg board, and we make the kids squish into those round holes.

The school had a very small special education population so the school did not need to go about making systematic changes. Rather, the team looked at each student individually and began to develop structures, supports, and interventions to support each student in the general education classroom.

Mrs. Sorenson and Kraft Elementary School

Mrs. Sorenson was a White woman in her late thirties. She had a large office that included a small, round conference table, a library of resource materials, a whiteboard, and a large desk where she worked. Her office was somewhat cluttered with binders and documents. Her office was not connected to the main office and was located on the second floor. Mrs. Sorenson was tough. She was direct, honest with her opinions, and appeared unafraid to hurt someone's feelings. She had a great deal of confidence in herself as an educator and leader. She was clearly in charge when she walked through the building or interacted with staff and students.

Mrs. Sorenson stated that she was triple certified in early childhood education, elementary education, and special education. She attended Temple University as an undergraduate student. She obtained a master's in education leadership. She did not focus much on her education. Mrs. Sorenson consistently wanted to talk about her teaching experience. I believed she felt she learned much more from her teaching experiences than from her undergraduate and graduate coursework.

Mrs. Sorenson taught in grades two through nine and had worked in large urban and suburban school districts. She worked four years in a large suburban district and then moved to Baltimore City Public Schools where she taught four years. While in Baltimore, she taught elementary school as a general education teacher and special education teacher. As a special education teacher she taught as an inclusion teacher and in a self-contained classroom for students with specific learning disabilities and emotional disabilities. She later moved to Essex City Public Schools where she taught for one year prior to being hired as a school administrator.

Mrs. Sorenson was extremely proud of her Baltimore experience and her reason for moving into a teaching position in Baltimore. She felt she was a very successful teacher in her suburban district and believed that she needed to take her skills where they were needed most. "Okay, so I sought out the worst school in Baltimore City... So it was the direct opposite of the experience that I've had for the four years prior. And so it was just awful. So I put my time in there with the kids because I had devoted myself to a group of 30 boys. And I promised them I would take them as far as I could in elementary school, so I lived with them for three years."

When she moved to Essex City Public Schools she also went to one of the most challenging schools in the district.

As a special education teacher she felt she was very successful. In interviews, Mrs. Sorenson persisted on focusing on how her teaching experiences prompted her to be a better administrator. Mrs. Sorenson believed she had worked for good principals and bad principals and those experiences, both positive and negative, were profound in her professional growth. "So the supportive principal, I mean, just daily conversations, mutual respect - which I think is huge - but also the willingness to help me advance myself career-wise and personally." The unsupportive principal was tough and less considerate. "She marked me down on my evaluation. I hardly ever missed school; I had a teacher counterpart who missed school, like, two days a week. And she got a 100 percent, and I got an 89 percent. However, I made AYP every year. And I've got - so it was definitely a personal vendetta against me. And when I left, she said to me, "So do you have a new job?" I said, "Nope. I don't."" When sharing the experiences of working under these two principals she stated, "I've learned a lot that has helped me become a better principal." She cared a lot about not being a bad principal like the one she worked with in Baltimore.

Kraft Elementary School

Kraft ES was located in a high-poverty and high crime area of Essex City. Most of the homes appeared to be single family homes, many were renovated to be multi-family housing. Kraft is an historic building that had two floors each with one main hallway. The school had a large auditorium that appeared to be renovated in the past few years. The hallways were extremely wide. The building had maintained

much of its historic charm. The doors inside the building are old and appeared to be original. The building was also very well maintained. The school had a small playground on a rubber surface, a small community garden and a large mural of prominent African-American figures including Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Frederick Douglas.

Kraft ES was a Title I school that had 230 student in grades Pre-K-5. Twenty nine of the students had IEPs. The school was primarily African-American and had only three Hispanic students. The school consisted of fifteen classrooms. Students scored approximately 40 percent on reading and 38 percent on math. Mrs. Sorenson believed that the students come from a challenging environment. She stated, "they come from chaotic worlds. And you have to - you have to put a boundary on things because they're not used to boundaries."

Mrs. Sorenson laughed when I asked her about the skill of her teaching staff. She reflected on her first year. "It's 100 percent better than it was last year because last year, I had a lot of 'haters' in here who were just holding everybody down. I mean, it was just like - everybody. They're negative 'Nellie's' all over the place, so I don't have that. So this year, what I have is a lot of brand new teachers from [the New Teachers Project] and Teach for America, a few of them - three of them."   Mrs. Sorenson believed the staff was more supportive and collaborative as a result of the overhaul in staffing.   Veterans that remained teamed up with less experienced teachers.

Mrs. Sorenson described parental involvement as "Zero!" She stated, "Oh, god. That's our biggest [problem] - and we've tried everything. Feeding them - now

when you perform, they come. However, when their kid - so let's say the kindergartner's are performing first, when their kindergartner's done, they all just get up and leave. They're so disrespectful, so now by the time the poor Fifth Grader's come up, the only people you have left in the auditorium are the Fifth Grade parents, and that bugs me. I don't even know how to fix that." Mrs. Sorenson highlighted that she had banned some parents from the building after confrontations. Parental involvement was definitely a sore spot for Mrs. Sorenson.

Mrs. Sorenson felt her budget was decent but not sufficient. Mrs. Sorenson removed her special education coordinator position from the budget and named her assistant principal as SEC. She felt that she has done a good job with her budget and that her staff was happy. "I run a budget very well. So there's nothing in this building that my staff needs that I don't have for them. We have LCD projectors and we have overheads, we have LCDs, we have TVs, we have VCRs; I have all the materials."

Mrs. Sorenson felt that her biggest obstacle was scheduling special education teachers given the distribution of students and hours of specialized instruction across multiple grades. "I have about five to six in each grade almost. And so when you have five across - you can't be in two places at one time. And when you - everybody is running the same block schedule that becomes very difficult. So my Reading occurs from 9:30 to 11:30 in every single classroom in this building. It becomes very challenging." During a special education meeting she worked with teachers to craft every minute of their day and week in order to ensure all students were receiving services. She was unhappy that the schedules needed to be so precise.

Mrs. Sorenson felt that her biggest success was improving school culture. She was told by the superintendent that the building was in chaos. "Kids were running the building. Kids were running up and down. Kids were running - so [the assistant principal] and I, when we came in, had to - a lot of changes to do... We've turned around the school in a matter of a week last year as far as culture - one week, done. But the instructional is a little bit harder." The school was calm and quiet, especially in the hallways.

History of Inclusion at Kraft Elementary School

Mrs. Sorenson believed that all students with disabilities should be included. "Inclusion, to me, is the ability to have Special Education children participate in everything else that General Ed kids do on a daily basis from the time that they're starting school. So 9:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. And then there's not a distinct line drawn to who's Special Ed and who's not." Mrs. Sorenson's building did not fit her inclusive definition when she became principal at Kraft ES. Mrs. Sorenson described her school as being completely segregated when she entered the building on her first day. She described the school as chaotic and be warned about her school's reputation for failure specifically in the area of special education. She described her initial thoughts about the special education program upon starting at Kraft ES:

> Fully Self Contained. In reading notes and talking to people – that Special Ed was not even being serviced correctly. Where you had a Special Ed Coordinator who sat behind his desk and did nothing and then you had a Special Ed teacher who sat behind her desk and did nothing and that the hours were not truly being met.

Mrs. Sorenson was given a mandate by the ECPS's superintendent to clean up the school. Mrs. Sorenson recalled a visit early in the year by the superintendent:

> I mean, just to give you a background, when the superintendent came here last year for a open house, every complaint she received about my school was about Special Ed and the Special Ed Coordinator. It was made clear to me, I needed to clean this up.

Mrs. Sorenson quickly acted to remove ineffective staff throughout the building. She removed the special education coordinator position from her budget and placed her assistant principal in charge of special education. She used the teacher evaluation system to remove ineffective teachers and had conversations with staff about finding a different school.

Mrs. Allen and Martin Elementary School

Mrs. Allen is an African-American woman in her late thirties or early forties. She has her hair cut short and speaks with a thick New York accent. She is small in physical stature, reserved, and direct. She is very tough, speaks plainly, and is always straight to the point. She was respected in the district and sat on the principal selection panel.

Mrs. Allen has been in education for over fifteen years. Mrs. Allen did not plan on being an educator. Mrs. Allen initially wanted to be a doctor but while taking a class on disabilities with children she became interested in special education. She changed her major from Pre-Med to Communication Sciences and Disorders and earned her certification in special education. She also studied speech and language

pathology. She earned a master's from New York University in speech and language pathology and special education.

Mrs. Allen's teaching experiences were extremely diverse. She taught students from ages seven to twenty-two years of age. She worked in the New York City Public Schools in elementary schools, junior high schools, and high schools. She also worked at Ritker's Island as a special education teacher for students who were incarcerated and had been identified as having an emotional disturbance. In total, Mrs. Allen was a teacher and full-time speech and language pathologist for about twelve years. She maintains a private practice as a speech and language pathologist.

Mrs. Allen felt she was successful as a teacher but also struggled to provide detail. "I think that I was successful. Your success is measured in small increments in those types of settings (Prison ED program) because students may be with you for an extended period of time as well as they may not. So, just because of their length of time that they spend at the facility, you may not have them for extended periods of time." I believed that she was very passionate about working with students with emotional disturbances although Mrs. Allen did not exude passion during interviews.

Mrs. Allen also had central office experience in Essex City Public Schools. Prior to becoming principal at Martin ES, Mrs. Allen was the Deputy Executive Director (Chief of Staff) of the Office of Special Education in ECPS. When leadership turned over in the district, Mrs. Allen decided to move into a school as a principal. She had no school leadership experience prior to taking the job. At the time of this study, she had been principal at Martin ES for three years.

Martin Elementary School

Martin ES is located in a neighborhood that was predominantly low income, African-American but has been in the process of gentrification. The neighborhood has had a increase in affluent and White residents. The school was built in the 1950's and does not appear to be renovated recently. The school is not well lit but the walls are filled with murals and color artwork. The school is quiet and well-maintained. The school has a concrete playground where students play basketball, tag, jump rope, and dodge ball during recess. The playground areas was completely fenced in and has warning signs for a Drug Free School Zone and Neighborhood Watch.

Martin ES had 247 students. Most of the students were African-American with five White and Hispanic students. Approximately 85 percent of the students received free or reduced lunch. The school was a Title I school. The school had two self-contained special education programs, one for students with emotional disturbances and one for students with hearing impairments. The total population of special education students was thirty four.

The school has not made AYP or safe harbor in recent years. Test scores have remained static and have risen or fallen by fewer than two points in recent years.

Mrs. Allen described her instructional staff as seasoned. "We have a high retention rate of our teachers-we have staff this year, one new teacher. And, that's due to retirement." Mrs. Allen attributed high retention to the family style approach of the staff in the building. The school has thirteen general education teachers and three special education teachers.

Mrs. Allen described parental involvement as poor:

That's something that we have been working on for the last three years. I can't say that it has increased substantially since I've been here... For example, the PTA having a functional PTA, where parents actually, regularly attend PTA meetings and things of that nature. So, we don't have that type of involvement.

Mrs. Allen believed her budget was accepted. "I wouldn't say we had all the things that we need to be successful, we do our best to use our finances wisely, use our money very strategically." She spent a great deal of her resources on supplies, software, and interventions.

Mrs. Allen described her biggest success and obstacle as the same. Her biggest obstacle and success has been in school culture. "When I first started here, my predecessor was here for over 22 years and so there was a sense of complacency that permeated within the staff. And, so people were successful to meet their own needs, but not necessarily to meet the needs of the entire student body. So, getting people to move out of their classroom and see the school as an entire school and not just a grade in the class of students that they are teaching, was a challenge." She felt that she had changed this paradigm of thinking and was seeing progress.

History of Inclusion at Kraft Elementary School

Mrs. Allen's vision of inclusion was supporting a variety of student needs in a number of settings. "Students should receive their services in a variety of ways, some in pullout and some in an inclusionary manner. It depends on the student's needs." Mrs. Allen recalled entering Kraft Elementary School with a successful special education program in the areas of compliance and quality of instruction. However,

she noted that most of her students with disabilities, particularly those students placed in the special education programs in her school, were segregated from their non-disabled peers. The students in programs were students with emotional disturbances. She described her initial thoughts about Kraft's special education program:

> The school has never been in jeopardy as far as Special Education is concerned, both coordinators since my tenure have been excellent. They were self-contained rooms, where the students stayed for the entire day. For the entire day, except for lunch and stuff like that. But, they would stay in that setting for the entire day.

Mrs. Allen recognized that she needed to act to change the way students were placed in her school. She began working with her special education team to review students and look for opportunities to include students into the general education classroom. Mrs. Allen did not describe any staff issues and found her special education team extremely helpful in the move toward creating a more inclusive school.

Ms. Violet and Howell Elementary School

Ms. Violet was an Asian-American woman in her early to mid thirties. She was small in stature and has a very pleasant personality. She was cheerful, witty, and always greeted staff with a smile. Her office was clean in comparison with other principals. She had a small round table in her office where she typically sat and worked with her assistant principal. She had a picture of her with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan when he visited her school in the windowsill. Ms. Violet

142

was not intimidating or controlling as the principal. She appeared to share a great deal of authority and responsibilities with her assistant principal.

Ms. Violet was youngest principal in the group of participants. She began teaching in 1998 in Essex City Public Schools as a Teach for America Core Member. She taught kindergarten, first grade, and second grade for three years in ECPS. She also taught in the Los Angeles Unified School District for a half of year. As a teacher, Ms. Violet did always feel as though she was successful in the classroom:

Definitely not in that first year at all, with any of my kids. As a kindergarten teacher, yes, and as a second grade teacher, yes. And then I realized that there was a lot I didn't know because I was in a new school. And I had an opportunity to do time lots of PD, which opened my eyes up to, wow, a lot that somebody could do with a classroom with their kids, if that makes sense. So going back, I would be a 100 times better now than I was when I was a teacher.

After teaching, Ms. Violet moved to Boston, Massachusetts where she pursued a master's degree in public policy and worked as a math coach in Boston Public Schools. She then took a job at an education non-profit for a year. Her experiences in the non-profit arena prompted her to school leadership. "I did non-profit for one year, a non-profit, and I really didn't like it because I felt really disconnected from the schools. And I think at that point, I really realized that a lot of what happens in the school is really determined by who the principal is and who the leader is because they're the ones that really put policies and procedures in place."

Mrs. Violet applied for New Leaders for New Schools and worked as an assistant principal for one year with a principal who was transitioning out of her position. She then took over the school for the transitioning principal. That school was closed and the staff and students were rolled over into Howell ES.

Howell Elementary School

Howell ES is located in a low-income, high crime area of Essex City. African-Americans are the primary residents of the neighborhood. The school was surrounded by a large housing project. At the time of the study, the housing projects were being demolished and new buildings for middle class and mixed residents were being built. The neighborhood was undergoing significant changes as large office buildings and government agencies were moving into the area. The school was recently renovated and appeared to be state-of-the-art. The school has plasma screen televisions in the hallways along with interesting architectural designs and artwork. The school has a playground and a small farm where students and community members grow a variety of vegetables. Attached to the school is a large public library. Upon entering the school, security guards asked all visitors to remove all metal items and walk through a metal detector. All bags needed to go through an X-ray machine.

Howell ES consisted of 381 students in grades Pre-K-8. Eighty five of the students had IEPs. The majority of the students in the school were African-American. The school has three full-time autism programs with about seven students in each class. The school was a Title I school. The school was in resturturing year II and has recently had a drop in test scores. She described student behavior as

dependent on who was leading the class but highlighted that a portion of her students have significant bheavior problems. "Like we had a kid in here today who just was throwing himself against the wall. And could we suspend him? Sure. But he's like a mental health case. So we have probably 20 kids, 25 kids here who have significant behaviors."

Ms. Violet did not complain about her budget allocation. Instead, she talked about her strategy for spending money. She didn't focus on supplies or technology. Instead she focused on staff.

> You need the folks that can support the work that your teachers are doing, and so you do need - for example, we knew we were going to need a lot of mental health services here, and not just limited to the special ed kids, who get them on their IEPs. So having three people, like I said, was really important.

Ms. Violet had about twenty nine teachers not including specials. Thirty-five total instructional staff. Her staff experience was mixed. "I would say most people here have between six and maybe ten years of teaching experience." She brought some of her staff over from her former school.

Ms. Violet described parental involvement as low but stated the school had a recent victory in attracting parents to the building. "I think at Back-to-School night we had 300 folks show up. So that was great, right? So it's getting better."

Ms. Violet described her biggest obstacle as being a new principal in the building and trying to address school culture. "I think the idea of collaborative planning, the idea of professional development to working with a coach is new to a lot of folks, and a lot of people are resistant to it. And we are also asking them to

change a lot of the instructional stuff they are doing, which is hard." She has used the teacher evaluation system to and I think some people are happy with their impact assessments and other people are not, and there's pushback. "Like the union folks just came yesterday and had a meeting. So that speaks to something."

Ms. Violet stated that the biggest success at the school was linked to the implementation of Achievement Network. Achievement Network was a non-profit organization that supports schools in testing and analyzing student data. "And so I think even though teachers are a little resistant to that, they did have some nice reflections on the process. So that's some instructional stuff that's starting to be pushed."

History of Inclusion at Howell Elementary School

Ms. Violet believed that inclusion was about the needs of the students and the resources within the school. She described her viewpoint of inclusion: "I think it totally depends on the kid...it's different depending on who the kid is. It's also dependent on the staffing, but it's who the kid is and what they need." Ms. Violet recalled entering Howell Elementary School as being completely "segregated. Howell Elementary School had some self-contained Autism programs were students were never able to interact with their non-disabled peers. Ms. Violet described the school's special education program as being very structured and not open to fit the needs of diverse students. She described the program: "It was the way it was structured, yeah. The idea of the special ed teacher planning and collaborating with the gen education teacher, I think it was non-existent."

Ms. Violet also found that the special education program many inconsistencies. Some students were segregated while others had some inclusion. In part, the amount of access a student had to the general education classroom was dependent on their special education teacher and who wrote the IEP. Ms. Violet described the situation:

> I think everything was separate. They may have sometime had special time together, but, yeah, it was pretty separate. And there was some inclusion going on in the other grades. But I had been told, for example, this one self-contained upper grade class, well, all the kids have these big hours, and one was a sixth grader, one was a third grader, and then there was some other random kid in there, and that was the class last year.

Ms. Violet recognized that her school needed to move toward inclusion but also that her special education program needed more consistency in how students with disabilities were served. She shifted resources to have more staff to support students in the general education classroom and changed special education coordinators to implement an inclusion model.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide context to the study and familiarize the reader with the Essex City Public Schools, each principal, and their schools. Each of these components is important to understanding the way principals made sense of inclusion. The special education policies ECPS levied on principals and their schools are important to understanding how principal made sense of inclusion especially considering that many of these policies were not clearly communicated to principals.

The principal's biography and the school's context were also important to understanding how principals made sense of inclusion because they created opportunities and constraints for principals.

