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Barriers and Supports Affecting the Inclusion of Special Education Issues  
into the Preservice Training of School Principals: Faculty Perceptions

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A dissertation  
presented to  
the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis  
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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by  
Gerard O'Leary Farley  
December 2002

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Ronald Lindahl, Chair  
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Russell Mays  
Harold Whitmore

Keywords: Principal Preparation, Special Education

## ABSTRACT

### Barriers and Supports Affecting the Inclusion of Special Education Issues into the Preservice Training of School Principals: Faculty Perceptions

by

Gerard O'Leary Farley

The literature contains repeated claims that most aspiring principals have limited academic knowledge and exposure to special education related issues. However, in this same literature there is substantial discussion that for prospective administrators to be prepared to deal with the ever-increasing demands of special education, principal preparation programs need to increase the amount of instructional time and structured experiences related to special education issues.

This qualitative study gives voice to faculty directly involved in the preservice training of principals in this ongoing call to reform principal preparation programs and increase the attention paid to issues concerning special education. In addition, this study offers insight into the nature of the supports and barriers that influence faculty in their decisions to include or exclude special education issues in course curricula and among departmental requirements for students in principal preparation programs.

The results indicated that faculty often are untrained, inexperienced, or disinterested in special education and, because of academic freedom, may freely exclude special education topics from the courses they teach. Faculty often inadvertently assume that special education is a topic that can be delegated to another department member who is more knowledgeable, better trained, or has a passion for addressing special education issues. Findings also indicated that faculty members often perceived a belief among their colleagues that special education-related topics can be delegated to others. In addition, students enrolled in principal preparation programs were noted to often be as untrained, inexperienced, or disinterested in special education issues as the faculty who prepare them.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mom, “Boots”, my sister, Tess, and my brother, Bill, for their constant love and support. I also dedicate this dissertation to my dad, Bill, Sr., who died when I was 16. I hope you all are proud.

Most importantly, I dedicate this dissertation to my best friend and wife, Gina, as well as my two beautiful daughters, Sophie and Devin, who sacrificed much in order to help me complete this degree. Without their love and support, I never would have been able to finish. Words could never express the love and appreciation I have for “my girls.” Because of them, I am a better man.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Although the preparation of educational leaders to deal effectively with special education issues is certainly not the most pressing topic in education today, there does exist a relatively firm foundation of literature that supports the existence of the need for improvement in this area (Abernathy & Stile, 1983; Bateman, 1998; Burdette, 1999; Kritsonis, 1994; Monteith, 1994). Sirotnik and Kimball (1994) wrote, “The conclusion we arrive at is this: Special education [and its relationship to general education] is treated wholly inadequately, if at all, in programs designed to prepare school administrators” (p. 599).

Despite this well documented need, the available research strongly supports the fact that educational leaders do not feel adequately prepared to deal with issues related to special education (Goor & Schwenn, 1995). Universities are ethically bound to keep educational leaders abreast of the changing needs of society (Calabrese, 1991). Yet, educational leaders are still not sufficiently equipped to deal with issues related to special education (Goor, Schwenn, & Boyer, 1997; Holifield & King, 1993; Valesky & Hirth, 1992).

It becomes apparent that present day administrators must become very familiar with state and federal legislation, as well as educational programming for children with disabilities. To support this point, Valesky, Greene, and Isaacs (1998) stated, “There is an obvious need to have administrator preservice and inservice training programs that focus on the administration of special education programs and students” (p. 7).

#### Statement of the Problem

To date, several studies have been published regarding the extent to which special education training should be included in graduate programs preparing educational leaders (Daresh & Playko, 1992; Monteith, 1998; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994). However, these studies have focused on the viewpoints of students or graduates of these programs. Because these studies have excluded faculty members in educational leadership programs, their relevance, although important, should be considered somewhat peripheral to this study.

The purpose of this qualitative study, therefore, was to attempt to fill this gap in the literature by giving voice to the faculty of educational leadership programs on their perceptions and opinions about the importance, if any, regarding the inclusion of special education issues as part of their courses and/or their department's requirements for their graduate students. Through the use of semi-structured interviews, the faculty of educational leadership programs were asked the extent to which they believe special education issues should play in the preparation of principals and the supports and/or barriers they encounter in achieving this end. A review of available documents (e.g., course catalogs, syllabi, etc.) was also conducted in order to support the current breadth and depth with which special education issues are formally addressed in their university's principal preparation programs. This study sought to offer insight into the extent of the supports and/or barriers that currently influence faculty in their decision to include or exclude special education issues in both the curricula of their courses and their departments' requirements for graduate students enrolled in their educational leadership program.

### Background to the Problem

The original intent of special education legislation was not to create a separate entity in the school system for the education of children with disabilities. In fact, early special education litigation, such as Pennsylvania Association of Retarded Children (PARC) v. Pennsylvania (1972), specifically noted that the most preferable placement of a child with a disability would be in a regular school classroom. The court's decision on this litigation provided the "general framework for what the Constitution required of states in providing special education" (Rothstein, 1995, p. 8). PARC v. Pennsylvania was also fundamental in the development of the regulations outlined in the original legislation of The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, which guaranteed all handicapped children between the ages of 3 and 21 the right to a free and appropriate public education. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, commonly referred to as PL 94-142, was amended in 1986 to include those children with disabilities from birth through age two. It was re-authorized in 1990 as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA was amended in 1993 and 1997 and continues to be a major influence regarding the types and qualities of services children with disabilities receive.

Despite the aim of the federal and subsequent state legislation, special education remained segregated from general education (often termed “regular education”) well into the early 1980s. During the decade after PL 94-142 was originally enacted, public education remained a dual delivery system in which special education and regular education merely co-existed (Lortie, 1978; Sarason & Doris, 1978). The available research does indicate that many school systems were working hard to enforce both the letter and intent of PL 94-142; however, a significant number continued to segregate special education from “regular” education, and often this segregation had detrimental effects (Sarason & Doris). In a 1985 report to Mayor Edward Koch of New York City, the Commission on Special Education noted many observed injustices. For example, special education classes were isolated in remote parts of schools so as to inhibit socialization with regular education students. Clinical personnel, such as diagnosticians and psychologists, tested special education students in hallways or offices because principals denied them access to other places, and special education faculty were often intentionally excluded from faculty meetings. Informal anecdotal evidence gathered by this researcher confirms that similar experiences were not uncommon among special education practitioners during this time period. Special education teachers reported being told to keep their classes quiet and out of sight; teachers who could not perform these directives received administrative reprimands.

During much of the era when special education services were segregated from regular education, educational leaders (e.g., principals and superintendents) had relatively little responsibility for special education, either administratively or financially (Sarason & Doris, 1978; Turnbull, 1976). The Commission on Special Education (1985) further noted:

The present special education structure gives community superintendents and principals no formal responsibility or authority for the hiring, training or supervision of special education teachers or support staff, the curriculum for special education programs, the allocation and assignment of special education guidance counselors or SBSTs or the supplies for special education classes. They also have no formal authority over the referral, assessment and decertification process or the decision to mainstream a special education student from a self-contained classroom into a regular classroom for part of the school day. The Commission finds it ironic that with the exception of teachers, those educators in the school system most able to affect the education of our children, superintendents and principals have no say with respect to those in need of “special” education. Once students are placed in special education, regular education administrators usually relinquish any responsibility for these students’ education, and there is virtually no dialogue or interaction between the two systems. (pp. 117-118)

The isolated status of special education was revisited in the mid 1980s, due in large part to the Regular Education Initiative (REI) that was endorsed, in 1986, by members of the U.S. Department of Education and advocacy groups such as The Council of Exceptional Children and The American Association of Mental Retardation. The REI advocated “that the general education system assume primary responsibility for all students in public schools, including identified students with disabilities as well as those who have special needs” (Kritsonis, 1994, p. 15). The REI movement of the mid-1980s has now blossomed into the educational philosophy commonly referred to as “inclusion.” Special education and regular education have merged into a unified system of delivery. The roles and responsibilities of educational leaders now include direct administrative and financial responsibility for all children. Today, “principals find themselves having to respond regularly to situations involving special learners” (Goor et al., 1997, p.135). The emergence of a unified system has placed demands on educational leaders that did not previously exist in the dual system, such as participating in the development of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), application of disciplinary action for special education students, and supporting a culture that celebrates diversity. As Valesky and Hirth (1992) noted:

It is evident that regular education administrators must command a knowledge of special education and special education law. This knowledge is required for two main reasons: to ensure an appropriate education for all students with disabilities, as required (by law), and to minimize losing potential lawsuits resulting from inappropriate implementation of special education legal requirements. (p. 403)

The focus on this problem is not diminishing but, in fact, is growing at a steady pace. The reason for increased attention to special education issues is directly related to the growing numbers of children with disabilities found in public schools. In fact, the number of students participating in federal programs for children with disabilities has increased by 47% from 1977 to 1995. This growth occurred during the same time frame during which the total public school enrollment decreased by 2% (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). It is now estimated that 5.6 million children with disabilities are served in public schools. This figure represents a national average of 12% of each school system’s population (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1997).

### Significance of the Study

The development of a unified educational system and the growing numbers of disabled children being served in public schools demand that educational leaders be better prepared to deal with all children and not just those who do not require special education. As Bateman (1998) wrote, “Appropriate instruction about special education and students with disabilities should be the goal of all preparation programs, for special education professional and principals alike, and for individuals seeking to lead schools” (p. 7).