Principals had to deal with issues related to their local school contexts. These contextual issues also created opportunities and constraints for inclusion. Some principals entered schools ready for inclusion or with functioning special education teams and systems. Other principals entered their school with a mandate from the superintendent for reform. Each principal faced different problems and issues and were aided or constrained by their own personal biographies and expertise in the area of special education and leadership. The next chapter will reveal the ways principals made sense of inclusion in their schools. The principals' sensemaking will be linked to the context provided in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Principal Sensemaking

Principal sensemaking of inclusion in Essex City Public Schools was complicated. The seven characteristics of sensemaking consistently appeared and interacted with each other as principals attempted to make sense of and implement inclusion programs in their schools. Principals enacted their environments by taking certain actions that influenced the opportunities and constraints within their building. Principals shifted roles and identities based on their own experiences and backgrounds as they faced different problems and opportunities. They identified problems and opportunities by extracting cues from their environment and from the social interactions they had with different individuals and groups. Principals never stopped making sense of inclusion. The ongoing nature of sensemaking was evident. Principals used retrospect to look back on what just happened. Finally, principals selected plausible explanations of what happened to make sense of inclusion.

Identity Construction

Principals took action to implement inclusion in their schools. The roles principals played while they enacted their environment are important to the sensemaking process. Principals in this study moved through different roles as they faced different challenges and demands. Principals faced such demands as upset and frustrated teachers and parents, insufficient knowledge, expertise, and resources to implement inclusion, unskilled or untrained teams, and teachers and staff that did not

want to deal with the behavioral and academic challenges of students with

disabilities. When a principal was placed in a particular situation or faced a certain

challenge they selected a role. In some instances, the principals in this study took on

similar roles. In other instances, principals responded to the same situation in

different ways. The role the principal took in a situation was in part related to their

past experiences and expertise and was important to the way he or she made sense of

inclusion in his or her school. The roles principals moved into were community

builder, expert, supervisor, modeler, advocate, and human resource leader. Table 10

below provides a description and example of each identity construction role.

Table 10. Identity Construction Roles

Role	Description	Example
Community Builder	The principal focused on building a positive school culture around supporting the needs of all students. Some principals moved into the role when they felt that teacher beliefs and values had a positive or negative influence on inclusion.	Ms. Violet attended IEP meetings when she believed the parent was upset with the school. She attended to help make the parent feel better about Howell ES and to get a better feel for why parents get upset with her special education program.
Expert	The principal focused on providing teachers and staff with technical information to aid in problem solving. Some principals moved into this role when they identified knowledge and expertise shortcomings with staff.	Mrs. Allen participated in IEP meetings and provided specific expertise in the area of speech and language by reviewing the results of a speech and language assessment and discussing the implications of those results with the team.
Supervisor	The principal focused on providing specific direction to staff. Some principals moved into this role when they identified a problem to be caused by a lack of teacher will.	Mrs. Sorenson redirected staff and had critical conversations with teachers if they were not following school policies.
Modeler	The principal demonstrated behaviors to the staff that they felt were important. Some principals moved into this role when they wanted staff	Mr. Oliver modeled for his staff the appropriate way to facilitate a Student Support Team meeting and an IEP

		meeting.
	to change their behavior in a variety of settings.	
Advocate	The principal demonstrated behaviors that advocated for inclusion. Some principals moved into this role when they felt the staff's values were not aligned to values of inclusiveness.	Mrs. Smith advocated for an inclusive and holistic approach to educating all students, not just students with disabilities.
Human Resource Leader	The principal demonstrated a desire to change the way staff was used in the building to support inclusion. Some principals moved into this role to address what they perceived were the unmet needs of students with disabilities.	Ms. Violet recruited a special education coordinator and inclusion consultant to improve inclusion at her school. She also increased mental health staff to support students with disabilities that struggle with behavior.

Community builder

Principals moved into a role of community builder. The community builder was interested in having a positive school culture and supporting and meeting the needs of parents. The community builder typically interpreted problems as being parent related and service based. Mrs. Smith spoke most extensively about being a community builder. Ms. Violet, Mrs. Allen, and Mr. Oliver discussed many of the obstacles they faced with parents but had a positive outlook on parent engagement. Mrs. Sorenson had negative encounters with parents and did not move into the role of community builder as frequently as other participants.

Mrs. Smith had extensive professional experiences working with wealthy and demanding parents in both public and private schools. She recognized that many of her students' parents were extremely demanding and typically wanted above and beyond the average parent. "We [Dewey ES] have a reputation for being a school that serves international families well, so I would say that a part of the reason why this neighborhood has so many is that they literally moved to the school in order to

come to the school." Mrs. Smith interpreted problems differently than some of her colleagues. She recognized that she had to provide an additional level of support to students with disabilities. She believed she had to provide the students with more than the law or district required because of parent expectations. I observed (4/1/11) Mrs. Smith communicate this with her team during a pre-IEP meeting.

Ms. Violet also took on the role of community builder because she concluded that many parents did not have a positive view of her school's special education program.

> I don't think parents, at least initially, saw the school as a place their kid could stay through eighth grade. We have some pretty significant kids there. But we want to make the school a home for all kids through eighth grade. And we want to provide them with the least restrictive environment possible. I think those are the two big things for special ed. and to be inclusive for parents. We value inclusiveness.

She informed her staff that she wanted to attend all contentious IEP meetings to help make parents feel more supported and welcomed. She reflected that she wished she had been in contentious IEP meetings from the beginning to help address parent concerns.

Mr. Oliver took a different approach to being a community builder. He attempted to coach his parents. Mr. Oliver past experiences prompted him to believe that parent buy in with the school were vital to student success. I observed (3/28/11) Mr. Oliver coach a parent through an issue she had with her child's teacher. The

parent came in venting about her son's teacher. She talked for approximately twelve

minutes without interruption. Then, Mr. Oliver asked a few questions:

    1.) What does he actually say to you when he comes home?

    2.) What do you know about their relationship (teacher and student)

    3.) What do you think triggers his behavior?

The mother answered the questions while Mr. Oliver guided her with prompts and

statements such a: "I think" or "what do you think about …?" Mr. Oliver deepened

the mother's understanding of the problem with her son in his current classroom. The

parent arrived at the conclusion that she needed to get the child's father more

involved with discipline at home and that she needed to meet with the teacher to

discuss how she can support her son in school more. The parent left Mr. Oliver's

room grateful for the time and satisfied.

      Not all principals moved into the community builder role. Mrs. Sorenson

actually took on a role opposite to community builder. Mrs Sorenson's professional

biography was very different than Mr. Oliver and Mrs. Smith. She worked in

Baltimore City schools where she had very little parent support. She claimed she

made progress with her students despite a lack of parent engagement. At Kraft ES,

Mrs. Sorenson recalled many instances where she acted to keep parents from being

involved in the school. She described her perspective and actions:

    Some parents are fond of me and some parent's can't stand me. And that's

    because I provide a lot of structure. And in the past, parents have been able to

    kinda walk in and do what they want when they wanna do it. Not happening

    on my watch. "You wanna come in? Make an appointment. You wanna

come in and see your child's classroom? I'll take you there." And that's to protect the kids and it's also to protect the teacher.

Mrs. Smith spent a career working with demanding upper class parents. Mr. Oliver found success working with parents in the past and felt he needed to continue working with parents to support his students. Mrs. Sorenson succeeded as a teacher despite poor parent engagement. She felt as though parent engagement was helpful but not required. Each of the principals' roles and actions as community builder were linked to their personal experiences and professional biographies.

Expert

Another role some principals shifted into was the role of expert. The expert role was played when particular principals were engaged with teachers and staff in problem-solving. The principals who moved into the expert role had positive professional experiences in the area of special education and academic interventions. The principal moved into the expert role once the team hit a road block in identifying the appropriate next steps for supporting a student with a disability. A principal who played the role of an expert introduced ideas for possible interventions, reviewed important data from special education evaluations, or reminded a team of legal requirements under IDEA.

Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Sorenson played the expert role. For example, I observed (4/1/11) Mrs. Allen in an IEP team meeting focused on a student's eligibility. Mrs. Allen had professional experience as a speech and language pathologist. The team appeared to hit a road block and then began to guess about next steps. Mrs. Allen jumped into the conversation. She asked a few focusing

154

questions based on a speech and language assessment. She asked the group to read a few particular excerpts from an assessment. Her questions lead the team to make a more informed and data-driven decision about the student's eligibility. In the study, not all principals possessed the skill and expertise of Mrs. Allen.

I observed (6/16/11) Mrs. Sorenson move into the expert role when her special education team meeting hit a road block. Mrs. Sorenson asked that each teacher to discuss their caseload and service delivery schedule in relation to the new enrollment numbers. Each teacher presented their proposed schedule to the group. Mrs. Sorenson quickly pointed out inconsistencies and then moved to directing her teachers to the correct way of formulating a schedule. Mrs. Sorenson drew a chart on her whiteboard and asked questions about the number of students in each grade and the times they took English and Mathematics classes. She diagramed their schedules in less than three minutes. The scheduling problem was solved.

I observed Mr. Oliver (5/12/11) and Mrs. Smith (4/1/11, 5/31/11) flirt with the expert role in meetings. They interjected in meetings to help them run smoother or asked questions of teachers to help lead them to their own answers. Both recognized their limitations of expertise in the area of special education but still acknowledged their ability to provide broad level expertise to the group. Ms. Violet never moved into the expert role. Instead she deferred to her special education coordinator or inclusion specialist when problems requiring specific special education knowledge or expertise came up in meetings. She frequently repeated in interviews and observations that she hired staff to fill in for her gaps in expertise. She was comfortable with her staff taking the lead.

The role of expert was deeply rooted in the principal's professional biography and their comfort level with imparting their expertise. The two experts were extremely comfortable taking the lead and teaching. The other principals engaged with their staff in areas where expertise was needed according to their comfort level and who else was in the room.

Supervisor

All principals played the supervisor role. Each principal moved into this role to address staff shortcomings or weaknesses. The principal shifted into this role when they felt their control and direction was needed. They interpreted problems to be caused by a lack of skill or will of their staff. Principals enacted their environment by taking control of meetings and making decisions or holding staff accountable for shortcomings.

Mrs. Sorenson spent a great deal of time in the supervisor role. For example, during both observations (4/26/11, 6/16/11) she set the meeting agenda, led all discussions, and made all decisions for her teachers and staff. She told them exactly what had to be done, how it should be done, and when it should be completed. Mrs. Sorenson did allow teachers to share their ideas but only after she had already set the constraints for the conversation. Mrs. Sorenson recognized that she was directive at times and felt that her actions were rooted in her own personality.

> I am very quick to do everything myself, because I know that is going to get done my way and the right way and I am not going to have it redone and I am also very quick to just fix the problems too. So if I see something that's

wrong instead of waiting around for someone else to see that it is wrong and to fix it, I will just jump right in and fix it myself.

Mrs. Sorenson was also quick to address teachers for their shortcomings. She gave teachers poor evaluations and had critical conversations about their attitudes and performance.

So now they're mad at me because [I scored them very low on their performance evaluation]. Well, I can't really do anything about that. You know things like that. I've had to have a lot of difficult conversations… And so again, if you're not there, you and I aren't gonna be able to work well together.

Mr. Oliver also moved into the supervisor role. I observed (3/28/11) Mr. Oliver become extremely critical of his staff during a meeting on a student with a disability who was failing his classes. The team suggested the student be held back. Mr. Oliver asked the team what interventions had been put in place to address the student's performance. The team didn't respond. Mr. Oliver became angry and explained to the staff that they were irresponsible and allowed a student to fail for eight months without collecting data or attempting interventions. The staff was silent.

Ms. Violet, Mrs. Allen, and Mrs. Smith did not discuss moving into the supervisor role interviews. I did not observe these principals move into the supervisor role during observations. The explanations for why these principals did not move into the supervisor role unclear. However, I had some hypotheses for each principal. I believed that Mrs. Allen's tough demeanor meant she wasn't tested by her staff so she wasn't in position to play this role. Mrs. Smith's school was not in

the midst of reform. The school was high performing and systems have been in place for years. I believed Ms. Violet avoided some critical conversations and moving into the role of supervisor based on observations of her demeanor and comfort level around staff.

Modeler

Principals also played the role of modeler. As the modeler, the principal demonstrated behaviors to the staff that they felt were important. They interpreted problems to be caused by staff buy in and enacted their environment by drawing attention to themselves modeling the behaviors they wanted to see staff develop. Mrs. Allen and Ms. Violet frequently provided examples of how they modeled certain behavior in front of their staff in order to change the staff's behavior and build a sense of community.

Mrs. Allen felt she needed to model to staff that she didn't have all the answers and that she found value in professional development. She believed that her staff needed to see her do some of the same things they needed to do in order to build buy in for inclusion or any reform. "Because I get the most buy-in from my staff once they actually see that I can do the work that I am asking them to do as well and the most cooperation is given to our net process." She pointed out that she had certain areas of weakness as a principal and modeled her own learning to her staff.

Ms. Violet wanted her staff to have more patience dealing with students with emotional disturbances. Some of the students in her school would exhibit extremely poor behavior to teachers and staff. She recalled being hit and kicked by students. A third grader even knocked over her desk. Ms. Violet always maintained a calm

demeanor. One situation stood out for Mrs. Violet with a student from an ED self-contained classroom that was moved into a general education classroom.

> When he was in the [ED classroom] room, one bad behavior would set off the rest of them. And those were their models. They're like, if so-and-so's gonna do it, so am I. When he got into the next grade in the general ed. class and in the lines and on the playground, he was like, oh, they're not running around. Maybe I shouldn't run around either. With this one kid, Brandon, I could clearly see him starting to run. At first he did run. But then later on, he was like, oh, wait. And you could totally tell he was like, oh, crap, nobody else is running. So I think that helped.

Ms. Violet did not get angry and yell at Brandon when he was rude, disrespectful, or insubordinate even when his behaviors were in front of other students and staff. She would remove Brandon from the situation, talk with his parents, and apply a fair consequence which was most often not a suspension. According to Ms. Violet, Brandon's behavior improved: "the social benefits for him have paid off tremendously and continue." She used Brandon's story with teachers to highlight her expectation of teacher responses to student misbehavior. Ms. Violet enacted her environment by modeling to her staff how to deal with the behavior problems from students with emotional disturbances.

Principals who moved into the modeling role were calm and believed that they could gain teacher buy in by demonstrating the skills they expected from their staff. Ms. Violet and Mrs. Allen were principals who focused on being outside of their offices and in the classrooms and hallways each day.

Advocate

All the principals in this study took on the role of advocate for inclusion. In the advocate role, principals identified problems as a school mission and vision problem. They enacted their environment by sharing their emotions, beliefs, and values with staff and by reframing issues in ways that enable staff to see student concerns as problems related to the teaching and learning in the building. Mrs. Smith appeared to be the most passionate advocate of inclusion because she advocated for inclusion of all students, not just students with disabilities. Mrs. Sorenson struggled to advocate for full inclusion given her budget. Ms. Violet advocated for inclusion but also advocated to have special education self-contained programs that would allow her school to serve any student in her community regardless of disability.

Mrs. Smith often played the role of advocate at Dewey ES. She enacted her environment through repeated conversations of her vision with school staff members. Mrs. Smith's vision was a school that could meet any student's needs.

> Sort of trying to create more of a holistic look at all of the possible things that both of our reasoning behind a learning issue and more responsive ways to work with them so that we aren't the school that has round holes on a peg board, and we make the kids squish into those round holes. We really have been practicing to be a peg board that has tons and tons of different shapes so that no matter who you are as a learner, there is that readiness to be ready for you.

Mr. Oliver advocated for a similar vision in his school: "That all students regardless of their differences can actually meet standards. That all students are capable of learning, and that we just learn differently." Mr. Oliver advocated for this vision through critical conversations with teachers and staff and by coaching staff to use data to identify antecedents to behavior, provide intensive interventions, and to reflect on their own practices. Mr. Oliver acknowledged that his school was not close to his vision. During the interview, he began to mumble and think about what his staff might be feeling:

> I would say that their mission, or the mission of the special ed program would be one of compliance, one of survival, and one of – you got me a lot to think about right now, actually. I've got some work to do in that area – one of – yeah, compliance and survival.

Mrs. Allen advocated for a vision of including students in general education classrooms as much as possible. "I think the mission of our special education program is pretty clear in terms of our self contained classes and that's to provide the students as many mainstream opportunities as possible." Mrs. Allen advocated this vision through conversations with staff and in IEP team meetings. I observed (5/16/11) Mrs. Allen provide an explanation of the LRE component of IDEA during an IEP meeting where the team was discussing whether or not a student would receive services inside the general education classroom or outside of the general education classroom. She asked the team to consider what the language in IDEA meant in making their decision. Mrs. Allen's expertise was strategically used and

161

effectively prompted staff to make considerations to include the student in the general education classroom.

Mrs. Sorenson advocated for inclusion in her school but identified constraints in her school. She frequently referenced her budget as an obstacle to inclusion. Mrs. Sorenson always used the caveat of limited budget and high teacher caseload when she spoke about inclusion with staff or in interviews and observations. "So, my goal is here is you have as many as my students included in the general ed population as possible and we know that can't always be true all the time, but that's really my goal."

Ms. Violet's advocacy for her school looked different from the other principals in this study. She advocated to her staff for inclusiveness and patience in working with challenging students like the other principals in this study but she also advocated outside of the school to the district's Office of Special Education. She wanted her school to have all the programs necessary to serve any student regardless of disability. Howell ES housed self-contained autism programs that she was very proud of. She wanted her school to serve every child in grades K-8 in the neighborhood and that no student who need to be shipped off to another location because of a specific disability or need. "I think we want to make Howell ES a home for all of the kids, preschool through eighth grade. And we have those autism classes here. I don't think parents, at least initially, saw Howell as a place their kid could stay through eighth grade." I observed (5/19/11) Ms. Violet advocate for her school to central office. She pushed for resources and sold her school to the district officials.

Human resource leader

Principals also played the role of the human resource leader. Human resource leaders interpreted problems as a lack of trained staff or enough staff to handle problems or workload concerns within the building. A human resource leader enacted their environment by removing staff and hiring new staff or by increase spending on specific positions. Ms. Violet emphasized her role as a human resource leader more than the other principals in the study. She was proud of how she staffed her building.

When Ms. Violet arrived at Howell ES she quickly recognized her staff wasn't capable of providing supports to meet the mental health needs of her students and that her special education coordinator was not interested in implementing an inclusion model.

> What we are discovering is we have some kids here with a lot of mental health needs. Like we had a kid in here today who just was throwing himself against the wall. And could we suspend him? Sure. But he's like a mental health case. So we have probably 20 kids, 25 kids here who have significant behaviors.

Ms. Violet decided to hire additional mental health staff to support the twenty to twenty five students. "We knew we would need two psychologists and one social worker, so we over hired for that mental health team." Ms. Violet also probed her special education coordinator's desire to develop an inclusion model in the school: "I asked him about developing a program where we did some things around inclusion, he was like, "That's really exciting what you're trying to do. I'm not interested in

doing that right now.""" The SEC decided to move to another school. Ms. Violet

hired a new SEC who was interested in implementing inclusion.

Principals moved into roles and enacted their environment based on problems

they identified. When they faced different problems, they shifted roles to enact their

environment and shape their school's inclusion program. In most instances,

principals shifted into roles they felt comfortable with and had some sort of

professional or personal background experiences. Principals needed to identify a

problem or issue from their environment prior to moving into these roles and enacting

their environment. The next section will focus less on the principal's role and more

on the way he or she enacted the organizational environment.

Enactment

Principals in this study enacted their environment by taking actions that

shaped the opportunities and constraints for inclusion within their school. Some

actions were directly related to inclusion policy and implementing inclusion. Other

actions were more indirectly related to inclusion. The actions principals took in their

schools were staffing/budgeting actions, structural actions, school culture actions,

problem solving, and gate keeping. Gate keeping actions, staffing and budget actions,

structural actions, and school cultural actions were directly related to inclusion.

Problem solving actions were more indirectly related to inclusion. Not all principals

engaged in each of these actions types. Table 11 below provides a description of each

action, a list of which principals engaged in the action, and quotes to highlight the

action.

164

Table 11. Principal Enactment Examples

Action	Description	Example with Quote
Staffing/ Budget Actions	Staffing/Budgeting actions are actions taken to add or subtract human resources from the special education program. These actions also including hiring staff with specific expertise or values.	My special ed. folks clearly have a lot more expertise around special education than I do. I guess I maybe just know the qualities of the kind of person I want leading that program. (Ms. Violet)
Structural Actions	Structural actions are actions are actions taken to increase or decrease the structure of the special education program.	So one of the things that we do is to begin with a job responsibility chart, and we just start to outline for ourselves what it is that that position does. So as principal, what am I in charge of? Dean of Students, what are you in charge of? As instructional coach, what are you in charge of? (Mr. Oliver)
Cultural Actions	Cultural actions are actions taken to change the culture of the school staff and their attitudes toward students with disabilities.	Like I have a few of them [teachers] that say, "I believe in kids." Yeah, but look at your actions. Look at what you're doing. It doesn't communicate belief in kids. Now change it. DO something different. Let me give you some suggestions, and if you don't, then the next time you do it, we're going to have a different conversation." (Mr. Oliver)
Problem Solving	Problem solving actions are actions taken to support teachers and staff with difficult situations and decisions.	"I don't attend all the meetings. I attend the more "hot" ones." (Ms. Violet)
Gate keeping	Gate keeping actions are actions taken by principals to integrate or segregate students within the school.	Given specific subject matter that they may have strength in, they go to the typically developing third, fourth, whatever the grade level is, classroom is for specific subjects and then they go back to their classroom. So, they have opportunities to interact with their typically developing peers. (Mrs. Allen) If somebody tries to register with 25 hours, I'd tell the parent, this: "You know, we are

an Inclusive environment and this may not be the best place for your child. Let me see if I can help you find a school that's closer." (Mrs. Sorenson)

Staffing and budgeting actions

Staffing/Budgeting actions are actions taken to add or subtract human resources from the special education program. These actions also included hiring staff with specific expertise or values. All principals created their own budgets and staffed their building. Mr. Oliver didn't adjust his budget to add additional staff to support students with disabilities. Mrs. Sorenson chose to spend a large portion of her budget on interventions and resources rather than staff positions. Ms. Violet and Mrs. Smith used staffing and budgeting actions to increase the resources for special education students more than other principals in this study.

Ms. Violet made two observations that prompted her to change her staffing model. First, she recognized that she did not have a great deal of special education knowledge and expertise. Ms. Violet's self assessment prompted her to hire staff with special education expertise. "My special ed. folks clearly have a lot more expertise around special education than I do. I guess I maybe just know the qualities of the kind of person I want leading that program." Second, Ms. Violet recognized that her current staffing model could not support the mental health needs of her students. Ms Violet described what she was seeing in terms of mental health problems:

What we are discovering is we have some kids here with a lot of mental health needs. Like we had a kid in here today who just was throwing himself against

the wall. And could we suspend him? Sure. But he's like a mental health

case. So we have probably 20 kids, 25 kids here who have significant

behaviors.

Ms. Violet concluded that she needed to hire more staff to support the students with

these significant needs. She hired more staff.

We knew we would need two psychologists and one social worker, so we over

hired for that mental health team. And then there was the special ed folks that

come in. But we really need those three people; they're busy all the time.

Mrs. Smith's students didn't face significant mental health concerns. Mrs.

Smith recognized that her school had a problem with handling due process complaints

and still being able to provide specialized instruction in the general education

classroom since one of her two special education teachers also acts as the school's

special education coordinator. Mrs. Smith described the situation:

We're all terribly sympathetic and understanding to the workload that the SEC

is carrying because of this. And she's doing an amazing job of kind of staying

steady and firm, and it's hard because we can get literally the fax machine is

in the corner of my office, and I can get five faxes in a row from one or the

other of the attorneys requesting all kinds of things. And I'm not a paralegal,

and she's not a paralegal. And so it's frustrating.

Mrs. Smith has been able to adapt to the increase of due process complaints

by accessing community supports and better utilizing other staff in the building.

 I have lots of graduate students that come and spend time here. And so the

students get additional support because of the presence of assistants in the

room. The get additional support because of having two ELL teachers that work almost exclusively inside the classrooms.

Each of the principals in this study struggled with budget and how they allocate their resources. Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Allen, Mrs. Sorenson, and Ms. Violet all believed they need more staff to better implement their inclusion models. Mr. Oliver believed he had adequate staff but did not have staff adequately trained to support his inclusion model.

Structural actions

Structural actions are actions are actions taken to increase or decrease the structure of the special education program. Each of the principals enacted their environment by putting certain structures in place. Some principals enacted their environment by taking action to make their schools special education programs more flexible. All principals redefined roles and developed new processes and procedures. Some of these processes are discussed in section that describes the gate keeping actions.

Some principals enacted their environment by taking structural actions to make their special education programs more flexible. Mrs. Allen made her special education program more flexible by allowing students with and without disabilities to move in and out of a variety of settings throughout the school day.

So, we do a lot of reverse mainstreaming and we also do mainstreaming from the students that are in the self-contained ED class, given specific subject matter that they may have strength in, they go to the typically developing third, fourth, whatever the grade level is, classroom is for specific subjects and

168

then they go back to their classroom… All of our Specials are fully integrated. So, our music, P.E., and the library, they all go together.

Mrs. Smith also made her school flexible to the community and more inclusive to families and students. Her actions weren't directly related to inclusion of special education students. Mrs. Smith's predecessor was rigid and focused on running a highly structured school focused on excellence from the beginning of first period to the end of last period each day. Mrs. Smith brought to the school different values to the school. She wanted a more inclusive and community based school not just in the area of special education. Mrs. Smith, "made it convenient maybe for families because we offer foreign language classes and some sports programs, and we're much more sort of open to hosting things, ballet class, music lessons, than the prior principal was." By opening the school up to the community, Mrs. Smith helped to reshape the school's image.

Some principals enacted their environment by redefining the roles within their school. All of the principals in this study redefined roles around special education in their building. Mrs. Allen redefined her role as principal. She wouldn't simply manage her staff from her office but would be in classrooms each day, participate as a member in professional development and IEP meetings. Mrs. Sorenson removed the position of SEC in placed her assistant principal in charge of special education. Ms. Violet hired a consultant who had implemented inclusion in other schools. She also asked her SEC to resign their position so she could hire an SEC that was interested in implementing an inclusion model.

Mr. Oliver created an organizational structure in his school and clearly defined roles. Mr. Oliver described his actions:

So once of the things that we do is to begin with a job responsibility chart, and we just start to outline for ourselves what it is that that position does. So as principal, what am I in charge of? Dean of Students, what are you in charge of? As instructional coach, what are you in charge of? So that I spend most of my time coaching and training my staff rather than doing. So I'm building up their leadership capacity to actually get the job done, so we spend a lot of time – I spend a lot of time at my core team if you will, that's what I call them. My core team is comprised of my instructional coach, my special ed. coordinator, my Dean of Students, my IB coordinator, and my counselor.

Principals took a variety of actions to change the structures in their schools. These actions included increasing the schools flexibility in special education programming and the roles and duties of different staff members in the school. Some of the structural actions overlapped with other actions described in this section.

School culture actions

Cultural actions are actions taken to change the culture of the school staff and their attitudes toward students with disabilities. Each of the principals enacted their environment through school culture actions. School culture actions were directly and indirectly related to inclusion. Mrs. Smith and Mr. Oliver took school culture actions that directly related to their inclusion program.

Mrs. Smith enacted her environment with school culture actions by creating an open dialogue around inclusion for all staff members. She created opportunities in

meetings for teachers to voice their opinions, ideas, and beliefs. Mrs. Smith believed that these opportunities prompted teachers to take more responsibility in the area of inclusion. Mrs. Smith decided to enact her environment in this way because of her personal belief:

> I am a big believer in that equation around when teachers feel effective, they actually work in effective ways. If they feel like they are doing a good job, they actually fulfill that by doing an even better job. And so I do think that teachers in the building that I'm leading right now feel good about the job that they get to do every day, partly because they have a voice, they have a choice in how that job manifests, and then they invest themselves in it and because they own it, it's not – it isn't something that is directed and owned by me, but it really is both their own and it's shared.

Mr. Oliver enacted his environment with school culture actions by setting expectations for teacher actions and opinions. He paid attention to the way teachers described problems and student behaviors. Language was important to Mr. Oliver. He provided an example:

> So for example a teacher who puts kids out of the classroom – out of the classroom into the hallway would be one. A teacher who isolates a kid from the other ones. So if I have a kindergartner who doesn't know how to behave, and the teacher instead of teaching the kid actually just pulls the kid and just isolates him from the rest of the kindergartners because he doesn't understand line doesn't have a belief in kids. A teacher who yells at kids, a teacher who doesn't say a kind word to a kid. These are all clues that if you just pick up

and listen for, you can actually begin to see the belief systems come out in their actions. It's also changing a conversation such as, "Oh, that kid can't do that because something happens at home." Those are some of the easier ones to pick up. But it's the subtle ones where they're doing actions, where you know, you've just got to be finely tuned and know thyself. Like, really never treat a kid improperly and treat them with respect, and you'll start to pick up what that respect looks like in others, or doesn't look like in others. And be willing, as an administrator or principal, assistant principal, to confront that.

Mr. Oliver discussed having critical conversations with staff. During our first interview, Mr. Oliver became passionate as he described a conversation with a teacher:

Like I have a few of them [teachers] that say, "I believe in kids." Yeah, but look at your actions. Look at what you're doing. It doesn't communicate belief in kids. Now change it. DO something different. Let me give you some suggestions, and if you don't, then the next time you do it, we're going to have a different conversation. You're no longer – you're being insubordinate now, because you're doing things that don't need to be. You don't need to be yelling at kids. And yeah, so confronting those issues, and saying, yeah, that's not a belief in kids. Change it. And some people will believe you, some people won't. Some people will leave and some people will stay. It is what it is.

The vignette highlights that Mr. Oliver's critical conversations focus on language. Mr. Oliver's actions shape the way teachers talk about problems and students.

Problem solving actions

Problem solving actions are actions taken to support teachers and staff with difficult situations and decisions. Problem-solving actions can remove pressure and stress from staff, provide direction for confused staff or teams, or answer questions staff may have about a particular special education issue. Most problem-solving actions were only indirectly related to inclusion. All principals enacted their environment using problem-solving actions.

Mrs. Smith enacted her environment by eliminating her staff's tension about an upcoming IEP meeting with a lawyer where the team would discuss placement. I observed (4/1/11) Mrs. Smith enact her environment during the pre-meeting where the team planned out the meeting. Mrs. Smith helped the team shape an agenda and talking points for the meeting. The team was nervous and when Mrs. Smith recognized the team's nervousness she said she would lead the meeting. The team breathed a collective sigh of relief. Mrs. Smith's problem-solving action calmed her team and enabled them to get focused on the meeting.

Mrs. Allen enacted her environment by providing direction and focus to an IEP team meeting. I observed (5/16/11) Mrs. Allen interject interjected when the IEP team lost focus or needed explanations of technical aspects of the IEP process and the law. The IEP team was discussing changing the student's placement before considering the student's needs. Mrs. Allen reframed the meeting. As a result, she created an environment the provided the IEP team the opportunity to make an informed and data driven decision on a student's placement.

I also observed (6/16/11) Mrs. Sorenson enact her environment by providing staff with specific legal knowledge and expertise. A special education teacher asked if Mrs. Sorenson could remove a student from the school because of behavior. The teacher referenced another student that Mrs. Sorenson had removed because of behavior. Mrs. Sorenson informed the teacher that there was a process the district followed for removing students. The teacher was still upset but understood the process and the legal requirements behind the process. Mr. Oliver and Ms. Violet also enacted their environment by taking problem solving actions. They refocused meetings and clarified school vision and their school's special education mission.

Gate keeping actions

Gate keeping actions were actions taken by principals to integrate or segregate students within the school. All principals utilized gate keeping actions in this study. Each participant had an example of how they acted to place a student in a more inclusive setting. Some principals utilized gate keeping actions to prohibit students from entering their schools, change teacher practices, and remove students from their school to a more segregated placement. Ms. Violet, Mrs. Allen, and Mrs. Sorenson each had an example of how they prompted a less inclusive outcome for a student or students.

Mrs. Allen, Mr. Oliver, and Mrs. Sorenson took gate keeping actions on a whole school level. Mrs. Allen moved students in and out of general education and special education classroom based on what she believed were the needs of her students.

We do a lot of reverse mainstreaming and we also do mainstreaming from the students that are in the self-contained ED class, given specific subject matter that they may have strength in, they go to the typically developing third, fourth, whatever the grade level is, classroom is for specific subjects and then they go back to their classroom. So, they have opportunities to interact with their typically developing peers. All of our Specials are fully integrated. So, our music, P.E., and the library, they all go together.

Mr. Oliver enacted his environment at the school level by implementing a rule he called "The Moratorium on Pullout." Mr. Oliver's rule enacted the environment because teachers and staff had to come prepared to meet with Mr. Oliver if they wanted to provide any student service outside of the general education classroom. Mrs. Sorenson took similar actions.

The only thing that I made sure was when annual IEP's were held last year that in the area where you – that you chose specialized instruction that it was in the General Ed setting-slash-Special Ed. So like that it was not out of the General Ed setting. So you needed to choose inside the General Ed setting and/or a combination. But there was no – nobody better have an IEP that comes across as outside the General Ed. And if it is happening, "You need to come see me. And you need to explain to me why you feel that this child needs ten hours outside the General Ed room.

Mrs. Smith took gate keeping actions on a grade level. Dewey ES had a First grader who had many behavioral problems. When he entered second grade Mrs.

Smith enacted her environment by making a decision of which class the student should enter.

> We specifically placed him in that classroom thinking that this was a classroom that was gonna be – that was the right, again, inclusive setting for him, and we were just 100 percent right. I have two second grade rooms. If he had gone to the other second grade room, which functions in a much sort of tighter fashion, I think we would have had a lot of behavioral issues as we did the year prior.

Mrs. Sorenson enacted her environment by taking gate keeping actions to keep students with certain types of IEPs out of her school. Mrs. Sorenson acted when a student had an IEP with intensive services outside of the general education classroom.

> So I was really careful in that. If somebody tries to register with 25 hours, I'd tell the parent, "This" – "You know, we are an Inclusive environment and this may not be the best place for your child. Let me see if I can help you find a school that's closer." You know, or things like that.

Mrs. Sorenson and Ms. Violet enacted their environment by using gate keeping actions to remove students with certain behavioral problems from the school. For example, Ms. Violet had a student with an emotional disturbance who had extreme behavioral problems. Initially, she pushed her staff to work with the student. However, Ms. Violet eventually came to the conclusion the student needed an alternate placement.

Oh, yeah, he would physically hit on him [the assistant principal], spit on him, do all kinds of stuff to him. And I feel real bad for the school. Yes, there's work to be done around behavior. But he's got a lot of issues. And we had to switch the kid because he was like, I've just been hit, kicked, bit so many times, enough is enough. He just had a really, really tough time. Sometimes he would just spend whole days in a room by himself with his aide. And it just was not a good place for him.

Mrs. Sorenson faced a similar type of student in her school and worked hard to have the student removed to an alternative placement. She described the student and the situation.

His aggression was just too much. He would throw chairs, he would throwing furniture, he was I mean fighting, he was breaking things, he was breaking windows, all sorts of things. You know, his mother would keep him home once in a while just to give us a break and you know just was back and forth and so finally it was not until end of May that we actually got him a new placement and then at that point, they are going to move him now until next year, not now, so, he stayed here all year with me almost restraining him everyday like literally sitting on the floor restraining him for at least an hour and then he was fine with me.

Principals enacted their environment by taking the actions described above. These actions directly and indirectly impacted inclusion. The actions described above were taken as principals shifted into different roles. In order to shift into different roles and act, principals needed information about what they were experiencing. The

177

next section will discuss the sensemaking characteristic of extracted cues. Extracted

cues provide principals with information about what was happening in the

organizational environment.

Extracted Cues

Principals extracted cues from their environment to help them make sense of

inclusion. The cues principals extracted from their environment included

standardized test scores, teacher flexibility and expertise, special education testing

results, special education teacher caseload and scheduling, previous student

placement, student disability type, and behavior. Table 12 below provides a list of

each cue principals extracted from their environment, a description of the cue, and an

example from a principal. Not all principals extracted all of the cues listed below or

used the extracted cue in the same way. The cues listed in Table 12 are fit into three

categories: 1.) student related extracted cues; 2.) assessment related extracted cues,

and; 3.) staff related extracted cues.

Table 12. Extracted Cues used for Sensemaking

Cue	Description	Example
Standardized Test scores	Results from the state's annual assessment in English-Language Arts and Mathematics.	Well, we looked at the capacity of certain students, both test scores as well as some of the testing… So, we gave students small increments in terms of opportunities. (Mrs. Allen)
		"All the data is telling me that the students are not performing like they need" (Mr. Oliver)
Teacher Flexibility and Expertise	The ability of a teacher to accommodate for a student's challenging behavior.	We wanted to put them into classrooms where we knew the teachers would be more apt to collaboration with somebody. Because we know that that's one of the key drivers of a successful inclusion program. (Ms. Violet)

Evaluation Assessment Results	Scores and recommendations in special education assessment reports	I observed (4/1/11) Mrs. Smith direct an IEP team to re-read a psychological assessment. Then she prompted the team to discuss certain findings from the report.
Schedule /Caseload	The number of special education teachers in relation to the number of special education students, grade levels, and special education programs.	You know, out of 34-35 students, eight of those students are in the ED and two of them are in the hearing impaired class. So, the remaining students are on one teacher's caseload, which is a lot. (Mrs. Allen)
Observations of Teaching	The information the principal receives from observing teachers providing instruction to students.	I walk into classrooms all day and so I know that there is quality instruction as being delivered to the students but there is some support that is needed in certain areas. (Mrs. Allen)
Previous placement/IEP	The location, intensity, and type of services a student received prior to entering the school.	If somebody tries to register with 25 hours, I'd tell the parent, "This" – "You know, we are an Inclusive environment and this may not be the best place for your child. Let me see if I can help you find a school that's closer. (Mrs. Sorenson)
Disability Type	The student's disability as listed on the student's IEP.	In a discussion about a student with a specific learning disability, Mrs. Sorenson stated: We are going to meet again in September, but this is not the right placement for him. He needs a more structured environment. He was at [another school] with eight kids and then now, he is going to be around 20 kids and he can't handle it.
Behavior	The types of behaviors a student may exhibit in the classroom and school.	"He loves to be around people. Now he puts on skits and teammate raps and he is singing and dancing." (Mrs. Sorenson) "Are kids happy?" (Mr. Oliver) "They used to smear their feces all over the wall, run around, rip stuff off the walls. They were just totally wild." (Ms. Violet)
Teacher Expectations	The principal's perception of teacher expectations for students with disabilities.	I totally understood why the test scores were the way they were. Because the kids were not expected to do grade level curriculum. (Mr. Oliver)

Student related extracted cues

Principals identified and extracted cues that were directly related to student attributes and characteristics. Behavior, disability type, and the student's IEP and previous placement served as cues for certain principals. Within an IEP, principals looked at the number of hours of specialized instruction a student received, whether or not a student had a Behavior Improvement Plan (BIP), and the type of related services the student received. In some instances principals placed different values and meanings on the cues.