However, several possible barriers to the reality of having a greater emphasis on issues of special education in the preservice training of principals were discussed in the literature. Included was speculation that faculty in educational leadership departments may, themselves, not be as knowledgeable and/or comfortable with special education issues. This possibility was supported by Campbell and Fyfe (1995), who noted that faculty, despite being committed to “the democratic values of inclusive education, are not knowledgeable” (p. 12) regarding special education. Another possibility raised was that faculty simply do not have enough time to cover special education issues given the requirements of their current class syllabi; therefore, in order to teach special education, some other part of the current coursework would have to be eliminated from the preparation requirements. This may be an even greater difficulty for some faculty. According to McCarthy and Kuh (1997), the number of content specialization areas (e.g., leadership, law, economics & finance, research, and policy studies) has increased over the past 10 years among the educational leadership professoriate. Personal biases may negatively impact the value some faculty members hold regarding the importance of special education issues over their own content specialization areas. Solutions such as simply adding more coursework requirements may not be viable. As Campbell and Fyfe noted, “Given increasing economic pressures, few students can afford, either in time or money, to enroll in courses that are not required” (p. 12). In the end, consideration must be given to whether or not the barriers to change are issues of will or issues of skill (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996).

Thus, the intent of this qualitative study was to bring to the literature information regarding current principal preparation programs and their extent or scope related to special education issues. An important aspect for consideration was faculty interpretation of those barriers and supports that affect both the quality and quantity of special education training for future leaders as perceived by the faculty of educational leadership programs.

McCarthy and Kuh (1997) stated that:

It remains to be seen if faculty members will invest the amount of time required to transform educational leadership programs and whether universities will reward such efforts. To initiate and sustain a meaningful transformation in preparation programs, there must be a commitment among rank and file members and their institutions in concert with efforts by ... [those] interested in improving school leadership. (p. 261)

As Hodgkinson noted, professors of higher education are reluctant “to respond to influences external to the university” (cited in Stakenas, 1994, p. 28). Therefore, it seems critical that faculty member’s perceptions be introduced to the current literature regarding the role and breadth of special education issues in the preparation of graduate students in educational leadership programs. Although “external forces could prompt significant changes in preparation programs” (McCarthy & Kuh, p. 261), it is believed that “systemwide change will only occur when faculty and collaborators have had the time to review and internalize their program experiences” (NASSP Bulletin, 1994, p. 2).

### Limitations

The following limitations apply to this study:

1. Qualitative research strategies (such as the ones in this study) encourage the investigator to “listen to the self in order to listen to the respondent” (McCracken, 1988, p. 33); therefore, according to Gergen “objectivity is impossible” (cited in Middleman & Goldberg-Wood, 1995, p. 8). Having been trained in special education, the author/researcher recognizes that his bias may have influenced the interpretations of the interviews conducted in this study.
2. This study was limited to a specific geographic area. That area included a 100 mile radius around Dayton, Ohio, where the researcher currently lives. This delimitation was established to include a variety of institutes of higher education while preventing the researcher from being burdened with excessive financial responsibilities. In the event that that the information collected did not provide the researcher with a thick and rich description of the topic then the geographic area was to be extended an additional 50 miles in radius; this proved unnecessary.

## Definition of Terms

### System of Delivery:

**Dual:** A term used in this study to indicate that the educational system is divided into two distinct systems, with one system responsible for ensuring that the educational needs of children with disabilities are met and the other ensuring that the educational needs of children without disabilities are met.

**Unified:** A term used in this study to indicate that the educational system equally shares in the responsibility to educate all children regardless of any disability.

**Special Education Issues:** A term used in this study to include any area related to special education, including but not limited to: special education curriculum, identification and placement of children with disabilities, accommodations needed by children with disabilities (i.e., related services), the procedural requirements and/or protections afforded to students receiving special education or the related laws and litigation concerning aspects of special education.

**Inclusion:** According to Heward (1996), there is no clear consensus on the definition of inclusion. This study defined this term as the practice of educating children with disabilities with children without disabilities -- in the same location, with similar experiences and the same level of dignity and respect in order to maximize individual potential.

**Children with Special Needs:** A term used in this study to describe any child currently eligible to receive special education services, as defined by the most recent re-authorization of IDEA as to who may or may not be receiving such services.

**Educational Leaders:** A term used in this study that includes administrators in the field of education who make decisions regarding the outcomes of students. This group includes positions such as superintendents, central office program directors (e.g., secondary schools, special education, curriculum, etc.) principals, and/or vice-principals.

**Special Education:** “Individually planned, systematically implemented, and carefully evaluated instruction to help learners with special needs to achieve the greatest possible personal self-sufficiency and success in present and future environments” (Heward, 1996, p. G-10).

### Overview of the Study

This study gives voice to the faculty of educational leadership programs regarding their perceptions for the inclusion of special education issues as part of their courses. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature related to educational leadership programs and the requirements of these programs to include special education issues. The literature review also relates to the increasing needs that are consistent with a unified educational delivery system. In Chapter 3, methods and procedures concerning the research methodology are presented. Chapter 4 includes the data analysis and findings of the study or, as Polkinghorne (1991) noted, “uncovering the meanings people assign to their experiences” (p. 815). Chapter 5 completes the study with conclusions about the role and breadth of special education issues that faculty members believe are necessary in the proper preparation of educational leaders and the extent of supports and/or barriers that influence these faculty members regarding their decisions to include or exclude special education issues. The influences these factors had regarding the faculty’s course curricula and departmental requirements was also addressed. Recommendations for further research and for practice are also included in this chapter.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

For the past 25 years there has been a nationwide emphasis on the education of children with disabilities. Even more obvious has been the increased number of these children being served in regular education classrooms, an increase that can be attributed to both a rise in population and improvements in identification procedures (Heward, 1996). When considering the sheer numbers of these children in today's public schools, it is no wonder that the call for principals to become more knowledgeable in special education issues has been gathering momentum in the literature (Daresh, Dunlap, Gantner, & Hvizdak, 1998; Monteith, 1994; Podemski, Marsh, Smith, & Price, 1995; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994; Valesky & Hirth, 1992). According to Valesky and Hirth, administrators need to be aware of special education law and regulations not only to "ensure an appropriate education for special education students (but also) to reduce a school district's liability for potential litigation" (p. 399).

Reforming the preparation of principals to include more emphasis on special education issues must be considered a high priority in education today, given the number of researchers who have, for various reasons, indicated that the current preservice training of these practitioners is often insufficient in preparing them for matters relating to children with disabilities (Aspedon, 1992; Burdette, 1999; Goor, Schwenn, & Boyer, 1997; Hirth & Valesky, 1991; Johnson & Bauer, 1992; Monteith, 1994; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994). Professional organizations such as the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) have also joined in the call for reform in this area, with platforms emphasizing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the need to have principals better prepared to implement the complex aspects of this law.

The demand for knowledgeable, prepared educational leaders who can effectively deal with special education issues can be found in the literature for the past several decades. In the late 1960s, the need to educate personnel to deal effectively with children with disabilities was viewed as "one of the areas of substantial need within the entire range of needs for educational personnel" (Weintraub, 1968, p. 20). In the 1970s, when special education issues were in the national limelight, due to the passage of federal law that mandated the education of all

handicapped children, the preservice training of principals regarding special education issues, continued to be viewed as inadequate and in need of improvement (Davis, 1980). Contemporary calls for reform note that principals not only need training in special education but that they also strongly desire it (Monteith, 1994).

Following a brief overview of the changing demands of special education, the review of literature pertinent to this study was concerned primarily with principal preparation programs and the current educational climate that exists and influences these programs. The research reviewed is discussed under the following specific sections:

1. The Ever-Changing Role of Special Education: Coming Full Circle
2. The Critical Role of Leadership in the Success of Special Education
3. The Current Knowledge Base of Principals Regarding Special Education
4. The Requirements for Principals Regarding Special Education
5. The Call for Principal Preparation Reform and Issues Related to Special Education
6. Perspectives on Principal Preparation Reform Efforts
7. Summary of Literature Reviewed.

#### The Ever-Changing Role of Special Education: Coming Full Circle

The education of children with developmental disabilities did not originate with the advent of federal legislation in 1975. The Education of All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) *mandated* the free and appropriate public education of all handicapped children, in the least restrictive environment, but it did not *create* the field devoted to their education (special education). Although prior to the 1970s, many states were, by their own statutes, legally allowed to deny school enrollment to children with disabilities (Heward & Cavanaugh, 1993; Keefe & Davis, 1998), there were many other states that did provide educational services to these children. For these states, the education of “handicapped” children was provided through *permissive* legislation (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1997). The intent of neophyte special educators, during the years of permissive legislation, was to “see special education become a part of, closer to, the mainstream of general education” (Division for Handicapped Children, Bureau for Physically Handicapped Children, New York State Education Department, and Westchester County Board of Cooperative Educational Services, 1969, p. 4). The intent of early special education reformers closely resembles that of contemporary educational leaders who call for (at least to some extent) more inclusive education of children with disabilities. Prior to PL 94-142,

the overriding concern of special education personnel was to unify “regular education” and “special education,” which were, for all practical purposes, considered separate entities. Trepidation was expressed that “regular” educators had relinquished their responsibility for children with disabilities (Division for Handicapped Children, Bureau for Physically Handicapped Children, New York State Education Department, and Westchester County Board of Cooperative Educational Services, 1969). Dr. James J. Gallagher, former Associate Commissioner of the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, noted that special education needed to be “a part of, not apart from regular education” (cited in Weintraub, 1968, p. 4). Other advocates, such as Mr. Richard Hehir, Chief of the Bureau for the Physically Handicapped in 1969, also noted “special education has become perhaps a little too specialized and too separate and segregated from general education” (Division for Handicapped Children, Bureau for Physically Handicapped Children, New York State Education Department, and Westchester County Board of Cooperative Educational Services, 1969, p. 4). The desire of special education leaders was to unify the dual (regular education and special education) educational delivery system.