Student behavior was a cue that influenced principal sensemaking. Mrs. Sorenson, Mrs. Allen, Ms. Violet, and Mr. Oliver all extracted the cue of observed student behavior. Each of the principals extracted similar but different meanings from the same cue. For example, Mrs. Sorenson identified the extracted cue of observed behavior as a key indicator of whether or not a student with a disability should be included in the general education classroom. "He would throw chairs, he would be throwing furniture, he was, mean, fighting, he was breaking things, he was breaking windows, all sorts of things… It was not the placement that he needed."

Ms. Violet made sense of the behavior cue in a similar way. She felt that some behavior was extreme and most likely warranted a more segregated placement. She recalled the story of one of her students.

He wasn't the normal pain in the neck. While he's cursin' me and the assistant principal off in the room for 20 minutes, we felt bad, like, wow. He would destroy. And it was pretty obvious. [The assistant principal] following

him through the building and was chasing after him through the building once. [The assistant principal] was escorting visitors into our main hallway – [the student]with his dedicated – he yells "fuck!" He will not be with us in the fall. I do not remember where he's going.

Mrs. Allen extracted behavior as a cue but used the cue to consider the amount of time a student should be included in the general education classroom.

The resistance that he [student] put forward of not wanting to go to receive his services and not wanting to do his work, just like completely shutting down. There were points in the school year we had to reevaluate the decision that was made and question as whether he needed to be in a more restrictive placement.

One important difference between Mrs. Allen's school and Ms. Violet and Mrs. Sorenson's schools were that Mrs. Allen's school has a full time self-contained program for students with emotional disturbances while Mrs. Sorenson and Ms. Violet's schools did not. Mrs. Allen may have interpreted the same cue differently because of the placement options available at her school.

Mr. Oliver extracted the cue of behavior but constructed meaning of that cue in a very different way from Mrs. Sorenson, Mrs. Allen, and Mrs. Violet. Mr. Oliver believed that poor behavior reflected the IEP team not crafting an effective IEP or teacher's not capable or willing to support the student. For example, Mr. Oliver recalled a teacher brining up a student:

Oh this kid's having behavior issues," but it's a student with an IEP. And so I would then begin to discuss what else do we need to do with the IEP to beef

up the behavioral goals. So my key is whenever I hear a student, a student

with special needs come to my – if I constantly hear their name being brought

up, I know we have an issue.

Principals extracted cues from the student's disability type and his or her IEP.

The disability type of Emotional Disturbance and the amount of IEP service hours

stood out to principals in this study. Ms. Violet, Mrs. Sorenson, and Mrs. Allen

constructed meaning of these cues in similar ways. Mr. Oliver and Ms. Smith did not

have an influx of students with IEPs or students with emotional disturbance so I could

not examine if they would have extracted these cues and how they would construct

meaning from these cues.

Mrs. Sorenson recalled being notified about a student with an IEP being

transferred to her school. She discussed her feelings and what occurred when the

student arrived.

He had full time hours, 27.5 hours; a dedicated aide. He had a BIP [Behavior

Intervention Plan], everything that they listen in his IEP. I am a full inclusion

program. They wanted him in a self-contained classroom and I didn't have

the staff for a self-contained classroom because at that point all of my

teachers, and at that point I had 30 kids, there I had 30 kids with three

teachers, that's 10 kids per teacher.

Mrs. Sorenson immediately recognized that her school could not service this student.

She began the process of attempting to have the student transferred before the student

arrived.

Ms. Violet and Mrs. Allen also discussed having students transferring into their schools with disabilities that are related to student behavior and a large amount of services. Ms. Violet recalled a student:

> Well, the person had been at [ECPS's School for Student's with Emotional Disturbances] his whole career. And he was only in second grade. So I don't know what age it starts. But he had a really, really, really, hard time. And he was hospitalized several times this year. Psychiatric hospitals. But he really did not do well at our school. He had a one-on-one [dedicated aide] who he'd beat up all the time.

Ms. Violet and her staff worked to have the student removed. The student had a new placement at another school the following school year.

The extracted cue of observed negative behavior often motivated the principal into the role of supervisor where they directed teachers to document processes to have the student removed to a more restrictive setting. They enacted their environment through gate-keeping actions to have the student removed from the general education classroom or the school.

Assessment related extracted cues

Principals identified and extracted cues that were directly related to assessment results. Special education assessment results and standardized test scores served as cues for certain principals. The assessments included any standardized test used to evaluate the eligibility of a student for special education and related services. Principals identified these cues but in some instances placed different values and means on the cues.

Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Allen paid close attention to special education assessment results such as speech and language evaluations, Woodcock-Johnson educational assessments, and comprehensive psychological evaluations. I observed Mrs. Smith (4/1/11, 5/31/11) and Mrs. Allen (5/16/11) take time to review the assessments in meetings and reference evidence to support an argument about the student and where they should be placed. Mrs. Allen shifted into her expert role when she noticed staff not utilizing the assessments in meetings. Mrs. Smith flirted with the expert role. She would prompt the team to look at the assessments but wasn't fully able to direct staff on the assessment results.

All of the participants extracted the cue of standardized assessment scores. Mrs. Allen constructed meaning from the scores differently than the other principals in this study. Mrs. Allen viewed the standardized assessments as indicators of whether or not a student with a behavioral disability should be included in the general education classroom. She provided an example:

> So, we gave students small increments in terms of opportunities. I mean, I have a classic example of a student who was in a self-contained class, who we would have to physically restrain sometimes for completely having a meltdown of sorts, and he is in a regular fifth grade class right now, and if you went into the classroom, you wouldn't know that it was the same child. So, we gradually reintegrated him, until he's fully integrated. He does not have an IEP any longer at all. He scored proficient every time we test him. So, I mean, it just depends, you have to look at students individually.

Each of the other principals linked standardized test scores to a fair or unfair judgment of their school. Mr. Oliver believed the test data gave an accurate portrayal of his teachers' ability and his students' academic performance. He viewed the assessments as evidence that his school was not performing and change was required. Ms. Violet, Mrs. Sorenson, and Mrs. Smith all took their assessment scores with a grain of salt. Mrs. Sorenson and Ms. Violet felt that the low test scores at their school didn't capture growth or their hard work. Mrs. Sorenson stated:

> Because, when you have kids that are reading three or four years below grade level and they you expect them to read at grade level text, you can't. This is what I think. If they are reading on a first grade level, can you give them first grade text or you can get a true picture of what they really know.

Mrs. Smith's view of assessment data was different from the other principals. She thought the public nature of the test data was problematic to her development of an inclusive school that is student centered.

> I think that's the challenge is finding that way of balancing the precise work of our data driven world and very public performance and what we all, parents, the district, myself, the teachers and kids want, which is the sense of being – we're an elementary school. And there should be joy, and there should be playfulness, and there should be not the hurry up, hurry up, hurry up, but the chance to do a little meandering because it's elementary school. And so I think that's been a challenge.

Principals used special education assessments and standardized assessments to construct meaning. In some instances, principals shifted in to specific roles and took on specific actions based on these assessments.

Staff related extracted cues

All principals identified and extracted cues that were directly related to their staff and their daily responsibilities. Teacher expectations, flexibility, caseload and schedule, and expertise served as cues for certain principals. Principals identified these cues and placed similar values and meanings on these cues.

Mrs. Smith and Ms. Violet looked specifically at teacher flexibility to meet the needs of a student. Mrs. Smith was strategic about which classroom would be a better fit:

We specifically placed him in that classroom thinking that this was a classroom that was going to be – that was the right, again, inclusive setting for him, and we were just 100 percent right. I have two second grade rooms. If he had gone to the other second grade room, which functions in a much sort of tighter fashion, I think we would have had a lot of behavioral issues as we did the year prior.

Ms. Violet used the same cues as Mrs. Smith to make a similar decision. During an observation (3/15/11) Ms. Violet gave me a tour through the building. As we walked through the building she identified the general education teachers on each grade level who had the students with disabilities and/or the students with the most challenging behaviors. I asked, "so you make a conscious choice on which class on a grade level a student will go?" She replied, "Oh yes! Of course" and smiled ear to ear as if the

answer was obvious. She highlighted teacher strengths and weaknesses on the tour and had reasons for why one teacher was a better fit than the other teacher on the same grade level. The cue of teacher observations prompted principals to move into the human resource leader role.

Principals extracted a variety of cues from their environment in order to help them make sense of what was going on. They way principals constructed meaning from these cues was in part linked to their personal experiences and professional knowledge. The meaning constructed from these cues prompted principals to shift roles and to enact their environment. Extracted cues were not the only information principals pulled from the environment. The principal position is highly social. Principals interacted with a variety of stakeholders. These interactions had implications on the way they made sense of inclusion. Social interactions are important to understanding principal sensemaking.

Social

Principals were influenced by their perceptions of social interactions. Principals interacted with parents, teachers, central office, and other principals in the district. Table 13 below indicates the different social interactions principals referenced and how these interactions influenced their sensemaking of inclusion. Not all principals reacted in the same way to similar social interactions.

Table 13. Social Interactions

Party	Interaction	Influence
Parents	Many have the financial resources to choose something else but have chosen this school. And with that comes a tremendous amount of appreciation for the school, but also a tremendous amount of	Most principals had very little parent interaction. Therefore, principals were not constrained by making decisions about where to

	expectation. (Mrs. Smith) I think our parents feel like we are doing great in that area because we have had students that because of their mainstream experience they don't have behavioral problems now and they have been able to reintegrate fully so our parents are happy with that especially if it's dealing with their child you know, in particular. (Mrs. Allen)	place students from the parents. Mrs. Smith was constrained by parents because her parents were engaged and extremely demanding. Mrs. Smith felt she needed to go above and beyond what the law required to satisfy her parents.
Teachers	Morale of the staff is a huge part of it. I also found that whenever people are confused it's usually because we've not gone through it to get the buy-in from them, and so therefore, things start to fall apart. (Mr. Oliver) I think the idea of collaborative planning, the idea of professional development to working with a coach is new to a lot of folks, and a lot of people are resistant to it. (Ms. Violet)	Most principals felt pushback from staff on some school reforms and policies such as co-planning and frequent observations. Principals balanced tough feedback and criticism with positive remarks and understanding to promote policies they wanted support wit in their schools.
Central Office	But anything of real substance, anything to really help me as a principal understand what the needs are of a special education learner has not been provided to me by the district. (Mrs. Smith)	All principals felt that they could not rely on the central office for training or support. As a result, they did not pay attention to central office initiatives.
Principal Colleagues	If I have learned any of that, it has come from my dialogue with other principals or with my special education coordinator as we literally sit on a set of steps and talk. (Mrs. Smith)	Principals could ask each other questions but reported rarely asking questions or for support from colleagues.

Parents

Principals engaged in social interactions with parents. For the most part, parent interactions were not directly related to issues of inclusion. The majority of the interactions were around student behavior and school events. The principals had similar interactions with parents. Most interactions were positive or neutral. Mrs.

Sorenson had discussed negative parent interactions. The way in which principals viewed their parents and their actions influenced the way the principals made sense of parents and many of the issues that their students faced.

Mrs. Smith appeared to be the most influenced by her parents. She crafted her day around meeting with parents and felt pressured by parents to be extremely accommodating.

> Families that are here, many have chosen the area because of the school.
> Many have the financial resources to choose something else but have chosen
> this school. And with that comes a tremendous amount of appreciation for the
> school, but also a tremendous amount of expectation. They recognize that they
> could be having that, and they're here, and they want that here. So there's a
> lot of expectation that parents put on teachers, and that's okay because
> generally, that makes us responsive and working hard.

The pressure Mrs. Smith felt influenced special education and inclusion in her school. I observed (5/31/11) Mrs. Smith discuss the type and intensity of services a student needed with her SEC and general education teacher. The team agreed that the student didn't need any services in the area of written expression because he did not have a deficit. However, the student did have a poor grade in the class because of writing. Mrs. Smith agreed with the team and stated that under the law they did not have to provide him with special education in this area but informed the team they would add a goal and services because that's what the parent expected.

Ms. Violet was not actively engaged in making decisions in the area of special education but she was aware that some parents were not pleased with her school's

189

special education program. Some parents with students with disabilities were upset with Ms. Violet over suspensions and frequent parent contact in reference to behavior.

> And I think we made them mad because we included them a lot in conversations about their kids in terms of, quite frankly, behavior and grades and academics. We had some outrageous behaviors, which definitely the parents were pulled in.

Ms. Violet wanted parents to be engaged and support the school but didn't always find that level of support from the parents. Mrs. Sorenson had angry and upset parents. Mrs. Sorenson described a group of parents at her school:

> I have the other group of parents who don't matter what I do they are not happy. It doesn't matter. I could give them a million dollars and they are still not going to be happy that they don't like me personally. They don't like anything that I am doing. They don't, they just don't get it.

Mrs. Sorenson was influenced by these negative social interactions and at times engaged in serious disputes with parents. Mrs. Sorenson barred certain parents from entering the building and didn't allow parents to observe classrooms without her permission and supervision. The parent climate was not friendly.

Mrs. Allen and Mr. Oliver struggled with parent engagement but did not describe any negative interactions with parents. They noted that their parents had a great deal of responsibilities outside of the school and that they continued to try new methods to attract parental engagement in their schools.

Teachers

Principals engaged in social interactions with their teachers. Many of the interactions the principals had with their teachers were similar. Some of the principals consistently maintained a positive view of teachers. Some principals blamed teachers for student behavior and failures to support students with disabilities. The way principals engaged with their teachers shaped influenced the roles principals played with their teachers and how they enacted their environment.

Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Allen maintained positive relationships with their teachers. They appeared to focus on their teachers' strengths. Both Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Allen described their school staff as very positive, open, and family or team oriented. They did not recall instances of negative social interactions or instances when teachers were resistant to inclusion or any reform. Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Smith's teachers were either supportive or quiet. Mrs. Smith recalled her school's supportive environment: "There has been a mutual investment by valuing them [teachers] as professionals, valuing the work that they do. That's really important and not easy physically. So no, there hasn't been pushback toward inclusion. They were ready." Mrs. Allen also did not face pushback from her staff around inclusion. I asked her if staff complained about inclusion. She recalled instances were teachers vented about dealing with a particular student or behavior but she did not recall any staff push back or tension on her decision to move toward full inclusion. Mrs. Allen stated, "No, nobody has pushed back, at least nobody has said anything to me about it."

Mrs. Sorenson, Mr. Oliver, and Ms. Violet had positive and negative interactions with their teaching staff. When I was in the participants' schools during

teacher evaluation time periods each of the principals described a tension in the building. Mr. Oliver highlighted the tension in his building:

Set the bar high enough, and any of the people able to meet the bar on their own and they're not willing to do the work to meet the expectations that you set for them. So yeah, I'm expecting turnover this year.

Mrs. Sorenson stated:

The pressure that I'm putting on teachers now to push harder for instruction is really coming through. And so [teacher evaluations] are not going the way that they thought: 1. Because I'm being harder on them, but 2. the whole rubric has changed. So now they're mad at me because they got [very low ratings] and they were [rated highly] last year. Well, I can't really do anything about that. You know things like that. So the morale overall is fine. I've had to have a lot of difficult conversations.

Ms. Violet highlighted similar tensions with her teachers:

I think some people are happy with their impact assessments and other people are not, and there is pushback. Like the union folks just came yesterday and had a meeting. So that speaks to something.

Social interactions between teachers and principals influenced the way principals viewed their staff. Principals with negative interactions with staff moved into the role supervisor and enacted their environment by taking culture shaping actions. Principals with positive interactions took on the role of advocate and continued to push their staff toward inclusion.

Central Office

Principals engaged in social interactions with central office staff. Social interactions with central office were less frequent, except through e-mail, and were often frustrating to the principal. Most principals felt the interactions were meaningless. The limited interactions with central office directly and indirectly influenced the way principals made sense of inclusion. All five principals did not pay attention to the district's special education rating system. Some could not describe any communication from the district around inclusion. Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Sorenson could describe the district's inclusion plan based on conversations with central office staff but both had totally different conceptions of inclusion.

Mrs. Sorenson believed she had the power to develop any type of inclusion model she wanted and even had the power to put all of her students in self-contained classrooms. Mrs. Sorenson discussed inclusion policy for Essex City Public Schools:

So I, pretty much, in this building as the Principal I can make whatever decisions that I wanna make. I can say I'm Inclusion today. Next September, I can say I'm Self Contained. So I really, truly, think that the system needs to come across the board that says, "We're All-Inclusive. And if you can't be Inclusive, then you need to document why you can't, and then you need to meet with [the Deputy Superintendent over Special Education] office or whomever's office, to decide on why you can't. But it's very carte blanche. It's very – I made that decision that we were gonna be Inclusive when I came. And there's other principals who believe the same. But there's other principals who say, "No, they should still be in a self-contained classroom.

And there's definitely very little guidance around that from ECPS's end of the plate. There's not even a guideline "if a child has less than 10 hours, he should be Inclusive.

Mrs. Smith's made sense of the district's inclusion policy and the law differently from Mrs. Sorenson. She recalled a meeting she attended with a handful of principals and the deputy superintendent in charge of special education:

[The Deputy Superintendent talked] a little bit in the passionate way that he does about the issue of kids that are being served outside the district by all these specialized population and by these schools, and the notion that we as inside the school system say that we can't serve them. The law says we're required to serve them no matter what their disability is. The law says that the local public school needs to be prepared. And we had a pretty fiery conversation about how that reality is a pretty challenging reality because if that's the truth, then you have to have schools that are really set up to be that multiply responsive to the multiple needs that are out there. It doesn't even work to do this cluster program. That's not what the law says. The law doesn't say you can group those kids and put them here. That's actually against the law, and yet, that's kind of a persisting thing that is happening in the district. So it was a pretty fiery conversation around our need as local school houses to be ready for whoever presents at the door. And I mean, I can think back to the summer where I invested an awful lot of time in considering whether we were the right place for a student to come, and deciding that, in fact, I felt like based on the limited staffing and the limited

physical space, we weren't. And then I felt like there would be other places in the district that could serve him better. I mean, I believe that. I think there are other schools that have better staffing and better facility to do that. But it's true. He didn't end up coming here. I don't know where he's being served right now. And really, truth be told, we need to be in the place where we're ready to receive him no matter what. No matter the challenge. If he's in the neighborhood, he should be here.

Mrs. Sorenson understood the district's inclusion policies as a "carte blanche" policy where individual principals had the power and authority to decide what inclusion would look like in their buildings. Mrs. Smith had a very different description. She felt legally obligated to provide students with access to the general education classroom and to their neighborhood schools. However, Mrs. Smith recognized that she did not always have the resources to do so.

One aspect of central office communication that all principals acknowledged was their school's special education star rating. The star rating system was the score card for their school's special education program, which included an extra credit star for inclusion. Interestingly, none of the principals knew there school's exact star rating or seemed to care. Each discussion on the star rating was brief and straight to the point. When asked about their school's star rating the principals said:

Mrs. Sorenson stated: "Don't know. There are too many other things to be on my radar, you know I mean until my name gets on some little list, you know what I mean."

Mrs. Smith stated: "I'm embarrassed to say that I don't recall it."

Mr. Oliver stated: "God, I don't even remember it."

Mrs. Allen stated: "I think at one point we even had 4 stars."

Ms. Violet stated: "I do not. And very honestly, I don't really pay attention to the stars. I don't think I checked our star rating once this year."

The principals' social interactions with the central office appeared to be very unclear and frustrating. They did not pay close attention to the central office's inclusion policy or the Office of Special Education's Star Rating system. The lack of clarity from the social interactions with the district may explain why principals rarely or never referenced ECPS's inclusion policy.

Principals/Colleagues

Principals had opportunities to interact and discuss issues and problems in their school during monthly district wide training sessions and smaller cluster sessions with roughly ten to twelve principals. Principals also visited other schools in their district and conducted learning walks and met with local superintendent to discuss observations. No principal in this study discussed having any conversations about inclusion with any of their colleagues or with their local superintendents.

Principals interacted with a number of different individuals and groups within their school. The interactions frequently prompted principals to move into different roles and take certain actions. The process of identifying a cue, interpreting a social interaction, moving in and out of different roles, and taking action is an ongoing process. It never stopped.

Principal sensemaking of inclusion is ongoing. The ongoing process of sensemaking was triggered by a variety of changes within the school environment. Principals continued to make sense of inclusion as their budgets changed from year to year, new students with disabilities were added to their school, due process complaints were filed against the school, student behavior and academic performance changed, and teacher retired, resigned, or were hired.

An increase in due process complaints and compliance work influenced the way Mrs. Smith made sense of inclusion in her building. For years Mrs. Smith has felt very comfortable with her special education program and providing services for students both inside and outside of the general education classroom. Then, last year, three due process complaints and the loss of a special education teacher due to budgetary reasons worried Mrs. Smith. She became concerned that she would not be able to provide all services in the general education classroom. She stated:

> I'll say that until this year, that (one special education teacher who acts as a special education coordinator) has been a doable arrangement. But for no real fault of our own, this year, we started the year with three legal cases. And she is spending 90 percent of her time as an SEC, and 10 percent of her time as a resource teacher. And, again, this is a model that we've had that has been successful prior, and so I can only kick myself so much to say I should have known better.

Changes in the student caseload influenced the way Mrs. Sorenson made sense of inclusion in her building. Mrs. Sorenson believed that full inclusion was

possible in her school given her projected enrollment for the first day of school but full inclusion was not obtainable if Kraft ES received students with more hours on their IEP throughout the course of the school year. I asked her if full inclusion was obtainable at her school. She responded:

> Yes and no, is it attainable with my current case load, yes. When it becomes, when you receive students with IEP that are well written, and that are well written for full inclusion yes. It is 100% obtainable in my school. What happens though, when you receive students with IEP that are incorrectly or improperly written, or you receive student's with IEP's 27.5 hours that's say outside of the general ed population, then it is not attainable. So then what happens, they tell you that you have to serve that child, they you have to pull your general ed teacher from teaching inclusion to service that child, then how are the rest of your students being impacted?

An increase in poor student behavior influenced principal sensemaking of inclusion, especially on an individual student level. Mrs. Allen discussed a fourth grade student who was identified as having an emotional disturbance. The student came from a self-contained setting but the IEP team at her school decided to try him in a general education setting. He struggled a lot with behavior which led to Mrs. Allen putting a teacher's aide in the classroom primarily assigned to deal with the student. She waited to see how the student did that year and if his behavior improved. The student did improve somewhat, but was far from perfect. Mrs. Allen pushed the IEP team to keep the student in the general education classroom for the following

year. Mrs. Allen highlighted being unsure at the time about how the student would adapt:

> There were points in the school we had to reevaluate the decision that was
> made and question as whether he needed to be in a more restrictive placement.
> So there were meetings with his parents as well as the teammate as a whole
> outside of meeting with his parents to have that table discussion.

Mrs. Allen and her staff's action highlight the ongoing nature of sensemaking. During the school year she was unsure about the decision and adjustments were made to support the student. Finally, at the end of the school year the team felt enough data was available to keep the student in the general education classroom the following year.

Teacher turnover and new reforms in the school also influenced principal sensemaking of inclusion. Mrs. Sorenson believed that as she brought in new staff she would be able to include more students with disabilities in the general education classroom. She stated:

> The downfall I had last year was that I did not get to choose my staff other
> than Barbara (Assistant Principal). And that really – I had to go the
> Superintendent to have the Assistant Principal that was here removed to bring
> on Barbara. But every teacher was already hired; every teacher was already in
> place. So I inherited a mess.

Mr. Oliver's plan of action for inclusion has changed from the beginning of his first year to the end. Early in the year he focused primarily on ending pull out and holding teachers accountable for student achievement. Toward the end of school year

2010-2011 his sense of what he should be doing to support inclusion model evolved to focus on teacher training. He stated:

> I think one thing we have to do is beef up special ed teacher skills on teaching the gen ed. curriculum, and the expectations of a gen ed curriculum. We need to build up the capacity of the gen ed teachers to teach with the strategies of a special education teacher. We need to refine the IEP process and make it more focused so that we don't spend all time in meetings, but we spend our time problem solving. And resources. Interventions and resources for kids and bringing that up.

Mr. Oliver continued to look forward at next steps in supporting students by highlighting an important aspect of supporting learners. He discussed early intervention and how that could better support all students. He discussed steps he would like to talk later in the following school year, he stated:

> I think right now it's going to be refining and just putting into place the process for early intervention. It's something I wanted to do this year, but the tiered intervention model won't work here, because tier one there were no tier one systems in DCPS. So without that tier one core curriculum, none of the other intervention is going to work. So I'm really beefing up that core curriculum, so that I can feel comfortable that there's a lot of great teaching going on. And then we can deal with interventions and the tiered invention model.

Mr. Oliver's view of what needed to be done was prioritized. As he worked through his list of items to be done his strategy and focus changed. Initially he started with

eliminating pull out and holding teachers responsible to teaching all students. Then

he discussed a need to provide training to general education and special education

teachers. Finally, Mr. Oliver discussed plans to develop early interventions to

support students before they begin to fail.

Principals continued to make sense of inclusion as their schools and situations

changed over time. Principals could never fully understand all the dynamics involved

in their school or all the elements incorporated into making a determination of where

a student should be placed. Instead, principals came to a plausible answer of what is

best for the student or school.

Plausibility

Principals used the sensemaking characteristic of plausibility to arrive at

plausible solutions to problems and constraints they faced around their inclusion

program. Principals frequently found a plausible answer to why students performed

poor in the areas of academics and behavior. Plausibility was consistently utilized as

principals shifted roles, enacted their environment, and interacted with different social

groups.

Mrs. Smith discussed a student named Tucker. Tucker was in the second

grade and had an IEP. In first grade Tucker was frequently in trouble. Mrs. Smith

stated the student's first grade teacher was a great teacher but she was rigid. Mrs.

Smith described the situation: "he had been in a classroom that wasn't quite as fluid,

and he actually had almost a halftime deal, special education sort of inclusion teacher,

but it just didn't work. It really wasn't the right model" Mrs. Smith developed the

student's schedule for the following year. She placed Tucker in the class with the less

rigid teacher. She believed one teacher would be better than the other for Tucker.
Mrs. Smith described the teacher as welcoming:

> He moved into a room where, again, the teacher was so willing to just be
> flexible and give him space and give him time and adapt to thing, that he,
> then, really rose to all that he never rose to the year prior, and he did it much
> more independently than he did the year prior when he had all those supports.

At the end of the first year, Mrs. Smith had concluded that the student would be better
in a class with a specific teacher. According to Mrs. Smith's interview, she turned
out to be correct. Mrs. Smith recognized something in the second grade teacher's
room that she believed would make Tucker more successful. She have evidence that
one teacher would be better than the other. She made selected and retained a
plausible choice that in part was related to extracted cues from teacher observations.
Her plausible conclusion that Tucker would do better with one teacher prompted Mrs.
Smith to move into the human resource leader role and enact her environment
through gate keeping actions.

Mrs. Allen discussed a difficult transition into the general education
classroom for a fourth grade student with an emotional disturbance named Tyhquan.
Tyhquan had frequent behavioral problems during the school year. Mrs. Allen came
to a plausible sense that Tyhquan's problems were in part related to his class size:

> Well Tyhquan went from a class where they were 7 kids to a class where there
> were 32 students and so just a large number of children was an issue he also
> went from a classroom of being able to have some much more 1-on-1

attention from the teacher because he was one of several third graders as opposed to being one of a host fourth grader with one teacher.

Mrs. Allen found reason in believing that Tyhquan struggled because of class size and not receiving the same amount of attention as he was use to in his self-contained classroom. Mrs. Allen's sense of the situation was not proven but plausible.

Mrs. Sorenson came to the plausible conclusion that her students' poor behavior were caused by parents and home life. She began discussing her students, their lives, and test scores. She stated: **"**They [students] come from chaotic worlds. And you have to – you have to put a boundary on things because they're not used to boundaries. So our scores are awful." Mrs. Sorenson's reference to chaotic worlds is most likely related to the students' parents and the community. Mrs. Sorenson had negative remarks about parents and the negative impact they have on their children in both interviews. Mrs. Sorenson found what she believed was a plausible answer for poor student achievement in her building. She attributed a great deal of her students' failure to parents.

Ms. Violet came to a different plausible conclusion for poor student behavior in her school. Ms. Violet believed poor behavior was linked to the mental health needs of her students. She explained what she believed caused most of her students to have behavioral problems:

> I would say, yeah, mental health. Some mental health, there are a couple that are just – I mean, it's always a function of something, but we do have kids that are just defiant, who are not labeled anything, they're just defiant. So it's maybe about five, well, probably more than that, like ten of them are serious

mental health. And then the other 20, for example, are not. Not that they

don't have mental health issues, but it's more than that, it's poor reading, that

kind of stuff.

Ms. Violet extracted the cue of observed student behavior and constructed meaning.

Ms. Violet may have been corrected or incorrect.   Her correctness was not

important.

Plausibility was important to understanding principal sensemaking of

inclusion. Principals didn't have all the information necessary to make many of the

decisions they needed to make. Even when principals had all the information,

principals did not have unlimited time to make data-driven decisions. Principals

acted quickly and moved on.   One sensemaking characteristic that is consistently

linked to plausibility was the retrospect. Principals used retrospect to look back at

past experiences in order to find a plausible meaning to what they experienced.

Retrospect

Principals used retrospect to look back at past experiences in order to come to

a plausible answer. When principals activated the retrospective characteristic of

sensemaking they appeared to be thinking about a certain structure or expectation

they had in their mind from past experiences or beliefs. Retrospect was activated in a

variety of instances.

Mrs. Smith had to make a choice of which classroom to place a student with

some challenging behaviors. She reflected on the strengths and weaknesses of her

teachers to determine which work best. She highlighted that one teacher was an

exceptionally intelligent and strong teacher but was not flexible in how she did things.

204

She placed the student in the other class because she felt the student would be more successful based on what she believed were the students' needs,   The principal described her thought process about selecting the best second grade teacher at her school to teach a student with specific needs:

> And so her inability to sort of let go meant that it was hard to create that easy communication between she and the special education teacher... it's one of the reasons why this child that I'm talking about absolutely went to the other room... And I think this other teacher did a beautiful job of creating the environment where the child could be who the child was.

Mrs. Smith used retrospect to identify that one teacher did a "beautiful job of creating the environment where the child could be who the child was." She thought about similar students and how they flourished. Retrospect aided Mrs. Smith in her decision.

Mrs. Sorenson reflected on her development of the school budget. She realized that she would need two more special education teachers given the amount of students with IEPs, their individual needs, and the grades the students were spread across. However, she didn't want to spend her budget money on hiring two more special education teachers even though she needed them because she felt she needed to spend that money on non-personnel items which included reading interventions and technology. She stated:

> I can't fund that (two special education teachers). That's $160,000, which is pretty much all my NPS money (Non-Personal Funds)... What are the number of hours that need to be serviced on those 29 kids because almost every one of

them have 10-plus hours...And it also crosses - where do they lie? You know, how many are in first grade, how many are in second grade... I have about five to six in each grade... You can't be in two places at one time.

Mr. Oliver reflected that his school was segregated. Students were being pulled out of the general education classroom to receive specialized instruction and that the instruction outside of the classroom was not rigorous. He looked back to see what was the result of the pull out model. He found low test scores and poorly written IEPs. He recalled from previous experiences that when IEPs aren't written well, students do not succeed. He stated:

I totally understood why the test scores were the way they were. Because the kids were not expected to do grade level curriculum. They were expected to do whatever the teacher wanted them to do. Like, if you look at the IEP goals, they're really tailored at a lower standard, so the kids were never able to pass the high stakes test. And so the same thing happened for my ELL students, so everyone was being pulled out. So it was obvious to me in that moment why my test scores were bad as they were, especially for the special ed population... I knew exactly what the problem was, and that's why I put a moratorium on pullout. They can't pull out.

Ms. Violet used retrospect to trace the progression of behavior of one of her students. Tyree was a student in a self-contained program for students with emotional disturbances. Tyree would run through classrooms and frequently smeared his feces on the walls of the bathroom. Ms. Violet remembered previous experiences with students with emotional disturbances. She recalled that some of the students had been

206

in self-contained classrooms surrounding by students acting out. She felt a change in setting would have a significant impact on Tyree's behavior. She stated: "Tyree needed to see that his behavior wasn't normal and if he could see other students behaving in a more acceptable way his behavioral problems would decrease" (Interview 2). She described the story of the student's transformation:

> Last year when we brought Tyree in with gen ed [class], the first couple weeks of school, we were chasing him off the playground to get him to line up; chasing him into the cafeteria, showing him how to line up, showing him how to do all that stuff. His social behaviors were way, way ridiculous... When he was in their room [ED self-contained classroom], one bad behavior would set off the rest of them. And those were his models. Tyree is like, if so-and-so's gonna do it, so am I. When he got into their first grade and in the lines and on the playground, he's like, oh, they're not running around. Maybe I shouldn't run around either… I could clearly see him starting to run. At first he did run. But then later on, he was like, oh, wait. And you could totally tell he was like, oh, crap, nobody else is running. So I think that helped. And we put in some academic interventions like Wilson Foundations.

In this anecdote Ms. Violet retrospectively made sense of Tyree's behavior by identifying a number of behaviors and looking for small improvements. Eventually, Ms. Violet came to the plausible conclusion that Tyree's behavior persisted in a self-contained ED classroom because of negative peer examples but changed and improved in the general education setting because of positive peer examples.

Principals used retrospect to support them in their sensemaking of inclusion. They looked back over student behavior, teacher observations, parent interactions, and other experiences to make sense of what they were experiencing. This process was reflective and incorporated other characteristics of sensemaking including identity construction and extracted cues.

Chapter Summary

Each of the sensemaking characteristics was present throughout the data. Principals sensed a change in the organizational environment. When they sensed this change they moved into different roles. Principals moved into different roles based on their past experiences and professional knowledge. While principals were in particular roles, they constructed meaning of cues they pulled from the organizational environment, interacted with other groups, and enacted their environment by taking actions that created opportunities or restraints for inclusion. This process was ongoing and incorporated retrospect and plausibility. Finally, principals made sense of inclusion by selecting and retaining a sense of inclusion that fit their actions and their school's context. However, a continuous stream of threats, changes, and constraints forced principals to continuously review and revise their sense of inclusion.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

The objective of this study was to answer the research question: How do elementary school principals in an urban school district make sense of inclusion in their schools. The findings described in the previous chapter have important implications for practice and theory. As an explanatory multi-case study, one of the major results of this research is a detailed description of how sensemaking theory explained the ways in which principals came to understand inclusion and the actions they took in regard to the inclusion policies in a highly demanding school and district context.

The findings of this research are especially significant because gaining research access to a high profile urban school district can be extremely difficult, especially given that the district was under multiple special education consent decrees and being monitored by the United States Department of Education and federal courts. The findings of this research are also significant because of a lack of empirical research in the area of principal sensemaking of inclusion. At the time this dissertation was completed I was unable to identify any empirical research that focused on principal sensemaking of inclusion in an urban school district.

My findings are drawn from a multi-case study that focused on five elementary school principals working within one urban school district. An assertion that the findings of this research are transferrable to all districts, schools, or principals would be unreasonable. However, the findings of this study make important

contributions to sensemaking theory, principal leadership, and inclusion

implementation. The findings also have value for improving policy and practice.

In this final chapter I will summarize the major research findings of this study.

Next, I will discuss findings and link them to implications for theory and practice.

Then, I will provide recommendations for practice and suggest future research

endeavors. Finally, I will discuss the limitations of this study and closing remarks.

Major Findings

In this section, I summarize the key findings that emerged from this study of

five principals in one urban school district. These findings are guided by my research

question and the conceptual framework of this study.

Utility of Sensemaking Theory to Inclusion Policy

Weick's sensemaking theory was useful in explaining the way principals

made sense of inclusion. Each of the seven characteristics of Weick's sensemaking

theory was present throughout the data. Jennings and Greenwood (2003)

sensemaking model adapted from Weick (1979) was useful in explaining the way

principals made sense of inclusion.

In the first emphasis of the model the actor asks the question "same or

different?" When principals were presented with new policies focused on increasing

inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classroom they

answered the question, "same or different?" Some principals viewed the inclusion

policy from the district as an opportunity (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001) some saw the

policy of inclusion as a discrepancy (Orlikowski & Gash, 1994) or something that

was not aligned with their current program. After the principals determined that something was different they needed to find a plausible answer to the question, "what's different?" The principal bracketed specific extracted cues from the policy and their own school context to help answer the question, "what is different?" Some principals concluded that they needed to move all or most of their students into the general education classroom while other principals concluded that they had to follow specific policies and procedures to maintain segregated environments for certain students.

The second emphasis of the model is enactment. Individuals enact their environments by interacting and responding to their environment and what they perceive as reality. Principals enacted their environment in a number of ways including: prohibiting certain students from enrolling in their schools or budgeting additional resources to support the mental health needs of students with challenging behaviors. The actions shaped the future opportunities and constraints for inclusion in the school.