In addition to expressing the intent of educational reform in preparation programs, advocates outlined a plan of action they believed would achieve the desired result of a unified educational system. The approach to reform centered on changing the mindset and attitudes of regular education personnel, especially public school administrators, who quite frequently had no previous exposure or orientation to special education (Division for Handicapped Children, Bureau for Physically Handicapped Children, New York State Education Department, and Westchester County Board of Cooperative Educational Services, 1969). These efforts received federal support in the form of The Education Professions Development Act of 1967 (EPDA). EPDA was designed to financially assist universities in the redesign of the education profession. Funds in the amount of over \$7 million were allocated specifically to impact the area of the disadvantaged. The financial resources of the EPDA, and the latitude in their use, afforded many opportunities to improving the field of special education. This was especially true as it related to the training of personnel (preservice as well as inservice) to become more sensitive to the overall needs of the disadvantaged (Edelfelt, 1969; Kidd, 1968; Reitz, 1969; Wood, 1968).

It was believed that school personnel, highly trained and highly motivated, would

sustain their commitments to the field of education and assume greater roles in the continuation of their professional development (Edelfelt, 1969). As efforts continued to unify special and regular education into one delivery system, programs that had previously been used to train special educators were being applied to the training of regular educators. Programs such as the Special Education Administration Task Simulation Game (SEATS), developed by Dr. Daniel D. Sage at Syracuse University, provided administrators simulated experiences for dealing with difficult special education issues (Division for Handicapped Children, Bureau for Physically Handicapped Children, New York State Education Department, and Westchester County Board of Cooperative Educational Services, 1969). The objectives of special-education-oriented programs such as the SEATS game were to equip participants with a fuller understanding and deeper knowledge regarding special education in the hopes that attitudes toward special education students would improve and their integration into regular classrooms would be better accepted (Division for Handicapped Children, Bureau for Physically Handicapped Children, New York State Education Department, and Westchester County Board of Cooperative Educational Services).

The efforts of special education reformers in the late 1960s designed to improve the attitudes of regular education administrators regarding special education were significantly affected in 1975 with the passing of federal legislation mandating the education of all handicapped students (PL 94-142). The authority associated with the presence of federal legislation sanctioned special education personnel with significant license to enforce regulations outlined in the law. Many advocates were not judicious in their exercise of this power, and, as Cox (1994) indicated, the letter of the law, in many instances, became the main barrier to achieving the intent of the law. After years of special education being treated with neglect, denial, and rejection (Reynolds & Birch, 1977), many special education advocates cast aside efforts to work *with* regular educators. Special educators often became autocratic regarding special education services and threats of litigation were commonplace in response to those regular educators who claimed to have some authority to regulate and/or limit the types and qualities of special education services that were to be provided to children with disabilities. The advocacy movement in special education created many problems, in that it often did more to alienate, rather than unite, regular and special educators (Blatt, 1979). In fact, many of the long

standing negative attitudes between regular and special educators can be linked to the days when special education all but forced itself upon regular education.

In an endeavor to re-focus the attention of educators to the true needs of children with disabilities and the original intent of federal legislation, the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education, funded a project entitled, Dean's Grants. The Dean's Grants awarded, although strategically specific for each university, were similar in context and focus. The main thrust of the Dean's Grants was the promotion of institutionalized change concerning the preparation of teachers and administrators regarding special education issues (Quisenberry, Miller, & White, 1982).

The impact created by the Dean's Grants sparked a resurgence in the philosophical belief, predominant in the late 1960s, that a unified system was the most appropriate way to serve the needs of children with disabilities in public schools. In addition, the Regular Education Initiative (REI) of 1986, "called for general educators to become more responsible for the education of students who have special needs in school" (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1997, p. 50) and was instrumental in the development of the contemporary educational philosophy of inclusion, which is the educational movement to dramatically increase the number of students with disabilities into regular education classroom (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Hallahan & Kauffman). However, what constitutes inclusion is not clearly defined and continues to be a concern among educators, both special and regular. This is in large part because the extent that students with disabilities should be educated in regular classrooms is hotly contested (Hallahan & Kauffman; Heward, 1996). Although there is much debate regarding the extent of inclusion, there is overwhelming support among educators that, at least to some degree, inclusion has a proper place in education today (Keefe & Davis, 1998; McIntosh, Vaughn, Schum, Haager, & Lee, 1993; Raynes, Snell, & Sailor, 1991; Skritic, 1991; Wisniewski & Alper, 1994).

It would seem that special education has come full circle from the original movement toward a unified system of delivery in the late 1960s, through the segregation between special and regular education which created the dual delivery system of the 1970s and early 1980s, and back now toward the unified system promoted through the inclusive model. Regardless of the changes, the presence of students with disabilities has played a vital role in the composition of public schools and has drawn attention to the way that principals are prepared.

### The Critical Role of Leadership in the Success of Special Education

Leadership is a critical factor in the effectiveness of schools (Algozzine, Ysseldyke, & Campbell, 1994; Anderson, 1991; Cunningham & Gresso, 1993; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Monteith, 1994) and now, as education moves beyond traditional boundaries, the demands of principals have become more complex (Billingsley, Farley, & Rude, 1993; Cunningham & Gresso; Davis, 1980; Lynn, 1994; Podemski et al., 1995). “Never in the history of education has so much been expected from the principal” (Kritsonis, 1994, p. 16).

Children with disabilities are an integral part of the diversity found in schools today and principals must realize the fundamental role they play in the level of effectiveness regarding special education programs in their schools (Billingsley et al., 1993; Bradley, 1999; Burrello, Schrup, & Barnett, 1992; Cox, 1994; Gameros, 1995; Hirth & Valesky, 1991; Monteith, 1994; Morgan & Demchak, 1998; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994; Smith & Colon, 1998; Van Horn, Burrello, & DeClue, 1992). The role of contemporary principals is one based on acceptance of diversity. Principals are the key to providing quality services to all children in their respective schools. After all, principals, through their actions and attitudes, are critical elements in determining the success or failure of special education and it is their knowledge of special education issues that result in appropriate administrative practices (NAESP, 1990; Smith & Colon). Goor et al. (1997) discussed effective leaders and effective schools as those that are attributed to principals who believe that all children can learn and that teachers can successfully teach students with disabilities in their regular education classrooms.

Effective schools and effective leadership can no longer stand apart from special education. Traditionally, the delivery of special education services was the responsibility of directors of special education and principals took on little responsibility for special education, either administratively or financially (Billingsley et al., 1993; Sarason & Doris, 1978; Turnbull, 1976). Today however, effective principals do not and should not differentiate their responsibilities between special education and regular education students (Bradley; Burrello et al.).

A principal’s attitude and behavior can directly influence, not only the success of special education programs but also how well those programs will be accepted by the rest of the school (Algozzine et al., 1994; Burrello et al., 1992; Gameros, 1995; Van Horn et al., 1992). Idol and Griffith (1998) stated, “For many schools, teachers’ perceptions of lack of principal support is

the primary reason why change, and in particular movement to inclusion, does not take place” (p. iv). Therefore, given the critical role that principals play in the direction of their schools, it is of the utmost importance that these practitioners be adequately prepared so that a vision, favorable to inclusion, will be sustained (Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994).

### The Current Knowledge Base of Principals Regarding Special Education

Within a few years after the passage of PL 94-142, William E. Davis penned an article entitled, “An Analysis of Principals’ Formal Training in Special Education.” A rather poignant question was posed at the end of the article. Davis (1980) asked, “Is much of the ‘negativism’ frequently attributed to building principals regarding special education programs within their building directly related to their feelings of inadequacy in this area as a result of lack of exposure to the field” (p. 94)? The question may, at first glance, seem to “date itself” historically; however, the literature does support that special education *per se* and its relationship to general education has not been clearly articulated in programs designed to prepare school administrators (Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994). As the following research indicates, the inadequate exposure to special education issues found in principal preparation programs appears to be a common link across the decades since special education services were initially mandated by law.

Issues related to special education are generally not a part of the coursework for administrator preparation programs, nor are direct experiences with this population and their diverse needs (Harlin-Fischer, 1998). In 1996, a study of Alabama school principals was conducted regarding their perceptions of the practice of inclusion in their schools. One of the questions posed to these administrators related to their formal preparation regarding special education issues. Only 3.5% of the respondents indicated that their training was excellent; and, although 52% indicated that their training was adequate, a significant portion (44.5%) stated that their training was inadequate (Dyal, Flynt, & Bennett-Walker, 1996). There have been numerous other studies that indicated a significant portion of educational leaders perceive themselves as unprepared, ill equipped, and inexperienced to provide effective leadership in special education. A 1992 study by Aspedon discovered that 40% of the principals surveyed responded that they had never had any formal course work in special education. Langley (1993) surveyed South Carolina secondary school principals and noted that 75% indicated they had no

formal training in special education. Payne (1999), in her study of 128 school principals in Texas, discovered that the majority indicated that they had no background and very little college training in special education. However, even limited exposure has been deemed inadequate for the significant need for principals to be knowledgeable regarding special education issues. Bateman (1998) stated that administrators who have only had one introductory course to special education are still inadequately prepared to meet the challenges of those children with disabilities served in public schools. He based his argument on the fact that an introductory course in special education has the expectation of covering all issues related to special education in a single semester. Included in a course of this nature is the identification and definition of various developmental disabilities, understanding methods of instruction for students with disabilities in both special and regular classrooms, and an awareness of federal and state regulations, to mention a few.

Discrepancies exist regarding the common body of knowledge and skills that should be included in a school administration preparation program. Despite these discrepancies, there is ubiquitous indication that school law is perceived as an essential element in the preparation of educational leaders (Cairns, 1995; Hillman, 1988; Hirth & Valesky, 1991; Hughes, Johnson, & Madjidi, 1999; Lovette, 1997; Smith & Colon, 1998; Van Berkum, 1994). This consensus is probably related to the fact that more and more lawsuits have been forthcoming especially in the area of direct services or lack of adequate services for the special education population. Thus, it appears prudent that the amount of time allocated to special education issues must be examined in courses in the area of school law (Johnson & Bauer, 1992).