The third emphasis of the model is selection. Actors select meaning retrospectively from extracted cues. This selection is made based upon the individual's own personal experiences and knowledge. In this study, principals justified their inclusion policies and actions based on extracted cues. Principals extracted and used the cues retrospectively to justify their actions. Some extracted cues were student behavior, IEP services and hours, disability classifications, and teacher expertise.

The fourth emphasis of the model is retention. Principals retain their selection in order make sense of the policy and their actions. Principals later utilized what was selected and retained to make sense of or predict future events and actions. Principals retained different "senses" of inclusion policy within their school. Principals retained a selection that made sense to the principal given their personal experiences and understandings. For example, a principal who made sense of inclusion policy as partial inclusion based on limited resources would continually push away or segregate new students who had certain disabilities or types of services on his or her IEP. One principal in this study shared that she prompted a family to enroll at another school because she did not believe her school would meet the needs of the student.

Interactivity between Identity Construction, Extracted Cues, and Enactment

Jennings and Greenwood's (2003) sensemaking model adapted from Weick (1979) was useful in examining sensemaking but understated the significance of identity construction and the interactivity and interconnectedness of identity construction, extracted cues, and enactment. The characteristics of identity construction, extracted cues, and enactment were interconnected in this study and had a significant influence on how principals made sense of inclusion and the other four characteristics of sensemaking. Identity construction took the lead in shaping principal sensemaking.

Figure 3 below is a model of the way principals made sense of inclusion in their schools. In this model an ecological change triggered the sensemaking process. A number of ecological changes occurred in this study including changes in policies

and procedures, new students with IEPs, and budgetary constraints. An ecological change prompted the principal to move into a specific role. Principals played a number of roles in this study including: community builder, expert, supervisor, modeler, advocate, and human resource leader.

From these roles the principals extracted cues, had social interactions with stakeholders, and enacted their environment. The role the principal selected influenced which cues were extracted, future social interactions, and the way they enacted their environments. For example, a principal in a gate keeper role may extract specific cues such as IEP hours and disability to help justify a change in placement. He or she may have some social interactions with a special education teacher who is complaining about her caseload size and sounds frustrated. The principal might feel some pressure and pushback from the teacher making them feel uneasy. The principal may then enact his or her environment by attempting to persuade a parent to enroll the child elsewhere or prompt staff to collect behavior data in order to justify a change in placement.

Retrospect and plausibility play a role in these actions and selecting and retaining a sense of inclusion. Principals look back at their previous experiences to select roles, identify or recognize cues they have used before, understand meanings of social interactions, and identify actions they have used before to shape future actions. The principals need to find plausible responses for selecting roles, cues, meanings, and actions. In the model below, the dotted line and gradient within the funnel represents the mixture of retrospect and plausibility throughout the sensemaking process and other sensemaking characteristics. The sensemaking process is ongoing

213

from ecological change to the retained sense. The process continues as changes in

policies, budgets, student populations, and other organizational related issues occur

within the school and school district.

Figure 3. Principal Sensemaking Model
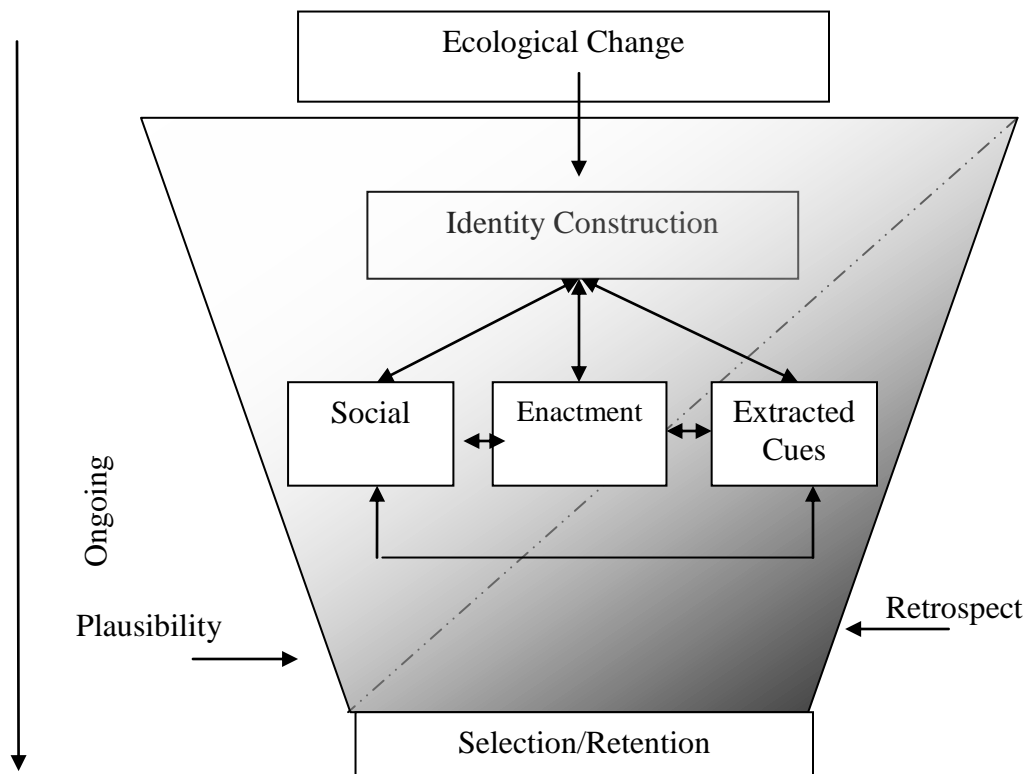
Complex Urban Environment Influences Sensemaking Processes

The complexity and challenges presented to principals by their school

environment influenced the way principals made sense of inclusion. Each of the

principals faced challenging school contexts (Bossert et al., 1982; Fullan, 2003;

Greenfield, 1995; Johnson & Fauske, 2000; Spillane et al., 2002, Weick, 1976) that

influenced the way they made sense of inclusion in their school. Greenfield (1995) found that principals worked in a "demand environment." However, the four principals that worked in high poverty schools (Kraft ES, Wilson ES, Howell ES, Martin ES) faced an even more demanding environment in a very demanding school district. The principals noted receiving little or no feedback from the district, struggling with budget and resources, parent engagement, a high population of students with disabilities and English language learners, a low quality teaching staff, and a high turnover of staff. These findings are aligned to findings of researchers and scholars focused on uncovering the additional challenges and complexities in urban public schools (Anyon, 2005; Cooke, 2007; Kozol, 1992; Losen & Orfield, 2002).

In some ways, principal sensemaking of inclusion was held captive by their organizational environments. The environment continually sent new demands to the principal which influenced his or her sensemaking. The principals in high poverty schools faced a constant flow of new students with disabilities, many with behavioral disabilities. These principals also faced budget cuts that would impact their staffing model and make inclusion more difficult. Principals paid close attention to these demands with influence on their sensemaking. Johnson and Fauske (2000) found that principals paid close attention to three types of environmental challenges: dependency, uncertainty, and vulnerability.

Principals in this study were challenged by an uncertainty: the continuous flow of students with disabilities that demonstrated challenging behaviors entering their school throughout the course of the school year. Johnson and Fauske described uncertainty as a flow of multiple and continuing threats that can cause losses (or

215

gains) of principal legitimacy. Each new student who entered the school with challenging behaviors and disrupted the school's special education program or general education classroom sent ripples through the school's organizational environment and influenced the principal's sensemaking of inclusion. The continuous flow of students meant principals needed to continually revise the way they made sense of inclusion in their schools.

Principals in high poverty schools were also extremely dependent on the district for resources. Principals found the school budget limited their ability to build an inclusion program that met the needs of their students. Johnson and Fauske defined dependency as certain issues or events that were out of the principals' control but impacted the principals' ability to improve the school. Budget allocations and cuts were out of the hands of the principals. Principals had some ability to change staffing and shift funding but many of the principals, even those who shifted funds to increase special education staff, noted that they struggled to spread special education teachers across grades to implement inclusion.

The constant stream of threats was so demanding that each principal in the study couldn't even recall their own school's Star Rating which was linked to their formal evaluations. Many of the principals felt that they dealt with so many demands that checking the Star Rating was not feasible even though principals could check their Star Rating in less than three minutes.

The high demand environment of a low-performing urban public school provided a continuous flow of threats for each of the principal's inclusion program. Principals were forced to continually revise the way the made sense of inclusion

based on these ongoing threats. Johnson and Fauske's framework for how principals identify particular environmental threats was useful in highlighting the threats that prompt the ongoing nature of sensemaking.

Relationship between Values/Attitudes and Roles/Actions

The sensemaking characteristics of identity construction and enactment highlighted particular principal roles and actions that influenced the inclusion of students with disabilities. Previous research had highlighted the actions principal can take important actions to promote inclusion (Hughes & Ubben, 1994; Salisbury & McGregor, 2002; Stanovich & Jordan, 1998;Ubben, Hughes, & Norris, 2001; Villa, Thousand, Meyers, & Nevin, 1993; Walther-Thomas & DiPaola, 2003; Walther-Thomas, DiPaola, & Butler, 2002). Research has also investigated principal attitudes related to students in special education programs and inclusion (Barnett & Monda-Amaya, 1999; Cook, Semmel, & Gerver, 1999; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Praisner, 2003; Villa et al., 1996). These two bodies of research are not sufficiently connected in the literature but this study sheds light on the relationship between attitudes and values and principal leadership roles and actions.

In this study, each principal provided their own personal definition of inclusion. However, in many instances, principals acted in ways that were not aligned with their own inclusion definition. The sensemaking framework provided a useful tool for examining the distortion between values/attitudes and roles and actions. Principals moved into the following roles as the made sense of inclusion in their schools: community builder, expert, supervisor, modeler, advocate, and human resource leader. These roles were typically not linked to values or attitudes of

217

inclusion but to personal experiences, professional biographies, and how they retrospectively constructed plausible meaning from extracted cues and social interactions.

While in these roles principals took specific actions to support or limit the inclusion program in their schools: staffing/budgeting actions, structural actions, school culture actions, problem solving, and gate keeping. These actions included: resource allocations for special education, instructional training and support, and promoting a vision of inclusion for the school. In many instances these actions did not support their own definition of inclusion. Thus, the ecological changes in the environment lead to principals moving into particular roles that lead principals to take actions and extract cues that did not align with their general attitudes toward inclusion. The lived experience and sensemaking pushed some values to the side as principals were forced to deal with significant demands and constraints.

The Elephant/Cue in the Room

Each principal in this study was different. They had different backgrounds, worked in different schools, had different skills, and different values. Many of the schools had different demographics, performance levels, and parent engagement. Principals in this study extracted a number of cues (Louis, 1980; Starbuck & Milliken, 1988; Thomas, Clark, & Gioia, 1993) from these unique circumstances. Some of these cues included: standardized test scores, teacher flexibility and expertise, special education testing results, special education teacher caseload and scheduling, previous student placement, student disability type, and behavior.

The variability of the principals and their schools and the unique nature of sensemaking typically produced principals constructing meaning of the same cues in different ways. In fact, many principals made sense of the same cues in totally different ways. The principals constructed meaning of many of these cues in a number of ways with implications on the principals' sensemaking of inclusion. For example, one principal constructed the meaning of student achievement data as an indicator that teachers were not teaching to the standards and providing high quality instruction. Another principal had similar test scores but constructed the meaning of the cue in a different way. She felt the standardized test scores did not represent the high quality instruction her teachers were providing each day. In this study, only one cue was constructed in the same way.

Each of the principals constructed the extracted cue of student behavior in a highly uniform manner. The cue was identified by each of the principals and constructed in a similar manner. The construction of the cue of behavior had serious implications on student placement. Students who misbehaved in classrooms and common settings where targeted by principals. This finding has been highlighted in other studies on principal attitudes and actions. For example, Domencic (2001) found that principals were more likely to have negative attitudes toward students with behavioral problems than students with other disabilities. Domencic also found that principals may target students with behavioral problems for more segregated setting such as resource rooms or separate schools and programs.

In this study, principals had different tolerance levels for student behavior. Some principals initially ignored the cue (Weick, 1993) of negative behavior while

others immediately acted (Weick, 1995) to remove the student from the general education setting. However, all principals in this study drew the line with student behavior at a certain point and pushed to have students placed in a resource room or separate placement. Each principal could identify at least one student during the school year that they removed based on their behavior. Moreover, no principal could describe a student being removed from the general education classroom or put into a self-contained program because of poor academic achievement, low standardized test scores, or any other cue. Thus, the extracted cue of student behavior was powerful. The cue was so powerful that a principal used the cue to predict future occurrences before they happened (Gephart, 1991; Martin, 1992). When other students with similar IEPs or behavior problems transferred to a school a principal could quickly target and remove or segregate the student.

One principal identified an extracted cue of IEP hours and the student having a Behavior Intervention Plan (typically related to poor student behavior) to create a blueprint to predict the occurrence of what would happen if the student was allowed to enter the school. The predicted event was that the student would not be successful in the school. Thus, the principal acted to keep the student from ever enrolling in the school.

Student behavior took the spotlight in this study. The purpose of this study wasn't to look specifically at any disability category under IDEA. However, students with emotional disturbances or students diagnosed as having behavioral disorders consistently emerged in interviews and observations. This finding is interesting because nationwide approximately 7.5% of students with IEPs are classified as

having an emotional disturbance while 44.6% of students with IEPs are classified as having specific learning disabilities (USDOE, 2008). Thus, principals may be ignoring other populations of special education students when principals extract the cue of poor student behavior from their environment.

Implications

Future Research

At the time of this study, only a limited amount of case study research had be conducted on principal sensemaking of a particular policy (Blanch, 1989; Callan, 2009; Callison, 2009; Emmil, 2011; Elliott, 2007; Fehsenfeld, 2010; Gorius, 1999; Grodzki, 2011; Grubb, 2006; Kinoshita, 2007; Howell, 1998; Ikemoto, 2007; Meloche, 2006; Pierce, 2009; Saltrick 2010). The potential for contributions of future sensemaking studies are boundless. Researchers should look to use sensemaking theory to explain other policies and to expand on the findings of this study in the area of inclusion. Additionally, researchers should look to use other methods of research and data collection tools. Researchers may benefit from having principals journal on their daily experiences to capture the ongoing nature of sensemaking. Researchers may also select an ethnographic study type to gain a more in-depth perspective on sensemaking.

Future research should investigate principal sensemaking while at the same time conducting a program evaluation of inclusion implementation in a school. This study focused only on the sensemaking of principals in five urban elementary schools. The findings from the study identified specific roles and actions principals take as they make sense of inclusion policy. These roles and actions were related to

the implementation of an inclusion policy. However, this study did not capture whether or not principals were effective at developing and implementing an inclusion policy. A study of that included a program evaluation component could provide greater insight into how principals make sense of inclusion and how sensemaking is related to policy implementation.

Sensemaking is a highly interactive and social process. Future research should investigate sensemaking of inclusion for multiple stakeholders within one school community. A study that can reveal the sensemaking of different groups can provide greater insights into the highly social and interactive processes of sensemaking. Previous research has also highlighted that stakeholders, particularly middle managers and executives, not only make sense but also give sense to other members of their organization. A sensemaking study that incorporates multiple stakeholders can highlight the way principals and other staff made sense and gave sense.

Future research should also address the role of race, ethnicity, gender, and leadership experience play in sensemaking. This study highlighted the significance of identity construction in the sensemaking process but did little to highlight the role of race, ethnicity, gender, and leadership experience in the development of those roles. Generally, sensemaking research has ignored these aspects of identity. Future researchers should incorporate these important variables into their studies in order to capture a more detailed understanding of sensemaking.

Finally, future research on principal sensemaking of inclusion should also assess principal knowledge and expertise in order to identify possible relationships

between expertise and principal sensemaking. A number of researchers (Cline, 1981; DiPaola & Tschnannen-Moran, 2003; Hirth & Valesky, 1989; Kaye, 2002; Martin, 2005; Patterson, Bowling, & Marshall, 2000; Salisbury, 2006; Valesky & Hirth, 1992; Weinstein, 1989) have assessed principal knowledge of special education. An investigation into the knowledge and expertise of principals and how knowledge and expertise influence sensemaking would be an important contribution to the sensemaking literature.

Policy and Practice

A number of recommendations for policy and practice emerged from this study. These recommendations are particularly relevant to central office administrators, principals, and educators of principals and school-based staff. This study found that the school district initiated a barrage of reforms within a short period of time and that principals were frequently unaware of reforms or too overwhelmed to pay attention to the reforms. Additionally, principals noted that professional development from the district was of little use. I offer the following three recommendations to central office administrators attempting to implement new policies within a school district:

1) Principals in this study and in other studies have reported that professional development by districts is often not helpful or related to their day to day work. Professional development sessions can be developed using sensemaking theory to create cases for groups of principals to discuss and analyze. In these professional development sessions principals can review cases and have critical discussions about the different roles principals

played, the cues they extracted, and the other social interactions they experienced. Then, principals can use a protocol to pose questions about the case. For example, principals could ask, "what if the principal in this case played the role of a resource manager rather than a supervisor?" or "could the principal in this case study constructed meaning of student behavior in a different way? If so, how could that has shaped the principals future sensemaking and actions?" As principals build their skills in questioning and reviewing case studies in groups they can be asked to present their own cases within their groups.

2) Central office staff must be aware of the organizational environment principals operate within and how the policies impact that organizational environment. Some principals perceive challenges in their schools which have implications for how they act. Central office must address those perceived challenges when they roll out policies. Central office administrators may want to survey principals after introducing a new policy to capture outstanding questions and concerns in order to provide meaningful follow up training and support.

3) Central office staff should be careful about how they communicate policy changes and how principals make sense of those policy changes. Central office staff should clarify a process for rolling out any new policy and supplement policy roll out with trainings that target principal needs.

This study also revealed the roles and actions principals can take to implement inclusion in their schools. Principals evaluated their school budget, staffing, student

caseload, and be able to anticipate student enrollment changes through a school year in order to develop an inclusion model that can support the needs of students. From these roles principals acted and enacted their environment. I offer the following four recommendations for principals attempting to implement inclusion in their school or are struggling to wrestle with issues of special education:

1) Take advantage of the knowledge and expertise within your building and of principals across the district. Principals must identify similar schools that have strong special education programs and investigate the actions principals have taken to develop these programs. Principals should not wait for the district to provide answers to questions or training in the area of special education.

2) Principals should review and revise their school's education mission and vision. One role that a principal can play in his or her school is the role of advocate for inclusion. Principals should actively advocate for inclusion with their teachers and staff.

3) Principals should review their budgets and identify ways they can modify their staffing model. Principals should collaborate with colleagues in similar schools to identify the most effective staffing model and master schedule.

4) Principals should ensure that they are not just paying attention to students with IEPs that have behavioral challenges. Principals need to manage the entire special education population and ensure that all students with IEPs are given the attention and support they need.