In a study examining the extent of special education legal issues taught in principal preparation programs, Hirth and Valesky (1990) discovered that special education law received little, if any, coverage. The most common approach used by universities was to address special education law as a sub-part of the general school law course (Hirth & Valesky). The discouraging news from the Hirth and Valesky study was that, of the universities that responded to their survey (n=66), 74% indicated that less than 10% of the instructional time in the general school law course was devoted to legal issues related to special education.

Smith and Colon (1998) warned that one of the most grievous mistakes made by principals is to dismiss their responsibility to understand special education law and their legal responsibilities. A common misconception is that a complex, special education situation can be



avoided by appointing a designee to take responsibility for it. However, designees have the authority to commit school and district resources. These commitments are often inappropriate and lead to even more difficult forms of litigation (Smith & Colon). It has been suggested that understanding special education issues and personally dealing with them are two of the best strategies for administrators. In this manner administrators could avoid the time consuming due process hearings and possible litigation that may follow (Goor et al., 1997; Smith & Colon). The delegation of special education related duties, because principals are unprepared to handle these types of issues, is significant cause for including special education issues in the preparation programs for principals, since, in the end, principals are the ones who are ultimately responsible.

Valesky and Hirth (1992) also warned about potential lawsuits that result from inappropriate implementation of special education legal requirements. A study by Langley (1993) provided insight into the potential problems administrators face regarding special education issues, in that over 90% of the respondents reported that one of the primary ways they learned about special education was by making mistakes. Unfortunately, no research could be found regarding the consequences principals have endured due to administrative errors in dealing with special education issues. Insight can, however, be attained through conversations with experienced practitioners. These administrators can give testimony to the lost days in court, districts' expenditure of unnecessary dollars, and the tarnished reputations and premature retirements they have witnessed, all due to poor judgments related to issues of special education. Trial and error learning experiences, however effective in the learning process, can carry with them extreme consequences that may otherwise be avoided with improved principal preparation aimed at special education issues. The knowledge base regarding special education law is inadequate (Smith & Colon, 1998; Hillman, 1988; Hirth & Valesky, 1989; Johnson & Bauer, 1992). However, even with a more comprehensive knowledge of the law and its regulations, there is no guarantee that this alone will improve the quality of programs in the area of special education (Billingsley et al., 1993). In order for special education programs to provide high quality instruction, as well as guarantee the rights of these children, principals today must be knowledgeable in a variety of areas related to special education (Burrello et al., 1992; Goor et al., 1997; Monteith, 1998; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994; Valesky & Hirth, 1992).

It is commonly agreed that for most administrators, one of the most complex tasks is to provide leadership in the area of special education (Johnson & Bauer, 1992; Smith & Colon,

1998). With only a modest amount of training and limited exposure to special education issues, principals struggle to understand their leadership role in dealing with special needs students (Bradley, 1999). This lack of training and exposure to special education issues becomes further compounded when considering the ever expanding programs and the sheer increase of number of students seeking services (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1997; Valesky & Hirth, 1992).

### The Requirements for Principals Regarding Special Education

It appears from the available literature that there are no unilateral requirements regarding the inclusion of special education in programs that prepare principals. Valesky and Hirth (1992) and Bateman (1998) each conducted a survey of states regarding principal certification requirements, specifically as they related to special education issues. These surveys cannot be directly compared because the states that responded were not specifically identified and the return rate for each study was different; however, because most states responded in both surveys, it is believed that parallels may be appropriately drawn.

Valesky and Hirth (1992) discovered that of the 47 states that responded regarding principal certification, 21 had no requirement for general knowledge of special education. An “Introduction to Special Education” course was required in 16 states for principal certification. In 6 states, principal certification required that participants complete a general school administration course, which included a special education component. Interestingly, however, no specific information is available regarding the breadth or depth of information covered in the special education component. Finally, the remaining 4 states indicated that the only special education requirement necessary for principal certification was that the university certify that the participant possess a general knowledge of special education (Valesky & Hirth). Again there is a conspicuous lack of detail regarding how individual universities established the criterion for general knowledge of special education.

In Bateman’s study, of the 48 states that responded to the survey, 23 states reported that no coursework or competencies relating to either special education or students with disabilities (Bateman, 1998) were required for principal certification. The certification requirements for principals in 17 states did require one course in special education, although the particulars of

such a course were never made clear. The certification requirements for principals in the remaining eight states did involve the completion of an “Introduction to Special Education” course, plus additional competencies (Bateman). Unfortunately, no specifics were provided regarding the special education “competencies” required by those eight states.

Valesky and Hirth (1992) investigated state criteria beyond the requirements for general knowledge of special education. Specifically, these researchers examined state requirements regarding special education law for principal certification. The results indicated that a few states are requiring a specific course in the area of special education law; however, a general school law course with special education elements is the most common practice. The majority of states only require university endorsement regarding knowledge of special education law for principal certification. Ironically, no specifics are provided as to how universities establish criteria for sufficient knowledge of special education law so as to endorse aspiring principals. In sum, students seeking educational leadership degrees or endorsements do not have much required of them in their studies related to issues of special education (Bateman, 1998).

For approximately 15 years, a significant number of professional associations (National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of Elementary School Principals, American Association of School Administrators, National Policy Board for Educational Administration) have proposed standards designed to improve the preparation of educational leaders (Lashway, 1998). Although these standards do not establish specific criteria for principal certification, these reform movements are a driving force in the redesign of how administrators such as principals are prepared in their preservice training programs (Lashway, 1998).

In the mid 1990s the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards emerged as the front runner for standards regarding school leaders. The ISLLC initiative was developed in partnership with the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), along with ten other professional organization and 24 states and operated on the financial support of several foundation grants, including the Danforth Foundation and Pew Charitable Trusts (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). Due to the broad representative voice involved with the ISLLC initiative, the standards that were developed for school leaders suggest a significant agreement among professionals for defining what constitutes leadership (Lashway, 1998).

A review of the ISLLC standards revealed no specific mention of the scope (breadth and depth) of special education issues that are considered fundamental for the adequate training of school leaders. It is apparent that these standards are sympathetic to the needs of children with disabilities, as indicated by the phraseology that begins each standard: “A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996, p. 10). A more in-depth review of the six ISLLC standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996) revealed that the only mention of special education came in the form of overriding statements indicating that the principal should have knowledge of “diversity and its meaning for educational programs” (p. 12); “legal issues impacting school operations” (p. 14) and “the conditions and dynamics of the diverse school community” (p. 16).

The current ISLLC standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996) espouse concepts that school leaders, such as principals, should believe that all students can learn and that the presence of diverse populations benefits the school community. Being sensitive to the presence of children with disabilities is a generally accepted position; however, only promoting a positive attitude fails to equip principals with the skills they need to ensure that the regulatory safeguards afforded by law to children with disabilities are followed or that these children receive the quality of education they need and deserve. The ISLLC standards are broad, at best, in providing direction for school leaders regarding the specific skills necessary for school leaders to effectively deal with the complex special education issues evident in public schools today.

#### The Call for Principal Preparation Reform and Issues Related to Special Education

Lumsden (1993) wrote, “It is no secret that the process used to groom individuals to become school leaders misses the mark in many respects” (p. 1). Lumsden’s criticism centers on her belief that principal preparation programs do not provide sufficient exposure to the types of real-world challenges that principals are likely to encounter. Lumsden is not alone in this denigration of principal preparation programs, in fact, the literature is rife with similar criticisms (Hoyle, 1995; Milstein, 1993; Murphy & Hallinger, 1987; Pitner, 1982). In an article from the National Association of Elementary School Principals (1990) it was noted that principals frequently report that there is little relevance between their preparation programs and the realities of the school. Cairns (1995), in his article on critical skills necessary for

principals, recommended that universities improve their relationships with professionals in the field.

Recently, Daresh et al. (1998) asked, “Do long standing visions of what constitutes the knowledge base, which guides the formation of future principals, reflect the realities of current practice?” (p. 17). A review of the literature would suggest that the answer to this question is an unequivocal “No.” Universities have failed to respond to this suggested area of basic need to effectively prepare principals for the realities of the principalship (Lovette, 1997; Van Berkum, 1994).

Over a decade ago, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) called for a general reform of principal preparation programs. NAESP noted that, “the role of the principal is being transformed, and the preparation of a new generation of elementary and middle school administrators requires significant changes in traditional principal preparation programs” (NAESP, 1990, p. 6). However, to date, these suggestions have not been implemented. Izano (1999) noted that educational leaders need to be effectively trained to deal with the diversity of students now prevalent in schools. Professionals are becoming increasingly aware that educational leaders, in order to appropriately serve today’s schools and students, can no longer be prepared with the traditional educational administrative curricula (Daresh et al., 1998).