Each of the principals in this study confirmed that their academic coursework in the area of special education or school leadership did not prepare them for their position as principal or provide them with adequate knowledge of special education. Previous research has produced similar findings ((DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Katsiyannis, Conderman, & Franks, 1996). I offer the following three recommendations for educators of principals or future principals:

1) Habits of the mind are important for effective leadership. This study showed that the roles principals move into and the types of data they use to take action. Principals need to be reflective in their decisions and question the information they use to make decisions and the roles they play when taking actions. Principals who can question their own practices can expand their own sensemaking and increase the chances of leading in ways that maximize opportunities for students with disabilities.

2) Coursework provided to aspiring principals should incorporate case studies and the theoretical framework of sensemaking. This will help future principals become aware of their own shortcomings and provide them with knowledge for being reflective and logical when they become leaders.

3) Principals and future principals should receive trainings on how to manage a school budget and adjust and modify the budget and staffing model based on changes to the school's organizational environment.

This study focused on a purposeful sample of five elementary school principals in one urban school district. The principals differed in race, gender, expertise, and experience. Each school had different student populations, academic achievement levels, and building histories. The variation between principals and schools enabled me to flush out how principals make sense of inclusion in a demanding school context but the findings of this study cannot be said to represent any principals outside of this group.

The Essex City Public School system provided opportunities and constraints for this study. The school district context with multiple special education consent decrees, increased accountability for principals and teachers, and the pace of change all created a unique school district. Thus, these findings may not be transferable to another school district or to Essex City Public Schools in the future.

The small sample of principals in this study and the limited duration of data collection posed limitations to the study. The sensemaking process is ongoing and never ends (Weick, 1995, 2001). Once data collection ends, the findings from the data cannot be said to truly capture a final product of principal sensemaking. Instead, the findings are an incomplete snapshot of how the principal made sense of inclusion at a given time. That sense may have changed since the data collection process concluded.

A further limitation of this study is on the perspectives in this study. Principals were the sole unit of analysis. Teachers and other stakeholders' perspectives were not included in the study. I relied exclusively on interviews with

227

the principal and observations of the principals to analyze the way principals made sense of inclusion. I did not seek out other perspectives that might have confirmed or disconfirmed the way principals acted or the way they made sense of inclusion.

Finally, this study was limited by me. I am sure that I unintentionally attended to data in ways that reflected what I wanted to hear instead of what was actually there. My analysis was limited by my own cognitive limitations and experiences as a researcher and as an insider in the school district. As I noted in Chapter 3, I tried to attend to these validity challenges but I acknowledge that my best efforts to remain impartial could have only limited my bias but not removed my bias.

Closing Remarks

In this study, the principals shared their experiences and tough decisions made through the course of their work. In many instances principals found ways to support students with disabilities in the general education classroom. However, not all the stories in this study were positive. The principals acknowledged the challenges they faced each day and their own shortcomings as leaders. The principals painted portraits of imperfect schools and their own imperfect leadership. Some principals described scenarios and actions that did not clearly caste them in the light of hero or reformer. Rather, some actions seemed distasteful or unwarranted. For example, a principal attempted to persuade a parent not to enroll their child with a disability in their school or sending a student with a disability to another school rather than take other steps.

Some of these actions seem difficult to understand or entirely inappropriate. However, this study was not about right or wrong. This study was about how

principals made sense of inclusion.   I felt at times the pressure to pass judgment. When I felt this pressure looked back to the data. I grounded my own feelings in the data. The data continually brought to the fact that principals faced a barrage of constraints, problems, and shortfalls as they attempted to balance what was best for each student and all students. In my opinion, the situations most of the principals faced, given their constraints and environment, meant that in many instances they had no positive options and only the lesser of evils.

I offer thanks to each one of the participants in this study for their participation but also their passion, courage, and dedication to their schools and students. I am proud that these five individuals are my colleagues and are now linked to my own experiences through this study. I hope each reader of this dissertation will recognize the difficulties of urban school leadership, will realize the serious constraints these principals faced when attempting to support their students and school, and stay away from evaluating their actions, values, and stances without first understanding the full context.

Appendix A

Interview 1 Protocol

<u>Date/Time:</u>

<u>Location/Setting:</u>

<u>Principal:</u>

Introduction Questions
1. How long have you been in education?
    a. What subject/grade did you teach when you were a teacher/How long were you a teacher?
    b. Did you teach many special education students? How would you describe your experience as a teacher?
    c. Did you have students with disabilities in your classroom?
        i. Were they successful?
        ii. Why/Why not? How did you know they were or weren't successful?
        iii. Where did they struggle/achieve?
2. How long have you been the principal at your school?
    a. How long have you been a principal?
    b. Is ECPS the only school district you have been a school principal?
        i. If no, what did you learn about inclusion and special education in your former district?
3. What did your principal certification coursework/master's degree teach you about special education/managing special education/inclusion?
    a. What have you learned since in these areas?
    b. How did you learn these things?
4. Did ECPS provide any training for you on inclusion?
    a. Describe your district training experiences with special education and inclusion?
    b. Did you feel prepared to work with special education as a principal?

Guiding Questions
1. Describe your school.
    a. Strengths/Weaknesses need to be identified
    b. Staff
        i. General Education staff
        ii. Special Education staff
        iii. Turnover
    c. Students (demographics/behavioral challenges)

  d. Parents (involvement)

  e. School District

    i. School ratings for special education

    ii. Training

  f. ESEA:AYP/Achievement

  g. School resources: staff/supplies

  h. Obstacles/Uncertainties/Barriers

  i. Successes

  j. Events/issues that stand out the capture your school's context/complexity

  k. Daily life at your school

2. What are your daily responsibilities in a typical school day?

  a. Who do you manage? How is work delegated? What work do you keep for yourself? (If special ed comes up, follow up to get explanation.)

3. What are the most important responsibilities you have in your school? (Does inclusion come up? If not, follow up)

  a. Responsibilities

  b. Tasks

  c. Communication

  d. Leadership style

  e. Time allotment devoted toward inclusion

  f. Abilities: strengths and weaknesses

  g. Change over time of role

4. Take me through a typical day as principal of your school?

  a. Tasks/Activities

  b. Pace

  c. Issues faced

  d. Length of time

5. What has been one of your most challenging obstacles/problems you have faced as a school administrator?

  a. What did you do?

  b. What was

6. How did your school become an inclusion school? When did you find out that your school would be an inclusion school?

  a. What were your initial reactions? (What concerned you? Where you excited? Nervous? Why?)

    i. Difficult/Easy

    ii. Compliance versus real change

    iii. Worries/uncertainty

  b. Initial communication with your staff/parents and their reactions

    i. Did staff/parent reactions influence your definition of inclusion?

  c. How long has your school been implementing an inclusion model?

    i. Progression of feelings/beliefs toward inclusion since initial reactions

    ii. Positives and negatives

<ol start="7">
<li style="list-style-type:none;">
<ol type="a" start="4">
Follow-up: Was the principals' initial reaction the same as present? Examine why it has changed or remained the same. What triggered a change?

Based on your past experiences, what elements should be in place in your school in order to successfully implement inclusion?
<ol type="a">
Are they in place?
What else is needed?
Do the elements change over time? If so, what are the different elements?
Can you be successful without these elements? Explain.
Follow-up: Predict the outcome for this year's success? Why did you make this prediction? What evidence do you look at/consider?

Has you inclusion program been successful?
<ol type="a">
Why?
How do you know?

Do you plan on making any changes in your inclusion from this year to last? (explain)
Do you plan on making any changes in your inclusion from the beginning of this year to now? (explain)
How would you define inclusion in your school?
<ol type="a">
Role of your personal experiences on your definition
Role of professional experiences
Role of peer interaction (e.g. other principals)
Role of ECPS interaction
Progression of your definition of inclusion: Day 1 versus Day 180
Positive and negative aspects
Role of AYP/ESEA
Worries/uncertainty

What is your definition of inclusion?
Would you say you are committed to inclusion?
<ol type="a">
Where does that commitment come from?

What role does inclusion play in your school's future?
<ol type="a">
Plan for moving forward/Next steps
Lessons learned
Role of principal
Role of staff

Did I forget to ask a question I should have asked?
Do you have anything else to add?

Appendix B

<u>Interview Protocol 2</u>

<u>Date/Time:</u>

<u>Location/Setting:</u>

<u>Principal:</u>

1. **What would you say are your greatest strengths as a leader of your school? (Identity Construction)**
   a. How do you know these are your strengths? (Identity Construction)
   b. Give us an example of how this strength impacts your work. (Extracted Cues)
   c. Do you use this strength to influence special education/Inclusion? How? (Enactment)
   d. Do you consider yourself a strong leader in the area of special education? Explain. (Identity Construction)
2. **What would you say are your biggest areas of growth as a leader of your school? (Identity Construction)**
   a. How do you know these are your areas of growth? (Extracted Cues)
   b. Give us an example of how this area of growth impacts your work. (Extracted Cues)
   c. Does this impact your leadership in special education/Inclusion? How? (Identity Construction)
3. **How do you think the following groups regard your school's overall academic and behavioral success? (Identity Construction)**
   a. Parents
   b. Teachers
   c. Other principals
   d. Central office
4. **How would you characterize the mission of your special education program? (Identity Construction)**
5. **How do you think the following groups regard your school's special education program: (Identity Construction, Social)**
   a. parents,
   b. teachers
   c. other principals
   d. central office

6. **Do you have an example(s) of a student who struggled academically or behaviorally in an inclusive setting? Can you tell their story? (Extracted Cues)**
   a. How was the problem brought to your attention? What was the story?
   b. What did you believe was actually happening? Why? (Plausibility)
   c. What did you notice about the story or student? (Extracted Cues)
   d. What did you do? (Enactment)
   e. How did staff react? Did their reaction affect the way you viewed the situation? (Social, enactment)
7. **Do you have an example(s) of a student who was very successful after being moved into an inclusive setting?**
   a. What's the student's story? (plausibility)
   b. Why do you think the student was successful? (extracted cues)
   c. How did staff react to the success? (Social)
   d. How did you react to the success? (enactment)
8. **Do you have an example(s) of a staff member who struggled to implement inclusion or special education students in your school? (Extracted Cues)**
   a. What was their side of the story? (social)
   b. What did you believe was happening? Why? (Plausibility)
   c. How did you respond? (Enactment)
   d. How was the situation resolved? (Enactment)
9. **Does school culture impact teachers' work with students with disabilities? (Social)**
   a. How do you respond to teachers responding negatively or positively toward students with disabilities? (enactment)
   b. Are their certain people in the building who can change the dialogue (positively or negatively) in a meeting or discussion? (Social)
10. **Is full inclusion obtainable at your school? (Plausibility)**
    a. Why or why not?
        i. What do you need to make it happen?
        ii. What obstacles do you face? (extracted cues)
        iii. What are your next steps? (enactment)
11. **Since receiving DC-CAS data what have you learned about your special education program? (Extracted Cues)**
    a. How do you explain your scores? (Plausibility)
    b. What do you think went right/wrong? (Plausibility)
    c. Will you make changes? What changes and why? (Enactment)
12. **What was your school's final star rating?**
    a. How do you explain your score? (Plausibility)
    b. What do you think went right/wrong? (Plausibility)
    c. Will you make changes? What changes and why? (Enactment)

Appendix C

Observation Protocol	
Date: **Location:** **Time In:** **Time Out:**	
Setting:	

Recording Time	Observation

Appendix D

____

CONSENT FORM

Project Title	*Principal Sensemaking of Inclusion*
Why is this research being done?	*This is a research study being conducted by David DeMatthews at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research study because you are currently an elementary school principal in an urban public school district. The purpose of this research study is to examine the way elementary school principals in an urban school make sense of inclusion. We hope to better understand the complexities of school leadership and how your experiences shape the way you think about and implement inclusion in your school.*
What will I be asked to do?	*Participating in this study means that you will be asked to participate in two interviews for about 60-120 minutes throughout the duration of this study and two observations of a meeting with your school's special education coordinator. The study will begin in June 2010 and continue through October 2010. All interviews will be taped unless you request for them not to be taped. All taped conversations will be transcribed. Field notes will be collected for observations.*
What about confidentiality?	*We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, all audiotapes and transcriptions will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's residence. In addition, pseudonyms will be used for all participants, including your school and the school district. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible, unless you desire otherwise. In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, we will disclose to the appropriate individuals and/or authorities information that comes to our attention concerning child abuse or neglect or potential harm to you or others.*
What are the risks of this research?	*There may be some risks from participating in this research study. Principals work in a high stakes environment. You may face risking your employment based on possible comments. Safeguards described above will guard against the identification of informants and the release of any personal data.*
What are the benefits of this research?	*This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the researcher learn more about principal leadership in elementary schools and how principals think about inclusion. We hope that in the future other people might benefit from this study.*

Project Title	*Principal Sensemaking of Inclusion*
Do I have to be in this research? May I stop participating at any time?	*Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify*
What if I have questions?	*This research is being conducted by David DeMatthews under the supervision of Dr. Hanne B. Mawhinney and the department of Education Leadership, Higher Education and International Education (EDHI) at the University of Maryland, College Park. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Dr. Hanne Mawhinney at:* *2201 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland, College Park, College Park, Maryland, 20742* *Telephone: 301-405-4546* *E-mail: hmawhinn@umd.edu* *If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:* **Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742; (e-mail) irb@umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678** *This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.*
Statement of Age of Subject and Consent	*Your signature indicates that:* *you are at least 18 years of age;,* *the research has been explained to you;* *your questions have been fully answered; and* *you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.*
Signature and Date	**NAME OF SUBJECT**	
	SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT	
	DATE	

15

237

Bibliography

Anagnostopoulos, D., & Rutledge, S. A. (2007). Making sense of school sanctioning policies in urban high schools. *Teachers College Record*, 109(5), 1261-1302.

Artiles, A. J., & Trent, S. C. (1994). Overrepresentation of minority students in special education: a continuing debate. *Journal of Special Education, 27*(4), 410-437.

Anyon, J. (2005). *Radical Possibilities: public policy urban education, and a new social movement.* New York: Routledge.

Barnett, C., & Monda-Amaya, L. E. (1998). Principals' knowledge of and attitudes toward inclusion. *Remedial and Special Education*, 19(3), 181-192.

Bean, C. J., & Eisenberg, E. M. (2006). Employee sensemaking in the transition to nomadic work. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 19(2), 210-222.

Bell, L., Bolam, R., & Cubillo. (2003). A systematic review of the impact of school headteachers and principals on student outcomes. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education.

Bentolila, J. (2010). *Secondary school inclusion rates: The relationship between the training and beliefs of school site principals and the implementation of inclusion.* Florida International University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* Retrieved from
http://search.proquest.com/docview/858856067?accountid=14696

Berg, B. (2007). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. Boston: Pearson.

Billingsley, B., Gersten, R., Gillman, J., & Morvant, M. (1995). Working conditions:
Administrator support. National Dissemination Forum on Issues Relating to
Special Education Teacher Satisfaction, Retention and Attrition. Washington,
DC, May 25-26, 1995. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No.
ED389150)

Blanch, M. C. (1989). *Culture as a control mechanism in schools.* The University of
Utah). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* , 328 p. Retrieved from
http://search.proquest.com/docview/303743834?accountid=14696

Blanchett, W. J. (2009). A retrospective examination of urban education: From
Brown to the resegregation of African Americans in special education-It is time to
"go for broke". *Urban Education*, 44(3), 370-388

Blasé, J., & Blasé, J. (1999). Principals' instructional leadership and teacher
development: Teachers' perspectives. *Educational Administration Quarterly*,
35(3), 349-378.

Board of Education of Henrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley, 80-1002
(US Supreme Court 1980).

Bodgan, R., & Biklen, S. (1998). Qualitative research for education: An introduction
to theory and methods (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Boscardin, M. L. (2004). Transforming administration to support science in the
schoolhouse for students with disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*,
37(3), 262-269.

Bossert, S. T., Dwyer, D. C., Rowan, B., & Lee, G. V. (1982). The instructional

    management role of the principal. *Educational Administration*

    Quarterly,18(3), 34-64.

Brown, A. D. (2000). Authoritative sensemaking in a public inquiry report.

    Organizational Studies, 25(1), 95-112.

Callan, M. B. (2009). *Sustained organizational learning for comprehensive school*

    reform: A sensemaking perspective. Fielding Graduate University). *ProQuest*

    Dissertations and Theses, Retrieved from

    http://search.proquest.com/docview/305168148?accountid=14696

Callison, V. A. (2009). *The use of a cognitive perspective to inform the revision of a*

    professional growth teacher evaluation policy. University of Washington).

    ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, Retrieved from

    http://search.proquest.com/docview/305018816?accountid=14696

Carlson, E., & Parshall, L. (1996). *Academic, social and behavioral adjustment for*

    students declassified from special education. Exceptional Children, 63(1), 89-

    100.

Carter, E. W., & Hughes, C. (2006). Including high school students with severe

    disabilities in general education classes: Perspectives of general and

special educators, paraprofessionals, and administrators. *Research and Practice for*

    Persons with Severe Disabilities, 31(2), 174-185.

Chia, R. (1994). The concept of decision-A deconstructive analysis. *Journal of*

    Management Studies, 31(6), 781-806.

Chia, R. (2000). Discourse analysis as organizational analysis. *Organization*, 7(3), 513-518.

Chiseri-Strater, E., & Sunstein, B. S. (2001). *Fieldworking: Reading and writing research* (2nd ed.). New York: St. Martin's Press.

Christoplos, F., & Renz, P. (1969). Critical examination of special education programs. *Journal of Special Education, 3*(4), 371-379.

Cistone, P., & Stevenson, J. (2000). Perspectives on the urban principalship. *Education and Urban Society*, 32(4), 435-442.

Cline, R. (1981). Principal attitudes and knowledge about handicapped-children. *Exceptional Children*, 48(2), 172-174.

Coburn, C. E. (2005). Shaping teacher sensemaking: School leaders and the enactment of reading policy. *Educational Policy*, 19(3), 476-509.

Coldren, A. F., & Spillane, J. P. (2007). Making connections to teaching practice - The role of boundary practices in instructional leadership. *Educational Policy*, 21(2), 369-396.

Collins, L., & White, G. (2001). Leading inclusive programs for all special education students: a pre-service training for principals [Microform]. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Educational Resources Information Center, Washington, DC.

Cook, B., Semmel, M., & Gerver, N. (1999). Attitudes of principals and special education teachers towards the inclusion of students with mild disabilities – Critical differences of opinions. Remedial and Special Education, 20(4), 199-207.

Cooke, G. (2007). *Keys to success of urban school principals* (2nd ed.). Thousand

    Oaks: Corwin Press

Cotton, K. (2003). *Principals and student achievement: What the research says.*

    Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five

    approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Davidson, D. N., & Algozzine, B. (2002). Administrator's perceptions of special

    education law. *Journal of Special Education Leadership*, 15(2), 3-8.

Davidson, D. N., & Gooden, J. S. (2001). Are we preparing beginning principals for

    special education challenges they will encounter? *ERS Spectrum*, 19, 42-

    49.Deno, E. (1970). Special education as developmental capital. *Exceptional*

    Children, 37(3), 229-237.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2003). *The landscape of qualitative research:*

    Theories and issues. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

DiPaola, M. F., & Tschnannen-Moran, (2003). The principalship at a crossroads: A

    study of conditions and concerns of principals. NASSP Bulletin, 87(634), 43-

    65.