Within the literature calling for reforms in the preparation of principals, there are numerous critiques specifying that a significant gap exists between what principals learn in their preparation programs and what they need to successfully survive regarding special education related issues (Burdette, 1999; Goor et al., 1997; Hillman, 1988; Kritsonis, 1994; Monteith, 1994; NAESP, 1990; NASSP, 2000; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994, Valesky et al., 1998). Sirotnik and Kimball noted:

In professional schools preparing school administrators, there are not two programs—there is only one—and special education is largely missing from the curriculum. This is reflected in the attitudes of students and faculty involved in administrator preparation, in the recollections of practicing school principals, and in the reform literature and typical textbooks associated with the field of educational administration. (pp. 625-626)

In their study of 24 practicing school principals, Pancake and Minor (1991) suggested that universities should offer some type of curriculum in the area of special education. In another study, Aspedon (1992) indicated that over 85% of the principals surveyed responded that

formal training in special education was necessary to appropriately prepare future principals. Payne (1999) reported that an overwhelming number of the principals surveyed (n= 128) responded that future educational leaders need to be better educated on special education issues so that students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs) will be appropriately implemented. Schoppmeyer (1988) studied over 1,000 principals and reported that one of the main concerns expressed by these educational leaders was their inability to handle a variety of special education issues. The literature is quite clear that principals with a history of exposure to and education about persons with disabilities have more positive attitudes about inclusion than their counterparts without a similar background (Burrello et al., 1992; Dayton, 1998; Maurizio, 1998). Indeed, in their preparation programs, principals continue to require training in special education issues, mainly because the obligations specified in special education law have yet to be internalized as standard protocol (Williams, 1993). However, as Burrello et al. (1992) suggested, issues related to children with disabilities exceed procedural safeguards and are increasingly becoming substantive. Goor et al. (1997) supported the inclusion of special education issues in principal preparation programs because they believed that insufficient training in this area leaves principals vulnerable to inadvertently violating the rights of children with disabilities by not protecting them procedurally or ensuring them a sound education.

The literature clearly supports that educational leaders who do not have either training or experience in dealing with special education issues will not be prepared to foster an environment that favors inclusion (Burdette, 1999). Despite the significant portion of students in principal preparation programs who would be happy to keep the existing emphasis on special education issues relatively low, the argument appears overwhelming that training in special education for aspiring principals is essential, even if it is not preferred (Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994). Principals must know special education issues because of the vast array of potential problems that could occur at their schools from inappropriate implementation of special education legal requirements (Kritsonis, 1994; Valesky & Hirth, 1992).

It is repeatedly found in the literature that most aspiring principals have both limited academic knowledge and exposure to special education related issues (Burdette, 1999; Goor et al., 1997; Hirth & Valesky, 1990; Kritsonis, 1994; Monteith, 1998; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994; Valesky et al., 1998). In an effort to better prepare educational leaders, those who plan and implement principal preparation programs need to increase the amount of instructional time and

structured experiences involving special education issues so that school administrators will be prepared to deal with the ever-increasing demands of special education (Bateman, 1998; Hirth & Valesky, 1991).

The increased number of students with disabilities now served in public schools has significantly changed the roles and responsibilities of leadership personnel in the mainstream of public education (Klotz & Daniel, 1998). Principals are now expected to be both knowledgeable and supportive of children with disabilities who attend their schools (Rothstein, 1995).

Educational leaders must be formally prepared if they are truly interested in promoting a unified system in which regular and special education personnel work collaboratively (Burdette, 1999).

Valesky et al. (1998) discovered that increased formal education regarding special education issues, and subsequent field experiences, significantly outweighed the benefits of intermittent in-service training in regard to principals' positive perceptions of their skills and abilities related to matters of special education. Administrators who have had formal coursework in special education issues as part of their preparation programs have reported significant benefits, including greater levels of confidence and increased acceptance of special needs students in their schools (Valesky et al.) as well as increased levels of satisfaction from their school faculty (Burdette, 1999). In a study of school administrators in Florida, Valesky et al. noted that administrators' self-efficacy to deal with special education issues was not only higher when these practitioners completed special education courses but was also higher when the number of special education courses was increased.

#### Perspectives on Principal Preparation Reform Efforts

One of the first major attempts at reforming the preparation of educational leaders was the Danforth Programs for the Preparation of School Principals (DPPSP) which began in 1987. The Danforth Foundation has a successful track record in influencing educational initiatives. One of those initiatives has been to help reconceptualize the preparation of educational leaders (Grosso, 1993). Thus, a five-year program which included 22 universities was commenced. The initial focus of the DPPSP was aimed at curricular change. The intent was to join together school district representatives and department of educational administration faculty with the

outcome of developing future training programs that would reflect the realities of the principalship (Grosso).

The impact of the DPPSP on the principal preparation programs at the participating universities was reflected upon by Milstein (1993), who noted:

There is no way of ensuring that fledgling programs will survive to move from ideas to innovations and on to institutionalization. In fact, it is just as likely that they will not, given problems such as inadequate resources for release time, coordination, and support needs; faculty disinterest in changing programs; and little history of meaningful partnerships between field leaders and university personnel. Even with the added status and extra funding they received, some of the universities that joined the Danforth Foundation program have seen their experimental programs fall by the wayside. (p. 218)

Perhaps no more eloquent account can be given than that of Milstein's testimonial regarding the difficulties involved in reforming principal preparation programs. Although the intricacies of implementing institutionalized change go beyond the scope of this study, it is critical to review the research regarding what other barriers exist regarding curricular change, particularly as it relates to special education issues.

The barriers that hamper educational reform are not unilaterally agreed upon. Among the differing viewpoints, however, one common thread emerged. The reform of principal preparation programs, like any other educational reform movement, is abundantly complex.

Some of the other perspectives related to the barriers to reforming principal preparation programs have been addressed by Campbell and Fyfe (1995). They noted that the process of change takes time and money, and the limits of these resources makes change difficult. In addition, without the much needed support from collegial relationships of faculty members, efforts for reform will be thwarted. Gibbs (1995) also added to the literature on barriers to educational reform when he pointed out that no financial consequences are in place for responding to the values or petitions of external forces for curricular change. These petitions often differ from the direction the university has chosen for its curricula. Given the presence of two incompatible visions, it is no wonder that educational reform is difficult to achieve. Another perspective on barriers to educational reform was offered by Ravitch (1983), who stated that lasting reform is best achieved by a series of small changes, yet, confoundingly, these changes are often scoffed at precisely because they are small. Nonetheless, she argued that setting goals



and then working toward their end will yield significant results. Still another possibility can be found in the perspectives of Sirotnik and Kimball (1994), who noted that competition is a huge barrier in changes in higher education programs. With only a set number of instructional hours available, special interests such as finance, law, or technology, to mention a few, could all argue for more time.

Campbell and Fyfe (1995) added one last perspective:

Even though students choose our program with full awareness of our orientation toward inclusion, they are caught in the uncertainty arising from the paradigm shift taking place in special education today. Their deep-seated biases and concerns surface as they are challenged to move toward the collaborative model of working with other teachers, family, specialists and other community resources. As they discover the incompatibility of many school policies and practices with the philosophy of inclusion and developmentally appropriate practice, their anxiety grows and feelings of helplessness develop or skepticism takes over. (p.11)

Among all of the varying perspectives regarding the reform of principal preparation programs, there does appear to be general agreement on one issue: The addition of more credit hours to educational leadership programs is not practical (Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994). Pressures such as limited time and money prevent many students from enrolling in courses that are not required for principal certification, despite desire by these students to learn additional information (Campbell & Fyfe, 1995). Thus, curricular modification, if initiated, requires that the faculty of educational leadership departments provide increased attention to special education issues in current courses. Apparently, special education issues must be integrated into the existing preparation programs of aspiring principals (Campbell & Fyfe).

Some universities' departments of educational leadership / administrator preparation are beginning to re-think their curriculum approaches based on a reassessment of what students really need to know and what they should be able to do in administrative positions (Gupton, 1998). Discerning the essential information needed to serve as effective principals will help in the transmission of knowledge these aspiring leaders are seeking in their preparation programs (Bateman, 1998). However, universities should carefully examine the methods used in determining what knowledge is essential for educational leaders. A major reason for exercising caution in determining essential needs is cited in Daresh and Playko (1992), who reported that discrepancies existed between experienced practitioners and aspiring ones regarding what information was believed to be essential in the effective performance of a principal's job

responsibilities. Similar studies (Erlandson, 1994; Lee & O'Neil, 1979; Lovette, 1997) have identified discrepancies among various groups of principals and/or aspiring principals regarding their perceptions of what information is essential for the adequate preparation of principals.

Sirotnik and Kimball (1994) noted that, "It does not appear that much is known-or that what is known is made explicit-about how special education is, or should be, included in programs designed to prepare school administrators" (p. 600). There have since been some specific strategies outlined in the literature. One major suggestion has been that more integration is needed between the faculty of special education and the faculty of educational leadership departments. In this manner a more pragmatic approach concerning special education issues could be utilized in the preservice training of perspective principals (Bateman, 1998). This strategy was also proposed by Sirotnik and Kimball, who recommended the development of curriculum planning teams. These teams, comprised of faculty members from leadership departments, special education departments, and members of the local school systems, would review course syllabi and highlight areas in which special education issues could be inserted throughout the existing courses. Campbell and Fyfe (1995) believed that the modification of principal preparation programs to include more special education issues rested on the supports provided to educational leadership faculty that would foster an appreciation regarding inclusion. Among the strategies they suggested were ideas related to supports such as mentoring or support groups and shared responsibilities in the form of group instruction, coaching, or teaching classes as interdisciplinary teams. Goor et al. (1997) proposed that changes in curricula would be better served with increased attention to the improvement of student attitudes rather than in the acquisition of specific skills. Goor et al. noted that, "beliefs influence perception and guide behavior, and given the central leadership role of the principal, training programs for principals must address their beliefs" (p. 134).

There is a paucity of literature regarding the exact special education issues that should be incorporated into a principal preparation program. It must be considered, therefore, that this lack of direction regarding special education issues has further complicated any attempts to modify principal preparation curricula. In the absence of special education training or experience, how could it be reasonably expected that educational leadership faculty would be able to identify and prioritize the essential information needed by principals in order to ensure the appropriate education of children with disabilities?

Sirotnik and Kimball (1994) outlined five specific recommendations regarding the modification of programs for increased attention to issues of special education. The most significant of these recommendations was to have a requirement that any student entering the program who does not have a background in special education be required to take a mini-course or tutorial program. The reason behind this strategy was that if students do not possess a minimum understanding of special education and related issues, they can easily miss the expected learning (Sirotnik & Kimball). Special education has a plethora of acronyms, terms, and definitions that require a certain level of pre-requisite understanding before an individual can be expected to adequately interpret and then appropriately apply their decision-making abilities. The other four recommendations outlined by Sirotnik and Kimball were: Integrate special education topics in other courses, make use of problem-based learning strategies, include faculty from the department of special education to help team teach and assist in curricular modifications, and appoint an oversight committee to ensure that the aforementioned changes actually are set in place.

Although the addition of more credit hours to the principal preparation program has been deemed to be not practical by some researchers (Campbell & Fyfe, 1995; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994), the availability of a single course, addressing current issues in special education and presenting the topics principals face on a daily basis, has received support (Farley & MacKay, 1999; Monteith, 1994). Interestingly, there is a noticeable absence of literature specifically outlining skills which are essential for principals to appropriately address special education issues. Farley and MacKay recommended the following 13 objectives for the preservice training of principals in the area of special education:

1. Understand the historical context of special education law and its impact on current educational practices
2. Identify the legal aspects of administrative functions such as IEP development and the monitoring of teacher's performance
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the school's legal responsibilities to children with special needs
4. Demonstrate a working knowledge of Due Process and the legal ramifications for schools and school systems regarding this function
5. Understand the ramifications and the legal responsibilities of administrators involved in a Due Process Hearing
6. Identify the legal boundaries of disciplinary action regarding children with special needs

7. Identify the scope of educational/support services afforded to special needs children under the law
8. Demonstrate an understanding for the use of published references regarding legal aspects of special education
9. Integrate an understanding of special education law in the development and/or preparation for meetings that simulate real-life problems in the field
10. Integrate an understanding of special education law for spontaneous response/decision making for simulated real-life emergencies
11. Develop a shared vision that children with special needs do not pose a threat to the operations of a school just because the laws governing these children are more complex
12. Identify the role of the regular educator in aspects of special education as mandated by law
13. Identify and differentiate the various placement options and types of services which are afforded by law for students with disabilities. (pp. 12-13)

Monteith (1994) suggested the implementation of a specific course of study on special education. The special education component was broken down into four areas: core, assessment, special problems/topics, and internship/practicum. Specific examples were provided as follows:

1. Identifying disabled students
2. Being familiar with definitions of various disabling conditions
3. Being aware of current legislation related to individuals with disabilities
4. Understanding the historical influence of various legislation
5. Understanding the etiology incidence and prevalence figures of various disabling conditions
6. Understanding the educational needs of students with disabilities
7. Understanding the concept of least restrictive environment
8. Identifying effective classroom methods appropriate for varying handicapping conditions
9. Adapting and modifying curriculum materials
10. Using technology effectively
11. Understanding how to use assessment data to plan instructional programs
12. Understanding basic considerations in psychological and educational assessment of students (including legal and ethical considerations)
13. Applying assessment information to educational decision making (understanding how to write and evaluate IEPs)
14. Understanding the general referral and assessment process as well as how it relates to specific states
15. Acquiring Level I and Level II computer competency
16. Understanding current topics/problems in administration as they relate to special education (e.g., LRE—achieving full inclusion, mainstreaming, disciplining students with disabilities, advocacy, and legal issues)

17. Developing specific administrative knowledge/competencies essential to school administration with emphasis in special education Synthesizing theoretical knowledge and applied skills gained in the classroom setting
18. Acquiring practical experience which leads to increasing competency with emphasis in special education
19. Gaining experience in formative and summative staff evaluation in a special education setting
20. Developing an analytical paper or doing a project related to some problem identified in relation to special education at the building or district level. (pp. 11-12)

Although neither of these lists is exhaustive of special education issues, they both provide insight regarding fundamental issues relating to special education. With these lists as beginning reference points, faculty who prepare principals can begin to delineate the topics and approaches that best meet the needs of their students, to enable them to deal effectively with children with disabilities.

Ultimately, curricular modifications will depend on two main factors, the first factor being how educational leadership faculty delineate the goals of their preparation programs, and the second, the extent to which they collaborate with others regarding these goals (Toth, Good, DuCharme & Dixey, 1999). However, if curricula modification efforts are “experienced as one more thing to do” (Campbell & Fyfe, 1995, p. 13), then faculty may be reticent to consider revising their current syllabi.

### Summary of Literature Reviewed

The contemporary movement of inclusion and the promotion of a unified system of educational services were priorities for special education advocates in the late 1960s (Weintraub, 1968). Programs designed to gain the support of regular education personnel, through special education training, met with significant success (Division for Handicapped Children, Bureau for Physically Handicapped Children, New York State Education Department, and Westchester County Board of Cooperative Educational Services, 1969). However, the attempts to unify special education and regular education were notably set back with the implementation of federal legislation in 1975 (PL 94-142). Special education services became mandated under PL 94-142, but the spirit of this law was often lost in the enforcement of the law (Cox, 1994). With the

realization that PL 94-142 had inadvertently helped isolate special education, movements such as Dean's Grants were quickly implemented, in an attempt refocus on the positive aspects inherent in special education law and work toward improving the relations between regular and special educators (Quisenberry et al., 1982). Special education has now come full circle. Today, as in the late 1960s, special education advocates are emphasizing shared responsibility with regular education personnel regarding the education of students with disabilities and trying to promote collegiality between these two groups of educators.

There is no doubt, according to the literature, that the increased presence of students with disabilities, the regulations of federal special education legislation, and the movement of inclusion have all coupled together to dramatically change the roles and responsibilities of school administrators (Daresh et al., 1998; Valesky & Hirth, 1992). Principals can no longer relinquish the responsibility, as they once did, for ensuring the educational safeguards of children with disabilities (Sarason & Doris, 1978).

It becomes abundantly clear, in the literature reviewed, that one constant over the last three decades has been the significant void in the training of principals on issues of special education (Monteith, 1998; Smith & Colon, 1998; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994; Valesky et al., 1998). The central issue that arises is, why after decades of calls for reform, from both current and past practitioners, has little or nothing been done to include training in special education in the pre-service programs for principals?

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 identifies the methods and procedures used to conduct this qualitative investigation, which sought to better understand the perceptions and opinions of university faculty in departments of educational leadership regarding the inclusion of special education issues in the preservice training of school principals. Qualitative studies attempt to describe more than just the way things are. The intent of qualitative research is to describe how things developed into what they are today and how individuals feel about the development. Presently, the utility of qualitative research has been primarily a method to give meaning to the experiences in which individuals have participated (Gay, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1991).

To date, no studies could be located that have attempted to uncover the attitudes, meanings, perceptions and/or opinions of faculty concerning the inclusion of special education issues in principal preparation programs. The gap created by this *missing* voice is significant and it is the attempt to diminish this gap, through discovery, that is the expressed intent of qualitative research (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989). Despite the claims that qualitative studies are transitory and situational (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996), the present research seems relevant to understanding why, for more than two decades, the calls to reform principal preparation programs in this area have gone unanswered.

#### Research Design

The multiple site case study design, sometimes referred to as a collective case study (Stake, 1995), was selected in order to examine faculty perceptions of the role that special education issues should play in the preparation of school principals, as well as the barriers and supports that influence these faculty members in their decision to include or exclude special education issues as part of their courses. Two sampling methodologies were used in this study. The first sampling methodology used to determine the selection of universities is referred to as homogeneous sampling (Patton, 1990). Homogenous sampling encompasses a group that shares similar characteristics, such as, specific to this study, universities that offer a certification

program for school principals. The second sampling methodology used to select faculty members is referred to as snowball or chain sampling (Patton). Snowball or chain sampling involves selecting persons based on the recommendation of a well-situated or knowledgeable person such as, specific to this study, department of educational leadership chairs to identify those faculty members who may be best suited to lend insight on the topic studied.

The data for this study were primarily collected through the use of semi-structured interviews that, as Creswell (1998) suggested, initially use open-ended questions but remain flexible during the research process so as to “reflect an increased understanding of the problem” (p. 19). In addition to interviews with faculty, a variety of documents, such as university catalogs, programs of study, course syllabi, and student handbooks, were analyzed to more completely assess the formal stance of each university’s principal preparation program and the amount of focus regarding special education issues.

### The Role of the Researcher

Fine suggested “that researchers move beyond the stances of ventriloquists or mere vehicles for the voices of those being researched” (as cited in Morrow & Smith, 1995). Especially in the beginning of the study, it is suggested that the researcher assume the role of learner (Stainback & Stainback, 1988). By not assuming a critical or evaluating position, Stainback and Stainback noted that participants may become more open and thus share a deeper level of their experiences. As interviews progress however, questions may need to change in an effort to understand the issues truly relevant to the study (Pryzwansky & Noblit, 1990).

Middleman and Goldberg-Wood (1995) noted that there is, “no reality apart from one’s construction of it in dialogue with others, and there are as many constructions of reality as there are experiencing people” (p. 8). The interactions between the researcher and the participants that include, but are not limited to, initial questions, follow-up questions, prompts and paraphrasing, “cannot help but influence the nature of the story” of each faculty member (Becvar, Canfield, & Becvar, 1997, p. 104). It is precisely this merging of interpretations that will create the understanding of the issue being studied (Middleman & Goldberg-Wood). As Burdette (1999) noted, “the qualitative narrative relies heavily on the voice of the researcher to tell a story” (p. 60).



Qualitative inquiry usually generates stories that are, as Creswell (1998) noted, “emotion laden, close to the people, and practical” (p. 19). Therefore, the researcher can not help but assume the role of a passionate participant (Lincoln, 1991). However, the researcher must attempt to consciously distinguish between being *emic*, or open to the unique views of the participants, and being *etic*, or recognizing one’s own interpretation of the stories being told (Creswell). This researcher took care to remain emic in this study.