DiPaola, M. F., & Walther-Thomas, C. (2003) Principals and special education: The

    critical role of school leaders (COPSSE Document No. IB-7). Gainesville:

    University of Florida, Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education.

Daunarummo, A. (2010). *Necessary supports for effective high school inclusion classrooms: Perceptions of administration, general education teachers, and special education teachers.* Seton Hall University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* Retrieved from

http://search.proquest.com/docview/739096971?accountid=14696

Domencic, P. L. (2001). *Reported influences, attitudes, and experiences of secondary school principals and their relationship to the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes.* Lehigh University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* , 145 p.

http://search.proquest.com/docview/304695219?accountid=14696

Downing, J., Eichinger, J., & Williams, L. (1997) Inclusion education for students with severe disabilities – Compartive views of principals and educators at different levels of implementation. *Remedial and Special Education*, 18(1), 133-150.

Dunn, L. M. (1968). Special education for mildly retarded: Is much of it justifiable?. *Exceptional Children, 35*(1), 5-22.

Dutton, J. E. (1993). Interpretations on automatic- A different view of strategic issue diagnosis. *Journal of Management Studies*, 30(3), 339-357.

Dutton, J. E., Ashford, S. J., Oneill, R. M., Hayes, E., & Wierba, E. E. (1997). Reading the wind: How middle managers assess the context for selling issues to top managers. *Strategic Management Journal*, 18(5), 407-423.

Dutton, J. E., & Dukerich, J. M. (1991). Keeping an eye on the mirror-image and identity in organizational adaptation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 34(3), 517-554.

Eckes, S.E., & Swando, J. (2009). Special education subgroups under nclb: Issues to consider. *Teachers College Record*, *111*(11), 2479-2504.

Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. Pub. L. No. 94-192, 20 U.S.C sections 1400-1485.

Elliott, M. S. (2007). *Principal leadership in the process of literacy reform: A structured conceptualization.* University of Connecticut). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/304865237?accountid=14696

Elmore, R. (2000). *Building a new structure for school leadership*. Washington: The Albert Shanker Institute.

Emmil, K. A. (2011). *The work of high school principals: A study of leadership for high reliability organizing.* Washington State University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/877968350?accountid=14696\

Evans, A. E. (2007). School leaders and their sensemaking about race and demographic change. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 43(2), 159-188.

Fehsenfeld, C. (2010). *Founders sensemaking and sensegiving behaviors effect on the organizational identities of new charter schools.* University of Massachusetts Boston). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/748321517?accountid=14696

Frost, P., & Morgan, G. (1983). Symbols and sensemaking: The realization of a

    framework. In L. Pondy, P. Frost, G. Morgan, & T. Dandridge,

    Organizational symbolism (pp. 207-236). Greenwich, CT: JAI.

Fullan, M. G. (1993). *Change forces: The sequel*. Bridgeport: George H. Buchanan.

Fullan, M. G. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-

    Bass.

Fullan, M. G. (2003). The moral imperative of school leadership. Thousand Oaks,

    CA: Corwin Press.

Gephart, R. (1992). Sensemaking, communicative distortion and the logic of public

    inquiry legitimation. *Industrial Crisis Quarterly, 6*, 115-135.

Gorius, P. A. (1999). *Sensemaking during the induction phase of socialization of a*

    neophyte principal: A researchers reflections. The University of

    Saskatchewan (Canada)). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* , 457 p.

    Retrieved from

    http://search.proquest.com/docview/304556780?accountid=14696

Greenfield, W. D. (1995). Toward a theory of school administration- The centrality of

    leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 31(1), 61-85.

Griffith, J. (1999). The school leadership/school climate relation: Identification of

    school configurations associated with change in principals. *Educational*

    Administration Quarterly, 35(2), 267-291.

Grodzki, J. S. (2011). *Role identity: At the intersection of organizational socialization and individual sensemaking of new principals and vice-principals.* University of Calgary (Canada)). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/879053787?accountid=14696

Grubb, S. W. (2006). *Making sense of reform: Understanding how school administrators use instructional letters to improve instruction in a northwestern district.* University of Washington). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* Retrieved from

http://search.proquest.com/docview/304962172?accountid=14696

Guzman, N., (1997). Leadership for successful inclusive schools: A study of principal behaviours. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 35(5), 439-450.

Hagan, F. E. (2006). Research methods in criminal justice and criminology (7th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Hallinger, P. (2005). Instructional leadership and the school principal: A passing fancy that refuses to fade away. *Leadership and Policy in Schools , 4* (3), 221-239.

Hallinger, P., Bickman, L., & Davis, K. (1996). School context, principal leadership, and student reading achievement. *Elementary School Journal*, 96(5), 527-549.

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (1996). Reassessing the principal's role in school effectiveness: A review of empirical research, 1980-1995. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 32(1), 5-44.

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (1998). Exploring the principal's contribution to school effectiveness: 1980-1995. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*. 9(2), 157-191.

Hansen, J., & Matthews, J. (2002). The power of more than one. *Principal Leadership*, 3(2), 30-33.

Haring, N., Stern, G., & Chuickshank, W. (1958) Attitudes of educators toward exceptional children. *Exceptional Children*, *25*(1), 41.

Harry, B., & Klinger, J. (2006). *Why are so many minority students in special education? Understanding race and disability in schools.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Hartmann v. Loudoun County Bd of Ed, 96-2809 (US Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit 1998).

Hasazi, S. B., Johnston, A. P., Liggett, A., & Schattman, R. (1994). A qualitative policy study of the least restrictive environment provision of the individuals with disabilities act. *Exceptional Children*, 60(6), 491-507.

Hirth, M. A., & Valesky, T. C. (1989). Principals' knowledge of special education law. *National Forum of Educational Administration and Supervision Journal*, 6(3), 130-141.

Hoffman, L. (2007). *Numbers and types of public elementary and secondary schools from the common core of data: School year 2005-06* (NCES 2007-354rev). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC.

Howell, L. A. (1998). *Principals knowledge in action: A study of leadership and power during school improvement.* The University of Wisconsin-Madison). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* , 128 p. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/304457015?accountid=14696

Hughes, L. W., & Ubben, G. (1994). *The elementary principal's handbook* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Ikemoto, G. S. (2007). *Supports for principals sensemaking: Lessons from the institute for learnings instructional leadership program in baltimore, maryland.* University of Maryland, College Park). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/304854135?accountid=14696

Individuals with Disabilities in Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA), P. L. No. 108-446, 20 U.S.C. sections 611-614.

Jennings, P., & Greenwood, R. (2003). Constructing the iron cage: Institutional theory and enactment. In R. Westwood, & S. Clegg, *Debating Organization: Point-Counterpoint in Organization Studies* (pp. 195-207). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Johnson, B. L., & Fauske, J. R. (2000). Principals and the political economy of environmental enactment. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 36(2), 159-185.

Johnson, M. M. (2011). *Practices and perceptions of northern plains elementary principals regarding inclusion for elementary students with special needs.* University of South Dakota). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/874617220?accountid=14696

Katsiyannis, A., Conderman, G., & Franks, D. (1996). Students with disabilities: Inclusionary planning and the school principal. *NASSP Bulletin*, 80(578), 41-49.

Kavale, K. A., & Forness, S. R. (2000). What definitions of learning disability say and don't say. *Journal Of Learning Disabilities*, *33*(3), 239-256.

Katzman, L. (2007). High-stakes testing. In A. Bursztyn (Ed.), *The praeger handbook of special education.* Wesport, Connecticut: Praeger.

Kaye, E. K. (2002). *Requirements for certification for teachers, counselors, librarians, administrators for elementary and secondary schools*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Kinoshita, K. (2007). *Critical inquiry, instructional leadership and closing the achievement gap: Principal learning in a university-school district professional development program.* University of Washington). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/304798689?accountid=14696

Kioukis, G. (2008). *From "nonsense" to "making sense:" how education leaders interpret and implement supplemental educational services.* State University of New York at Albany). ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/304385580?accountid=14696

Kozol, J. (1992). Savage inequalities: Children in america's schools. New York: Harper Perennial.

Leithwood, K., Louis, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *Review of Research: How Leadership Influences Student Learning*. New York: Wallace Foundation.

Leithwood, K., & Riehl, C. (2003). What do we already know about successful school leadership? Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.

Lewis, R., & Doorlag, D. (2003). Teaching special students in general education classrooms (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.

Lincoln, Y.S. (1995). Emerging criteria for quality in qualitative and interpretive research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1, 275-289.

Losen, D., & Orfield, G. (2002*). Racial inequity in special education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Louis, M. R. (1980). Surprise and sense making- What newcomers experience in entering unfamiliar organizational. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 25(2), 226-251.

Mailloux, S. (1990). Interpretation. In F. Lentricchia, & T. McLaughlin, *Critical terms for literary study* (pp. 121-134). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Maitlis, S. (2005). The social processes of organizational sensemaking. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(1), 21-49.

Mandler, G. (1984). *Mind and Body.* New York: Free Press.

Mantle, J. (2005). *Navigating special education tensions and controversies*. Mahwah: Lawrence Elbaum Associates.

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (2006). Designing qualitative research. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications

Martin, J. (1992). *Cultures in organizations.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Martin, S. (2005). Special education leadership preparation grant: National urban special education leadership initiative: OSEP.

Marzano, R., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An iterative approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

Mayrowetz, D., & Weinstein, C. (1999). Sources of leadership for inclusive education: Creating schools for all children. *Education Administration*, 35(3), 423-449.

Mead, G. (1934). *Mind, self, and society.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Meloche, B. H. (2006). *From expert to novice: Unpacking the first-year principals journey from classroom teacher to elementary school principal.* Michigan State University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* , 247 p. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/305303425?accountid=14696

Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia (1972), 348 F. Supp 866 (D. DC 1972)

Monteith, D. S. (2000). Professional development for administrators in special

    education: Evaluation of a program for underrepresented personnel. *Teacher*

    Education and Special Education, 23, 281-289.

Murphy, A. G. (2001). The flight attendant dilemma: An analysis of communication

    and sensemaking during in-flight emergencies. *Journal of Applied*

    Communication Research, 29(1), 30-53.

Nanus, B. (1992). *Visionary leadership: Creating a compelling sense of directions for*

    your organization. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425 (2002).

Olmstead v. L.C., 527 U.S. 581 (1999).

Orlikowski, W., & Gash, D. (1994). Technological frames: Making sense of

    information technology in organizations. *ACM Transactions on Information*

    Systems, 12(2), 174-207.

Osgood, R. (2005). *The History of Inclusion in the United States.* Washington, D.C.:

    Gallaudet University Press.

Paget, M. (1988). *The Unity of Mistakes.* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Parry, J. (2003). Making sense of executives sensemaking: A phenomenological case

    study with methodological criticism. *Journal of Health Organization and*

    Management, 17 (4), 240-263.

Patriotta, G. (2003). Sensemaking on the shop floor: Narratives of knowledge in

    organizations. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40(2), 349-375.

Patterson, J., Bowling, D., & Marshall, C. (2000). Are principals prepared to manage

special education dilemmas? *National Association of Secondary School*

Principals Bulletin, 84(613), 9-20.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (2nd ed.).

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Pierce, T. L. (2009). *Strengthening instructional leadership: Learning to use a*

sensemaking approach in principal professional development. University of

Washington). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* Retrieved from

http://search.proquest.com/docview/305015461?accountid=14696

Powell-Smith, K. A., Stoner, G., Shinn, M. R., & Good III, R. H. (2000). *Parent*

tutoring in reading using literature and curriculum materials: Impact on

student reading. Achievement. School Psychology Review, 29(1), 5.

Praisner, C. L. (2003). Attitudes of elementary school principals toward the inclusion

of students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 69(2), 135-145.

Pratt, M., Rock, K., & Kaufman, J. (2001). Making sense of socialization: How

multiple social identities shape members' experiences of work. *Academy of*

Management Proceedings, A1-17.

Rice, D., & Zigmond, N. (2000). Co-teaching in secondary schools: Teachers

reports of developments in australian and american classrooms. *Learning*

Disabilities Research & Practice (Lawrence Erlbaum), *15*(4), 190.

Riehl, C. J. (2000). The principal's role in creating inclusive schools for diverse students: A review of normative, empirical, and critical literature on the practice of educational administration. *Review of Educational Research, 70*(1), 55-81.

Robinson, V., Lloyd, C., & Rowe, K. (2008). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(5), 635-674.

Salisbury, C. L. (2006). Principals' perspectives on inclusive elementary schools. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 31*(1), 70-82.

Salisbury, C. L., & McGregor, G. (2002). The administrative climate and context of inclusive elementary schools. *Exceptional Children, 68*(2), 259-274.

Salisbury, C. L., Wilson, L., & Palombaro, M. (1998). Promoting inclusive schooling practices through practitioner directed inquiry. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 23(3), 223-237.

Saltrick, S. (2010). *Making sense of accountability: A qualitative exploration of how eight new york city high school principals negotiate the complexity of todays accountability landscape.* Columbia University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/858965289?accountid=14696

Sands, J., Adams, L., & Stout, D. (1995) A statewide exploration of the nature and use of curriculum in special-education. *Exceptional Children*. 62(1), p. 68-83.

Schoger, K. D. (2007). *Perceptions of attitudinal barriers to effective implementation of inclusion.* University of Houston). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses,* Retrieved from

http://search.proquest.com/docview/304849139?accountid=14696

Scruggs, T. E., & Mastropieri, M. A. (1996). Teacher perceptions of mainstreaming/inclusion, 1958-1995: A research synthesis. *Exceptional Children, 63*(1), 59-74.

Shank, G.D. (2002). Qualitative research: A personal skills approach. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc.

Slee, R. (2007). Inclusive schooling as a means and end of education? In L. Florian (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Special Education.* London: Sage Publications.

Smith, T. M., & Ingersoll, R. M. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(3), 681-714.

Snook, S. (2001). *Friendly Fire.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University.

Spillane, J.P. (2004). *Standards Deviation: How schools misunderstand education policy.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Spillane, J. P., Diamond, J. B., Burch, P., Hallett, T., Jita, L., & Zoltners, J. (2002a). Managing in the middle: School leaders and the enactment of accountability policy. *Educational Policy*, 16(5), 731-762.

Spillane, J. P., Reiser, B. J., & Reimer, T. (2002b). Policy implementation and cognition: Reframing and refocusing implementation research. *Review of Educational Research*, 72(3), 387-431.

Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2004). Towards a theory of

    leadership practice: A distributed perspective. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*,

    36(1), 3-34.

Stake, R. (2005). Qualitative case studies. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The*

    sage handbook of qualitative research (3rd ed. pp. 443-466). Thousand Oaks,

    CA: Sage Publications.

Stainback, S., Stainback, W., & Guglielmo, M. J. (1990). With a little help from my

    friends. *Exceptional Children, 57*(1), 76-77.

Stanovich, P., & Jordan, A. (1998). Canadian teachers' and principals' beliefs about

    inclusive education as predictors of effective teaching in heterogeneous

    classrooms. *Elementary School Journal*, 98(3), 221-238.

Starbuck, W. H., & Milliken, F. J. (1988). Challenger- Fine-tuning the odds until

    something breaks. *Journal of Management Studies*, 25(4), 319-340.

Sutton, R., & Kahn, R. (1987). Prediction, understanding, and control oas antidotes to

    organizational stress. In J. Lorsch, *Handbook of organizational behavior* (pp.

    347-361). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Thomas, J. B., Clark, S. M., & Gioia, D. A. (1993). Strategic sensemaking and

    organizational performance- Linkages among scanning, interpretation, action

    and outcomes. *Academy of Management Journal*, 36(2), 239-270.

Ubben, G., Hughes, L., & Norris, C. (2001). *The principal: Creative leadership for*

    effective schools (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

US Department of Education. (2008). *OSEP's 30th Annual Reports to Congress on the*

    Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Valesky, T. C, & Hirth, M. A. (1991). *A nationwide survey of school administrator training program provisions and awareness of certification requirements for administrator competency in special education law.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED337-892).

Valesky, T. C., & Hirth, M. A. (1992). Survey of the states: Special education knowledge requirements for school administrators. *Exceptional Children*, 58(5), 399-406.

Vaughn, S., Elbaum, B. E., Schumm, J., & Hughes, M. (1998). Social outcomes for students with and without learning disabilities in inclusive.. *Journal Of Learning Disabilities*, *31*(5), 428.

Villa, R. A., Thousand, J., Meyers, H., & Nevin, A. (1996). Teacher and administrator perceptions of heterogeneous education. *Exceptional Children*, 63(1), 29-45.

Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973. P.L. 93–112, Approved September 26, 1973 (87 Stat. 355)

Wakeman, S., Browder, D., Flowers, D., & Ahlgrim-Delzell, L. (2006). Principals' knowledge of fundamental and current issues in special education. NASSP Bulletin, 90(2), 153-174.

Walther-Thomas, C., DiPaola, M., & Butler, A. (2002). A national study of the endorsement requirements for principals: No wonder they don't understand special education. Unpublished research.

Weatherly, R. & Lipsky, M. (1977). Street-level bureaucrats and institutional innovation: Implementing special education reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 47, 171-197.

Weick, K. E. (1976). Educational organizations as loosely coupled systems. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21(1), 1-19.

Weick, K. E. (1977). Enactment processes in organizations. In B. Staw, & G. Salancik, *New directions in organizational behavior* (pp. 267-300). Chicago, IL: St. Clair.

Weick, K. E. (1979). *The social psychology of organizing.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Weick, K. E. (1985). Sources of order in underorganized systems: Themes in recent organizational theory. In Y. Lincoln, *Organizational theory and inquiry* (pp. 106-136). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Weick, K.E. (1988). Enacted sensemaking in crisis situations. *Journal of Management Studies*, 25(4), 305-317.

Weick, K. E. (1993). The collapse of sensemaking in organizations-The Mann Gulch disaster. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38(4), 628-652.

Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in Organizations.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Weick, K.E. (2010). Reflections on enacted sensemaking in the Bhopal disaster. *Journal of Management Studies*, 47(3), 537-550.

Weick, K. E., & Sutcliffe, K. M. (2001). *Managing the Unexpected.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Weick, K. E., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Obstfeld, D. (2005). Organizing and the process of sensemaking. *Organization Science*, 16(4), 409-421.

Weinstein, C. (1989). Teacher education students' preconceptions of teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(2), 53-60.

White v. Ascension Parish School Board, 02-30845 (United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit 2003).

Will, M. (1986). Educating children with learning problems: A shared responsibility. *Exceptional Children*, 51(1), 11-18.

Witzers, B., Boskers, R., & Kruger, M. (2003). Educational leadership and student achievement: The elusive search for an association. *Educational Leadership Quarterly*, 39(3), 398-425.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Youngs, P., & King, M. B. (2002). Principal leadership for professional development to build school capacity. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(5), 643-670.

Zukier, H. (1986). The paradigmatic and narrative modes in goal-guided inference. In R. Sorrentino, & E. Higgins, *Handbook of motivation and cognition* (pp. 465-502). New York: Guilford.