### Trustworthiness of the Study

In quantitative research, readers expressly look for the validity and reliability of the study in order to determine if the results are trustworthy or worthy of attention (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Validity and reliability are not applicable in qualitative studies, yet there are correlates to these terms that support whether or not a study should be considered trustworthy or worthy of the reader’s time.

Qualitative research uses four main terms in order to establish trustworthiness. Those four terms are: Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability. These terms have correlates to quantitative terms but, more importantly, are based on specific constructs. It is the methods by which the researcher addresses these constructs that ensure the reader that the study is trustworthy.

Despite the active participant role of the researcher in a qualitative study, trustworthiness can be established. The acknowledgement of bias by the researcher does not diminish the trustworthiness of the study but enhances it, because the researcher, aware and open to his or her bias, works diligently to ensure that it does not directly influence his or her study (Hammersley & Gomm, 1997). In fact, researchers such as Burdette (1999) noted that strategizing on ways to ensure objectivity should be a dominant focus in the planning of qualitative research designs.

Regarding the construct of truth-value in a qualitative study, researchers refer to the term credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility in this study was ensured using three predominant strategies: (a) a significant amount of time in the field was spent gathering data; (b) a variety of information sources were collected; and (c) participants reviewed their responses to ensure that bias has not misrepresented their intent (Lincoln & Guba). These strategies were used by the researcher until a thick and rich description of the topic was complete. Mertens

(1998) addressed this issue when he noted that researchers should not discontinue the study until they have “confidence that themes and examples are repeating instead of extending” (p. 181).

The construct of whether or not the study is applicable is referred to as transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability in this study has been ensured by a thick, rich description of faculty members’ perceptions and opinions about the significance, if any, of the inclusion of special education issues as part of their courses and/or their department’s requirements for principal certification. In addition, a thick and rich description into the extent of the supports and/or barriers that influence faculty in their decision to include or exclude special education issues in both the curricula of their courses and their department’s requirements for principal certification was included and should have enhanced the transferability of this study. The reader, by understanding the context of the participants’ answers, is called upon to judge for himself or herself whether or not the study has any benefits. The reader must also determine if the benefits of the study extend to others or if they are exclusive to only similar groups.

Dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) answers the construct of consistency. Dependability was ensured in this study by the completion of an audit. The auditor was someone with administrative experience, a background in special education, experience in working with public schools, and also experience in higher education. All transcripts of interviews and other documentation were examined periodically throughout the course of the study as a way to ensure that the inquiry was dependable. In addition, the auditor also examined the final product of the study as a way to ensure that the findings were supported by the data. The auditor’s report is included in Appendix A.

In addition to the dependability of the study, the auditor also supported the fourth construct of neutrality. This construct, in qualitative research, is referred to as confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability, in this study, was ensured by the complete and accurate accumulation of all necessary information, including interviews and documentation such as university catalogs, programs of study, course syllabi, and student handbooks.

### Selection Process

Using a map of the Midwestern United States, circles were made around Dayton, Ohio (location of the researcher) representing radii in increments of 50 miles. A limit of 100 miles from Dayton, Ohio was used as the initial boundary. Within this circumference, universities offering certification programs for principals were initially identified using the Educational Administration Directory 2000-2001 (Lane, 2000).

The 100-mile band established for this study included 3 states, specifically: Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky. A total of eight universities within the 100-mile band were identified as offering principal preparation programs. An initial radius of 100 miles was determined to be adequate as a first attempt to gather a thick and rich description for this study. If a thick and rich description could not be gleaned from interviews conducted at these initial universities, then a new 50-mile band would have been added and universities, within that band, would have been included for participation; however, this proved unnecessary. Each of the universities was contacted, one at a time, starting with the closest university, until it was believed that a thick and rich description of the topic had been gathered.

The department chairs responsible for the principal preparation programs at each of the universities were contacted by a letter (see Appendix B), seeking approval to visit their campus, interview faculty members, and review relevant documentation. A confirmation sheet (see Appendix C) and a self-addressed stamped envelope were included in the initial contact letter sent to the department chairs. As part of the confirmation sheet, the department chairs were asked to identify those faculty members who may have relevant information regarding the topic of this research project. This process for the selection of faculty members fit Patton's (1990) description of chain sampling, in which participants are invited to participate based on the recommendations of someone who is well-situated to make such suggestions.

### Structured Interviews

The focus of this study was two-fold. The first focus was on faculty members' perceptions and opinions about the importance of including special education issues as part of their courses and/or their department's requirements for principal certification. The second focus was to examine the extent of the supports and/or barriers that influenced these faculty members

in their decision to include or exclude special education issues in both the curricula of their courses and their department's requirements for principal certification.

By structuring the interview, it was expected that the responses provided would be more comparable among the participants (Stainback & Stainback, 1988). Therefore, a question flow sheet (see Appendix D) was developed that intentionally allowed participants to tell their stories without active listening techniques to encourage their responses (McCracken, 1988). The questions on the flow sheet were approved by three experts on special education and principal preparation to ensure that they met the trustworthiness component of being credible or having a truth value (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A panel of professionals familiar with the roles and responsibilities of principals related to special education issues completed the credibility check. These professionals represented a variety of background experiences including public school administration, special education, educational leadership, and participation in principal preparation programs.

Prior to the beginning of the study, mock interviews were evaluated by three faculty members in East Tennessee State University's Department of Educational Leadership who have experience teaching in the principal preparation program. Feedback from those faculty members helped refine the interview approach and allowed the researcher to practice such skills as using open-ended follow-up questions, encouraging respondents to elaborate, controlling emotional reactions to answers, and listening unobtrusively (Burdette, 1999).

### Data Analysis

The interviews conducted during the study were audio taped and the discourses were transcribed verbatim. Response patterns were coded using Qualitative Solutions and Research, Non-numerical Unstructured Data \* Indexing Searching and Theorizing (QSR NUD\*IST 4). This software package allowed the researcher to form initial categories of information and then refine these categories in order to better access the passages of the interviews that support these common threads and unite the themes of the responses. The collected documentation of materials such as such as university catalogs, programs of study, course syllabi, and student handbooks was reviewed in order to glean any references made to the formal inclusion of special education issues.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The purpose of this study was to give voice to the faculty of principal preparation programs on their perceptions and opinions about the importance, if any, of including special education issues as part of their courses or programs. This study also offered insight into the extent of the supports and/or barriers that currently influence faculty in their decision to include or exclude special education issues in both the curricula of their courses and their department's requirements for graduate students enrolled in their principal preparation program.

The data for this study were collected through the use of semi-structured interviews that incorporated 23 questions, grouped into five categories (see Appendix D). In some cases, follow-up questions were asked of the participants in order for the researcher to gain a better understanding of that individual's response.

The results of the interviews have been synthesized into the four main themes that emerged from the responses of the participants. The four themes reflect faculty perspectives regarding issues of self, special education in general, students enrolled in principal preparation programs, and the curriculum for the preservice training of principals. Within each of those themes, I categorized the participants' responses into two areas; supports that facilitate the inclusion of special education issues into principal preparation programs, and barriers that mitigate against such inclusion.

#### Introduction of the Participants

Pseudonyms were given to each of the 12 participants in this study in order to ensure their confidentiality. The participants of this study were all full-time professors at universities offering principal preparation programs. The universities were located within a 100-mile radius of Dayton, Ohio, where the researcher currently lives. Research participants represented seven universities in three different states.

Dr. #1: A tenured, full professor in a Department of Educational Administration. Dr. #1 is male and is an attorney, in addition to having a doctorate in educational administration and

supervision. He has been teaching, either full or part time, in higher education for 23 years and currently is serving in the position of an endowed chair. Past experience includes eight years as a classroom teacher, but he also reported that he has had responsibilities for many administrative functions.

Dr. #2: An assistant professor in a Department of Educational Administration. Dr. #2 is male and has a doctoral degree in educational administration. He has been teaching in higher education for four years. He has extensive experience in the field, having served as a principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent of schools prior to assuming his current position.

Dr. #3: A tenured, full professor in a Department of Educational Leadership. Dr. #3 is male and has a doctoral degree in educational administration. He has been teaching in higher education for 21 years. He reported that he had served at several positions in education (teacher, principal, and superintendent) prior to taking a position in higher education.

Dr. #4: An associate professor in an Education Department. Dr. #4 is male and has a doctoral degree in educational administration. He has been teaching in higher education for 11 years and has extensive field experience as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal.

Dr. #5: Is currently serving as a distinguished professor in residence in a Department of Educational Leadership. Dr. #5 is male and has a doctoral degree in educational administration. He has taught in higher education for 24 years but intermittently has worked in K-12 education as a teacher, principal, and assistant superintendent.

Dr. #6: A tenured, full professor in a Department of Educational Leadership. Dr. #6 is female and has a doctoral degree in educational administration. She has taught in higher education for 24 years and worked for many years as a classroom teacher.

Dr. #7: An assistant professor in an Education Department. Dr. #7 is male and has a doctoral degree in educational leadership. He has been teaching in higher education for three years and has 22 years of work in the public schools, including roles as a teacher, principal, curriculum director, and superintendent.

Dr. #8: A tenured professor in an Education Department. Dr. #8 is male and has a doctorate in educational administration. He has 30 years of experience teaching in higher education but has been a full-time faculty member for only 13 years. He has extensive experience working in K-12 education, having been a teacher, principal, curriculum director, assistant superintendent, and superintendent.

Dr. #9: An assistant professor in a College of Education. Dr. #9 is female and has a doctorate in administration and supervision. She has been teaching in higher education for three years. Dr. #9 has 30 years of experience in the public schools, with 10 years as a classroom teacher and 20 years as a principal.

Dr. #10: A tenured professor in a Department of Educational Leadership. Dr. #10 is male and has a doctorate in educational administration. He has been teaching in higher education for 32 years. Dr. #10 has experience in the public schools as a classroom teacher, coach, and department head.

Dr. #11: A tenured professor in the School of Educational Policy and Leadership. Dr. #11 is male and is an attorney, in addition to having a doctorate in educational policy studies. He has been teaching in higher education for 30 years and has experience in K-12 education as a classroom teacher.

Dr. #12: An assistant professor in the School of Educational Policy and Leadership. Dr. #11 is female and has a doctorate in educational administration. She has been teaching in higher education for seven years and has experience in K-12 education as a classroom teacher and lead teacher. She also has served as an assistant to a Director of Special Education and was the Director of a state Special Education Program.

#### Faculty Perspectives of Self

Participants in this study were asked, throughout the interview, to reflect on their roles in the preservice training of principals. Included in the interview were questions designed to promote each individual's reflection on his or her level of preparedness, not only on the topic of special education but also for the principalship in general. This reflection sparked some of the most passionate answers given during the interview process. This passion may have been generated by their disgust with the lack of fundamental knowledge perceived by many to be present among their peers, not only in regard to issues of special education but also to the principalship. The participants also commented that the inclusion or non-inclusion of special education topics in principal preparation programs is safeguarded by the academic freedom found in universities. Academic freedom allows faculty to pursue their interests, but also insulates faculty from dealing with any issue they are either unprepared or uncomfortable in

teaching. The latter was perceived to be true regardless of the potential value of omitted issues to the overall quality of the program in which they participate.

### Supports

The participants in this study shared a common perspective of self that was directly connected to the general nature of universities and the amount of academic freedom faculty members enjoy. “I think the nature of the university is very independent-minded. You know, individual people are working on various things on their own. The university’s strength is individual people with individual interests – pursuing them” (Dr. #2). Therefore, all of the participants in this study shared a perspective of not being forced into the inclusion or exclusion of any specific content in their courses. As Dr. #8 noted:

I think it would be a matter of me deciding that it [special education issues] deserves more time -- resources, and time, research, my expertise if I have any, and the discussion in the class and the emphasis on it. I don’t think there’s a barrier there at all. It’s simply a matter of deciding where it lies in importance and I don’t -- you know, I mean, based on the feedback from my students in recent years, what they told me was spend a little more time on special education and a little less time on the philosophical issues of the legal system. So I’m ‘gonna’ do that. I am doing that this semester as a matter of fact. We went from one and a half nights of classes on special ed. to -- we’re going to three. That’s three out of sixteen. It used to be one out of sixteen, now it’s three out of sixteen.

Still another participant noted that, in over 20 years of working in higher education, he had never been given anything but a course title, and had never been asked to follow someone else’s syllabus (Dr. #1). Having the academic freedom to teach the subject matter as he felt most appropriate was also described as a support by Dr. #7, who believed that the interest level of the faculty member played a great role in determining the course content in relation to special education issues. Such was the case of Dr. #4, who explained that he includes more special education issues in his course than “most” because he has a “personal interest in preparing people” for a subject that he was required to rely on others to keep from making mistakes and getting in trouble as a principal. This theme of academic freedom was replete among the participants, who, to some degree, indicated they were basically allowed to teach what they wanted, within reason (Dr. #3, Dr. #6, & Dr. #10). The single greatest support expressed by the



participants was the nature of academic freedom in universities that enabled them to pursue their interests regarding course content.

Other supports noted included collegiality in their departments. Dr. # 10 praised his department chair by noting, “The support system here in this department would come from the chair, who is very special educationally-minded, being an attorney and a hearing officer. That’s a big support base.” In addition to complimenting his chair, Dr. #4 had high praise for his colleagues. He noted, “I think we all get along so well, and we work together so closely that there is no difference. I would say we all are very complimentary. We have a little different perspective from that point of view [our different backgrounds], but yet we get along so well and we work together.” And in yet one more testimonial of the importance of collegial relationships, Dr. #12 stated:

For me, in the context of our program, it’s probably having another faculty member who is equally invested, equally concerned about these issues. So having that other voice is really helpful. In addition we have a number of faculty who—although special ed. is not necessarily a direct focus, diversity of students and student needs is. So I think that’s probably our biggest asset, that we’ve got the opportunity to build a critical mass.

### Barriers

Although academic freedom was listed as a support, the presence of academic freedom does not guarantee that any one issue will be addressed. Personal interests, as noted above, greatly influence the content of courses offered. Dr. #2 stated:

If you happen to have an instructor who has an interest in it [special education], you’ll get a lot of it—you know, you’ll get three different approaches to teaching the principalship course depending on the backgrounds of people. That’s a problem, probably, and that will stop anything of real momentum in terms of addressing this issue in an ongoing way. I think the downfall is that there is nothing guaranteed. In other words, it’s kind of a luck of the draw. It depends on when you go through and who you have, and that’s—as I said before, that’s the strength of the university, but that’s also the weakness.

This sentiment was shared by other participants, who made comments such as, “We’re not always aware of what the other person is doing” (Dr. #6), or “I’m hoping somebody else is taking care of that” (Dr. #8). This “hit or miss” (Dr. #7) reality of whether or not specific issues are included in principal preparation coursework was elaborated on by Dr. #1, who said, “Even if

we talk about putting something across the curriculum, I don't know what the person next door or down the hall or in the other campus location is 'gonna' do. Good faith notwithstanding, if it's every place, it's no place." Adding to this basic commentary, Dr. #12 stated:

I think that the academy has academic freedom as our strength and Achilles heel in terms of curriculum development, because it allows people to really go with their strengths and teach to their passion. On the other hand, often times people are resistant to change in the name of academic freedom. So, convincing faculties of ed. admin. that there is a need for reform in special ed. or the inclusion of special ed. issues is a challenge.

Many participants shared an opinion that a real disconnection exists between some of the faculty who participate in principal preparation programs and the reality of what their students need in their preservice training. This disconnection seems to be even greater in the area of special education. One explanation of this difference was offered by Dr. #11, who commented:

The education administration program is not a faculty of special education professors. We have, if you will, those experts who happen to operate within another department within this college, whose job it is to carry that on. It's not necessarily our job. What's happened is this—and I assume this is one of the reasons why you're here: Special education is now—is now being seen as being very integrative, as a regular education process. That's just the way it is, which is sort of a contemporary issue. Not all of us have caught up with that.

This issue of disconnection is of fundamental importance to the study, not only because a significant number of participants commented on this issue, but also because of the passion with which they told their stories. Listed below are excerpts from four of the interviews conducted. I have grouped all four together, without introduction, so that the reader can fully appreciate the significance of this issue. The first excerpt is from Dr. #12; the second is by Dr. #8; the third is from Dr. #5; and the fourth is from Dr.# 1:

I think that—again time is a barrier—and this goes back to a frustration of professional lifelong frustration that there is a real profound difference between how—and I'm speaking in gross generalizations here—but how special ed. educators view these concerns and understand these concerns—educators who haven't had direct experience with special education view these concerns and understand these concerns. So I'm not sure that all faculty share that investment. So one of the barriers is convincing people of the importance of these issues, and a significant number of faculty have been in the academy long enough such that their own practical experience is very different from what principals feel is currently as regards special ed. So I don't think they understand the intensity of these concerns day-to-day on the job.

The interest level of the students and their orientation. Many of them come to us without a special education orientation at all. And so I think that we're 'gonna' have to create that in them. You know, so I think that we have to do a better job of emphasizing the importance of this role, and I think that what makes that hard is that all of the professors in educational administration—none of them—none of us—have special education teaching backgrounds and also most of us were administrators—most of them because I stayed around long enough to do it. But most of them who are administrators were pre-IDEA or early stages of IDEA, and therefore I think there's a knowledge base problem there, to be honest

I think there is a lack of awareness on much of the faculty's part in terms of what is needed to operate day to day in a school environment, around the whole issue of special education. I think that is, too many of us have been too long away from the field to understand what that means. I think we've got people who are old, and I don't just mean chronologically, but even mentally. People who are physically young but have an old school mentality and not willing to look to new and different ways of dealing with things in the future, who don't want to broaden their horizons, who have limited experiences. In addition, I'd have to stop and think it through to be honest with you. I don't know what the percentage is, but many of the people I've worked with, probably a plurality. I wouldn't go to say a majority but certainly a pretty good plurality, not only were never administrators but a plurality of that plurality never even taught school. I don't think we realize how much we're supposed to be connected to the field, to the reality, to the practitioner dimension of it, and, as I mentioned before in different words, maybe you don't have to have "Been there, done that" on everything, but if you haven't, you at least have to have an appreciation for it. But so many people that I encounter have not "Been there, done that" and don't appreciate it. I was offered a job, again, couple of years ago I started at [another university] and desperately want to go back to the [named state] area, and they offered me a position again about three and a half years ago. They offered two people positions; the other one was a 29-year-old kid who could not have been admitted to the program as a student, because he didn't have the requisite three years of teaching experience. They've now got this guy teaching courses on Superintendency. I understand you can understand the theory of it, but how in the hell can you teach a course *on* superintendency *to* superintendents if you've never stood up in front of a kid and taught a classroom in your life.

The disconnection reported so passionately by these participants calls into question the level of preparedness of faculty members who teach in their university's principal preparation program. Interestingly enough, participants were directly asked for their opinions on this issue, as each was posed the question, "In your philosophical beliefs, is it more important for the professor to be an expert or simply a guide regarding the preparation of principals in order to handle issues of special education?" In response, none of the faculty believed they could fill the role of an expert in the courses they teach regarding special education issues; however, compelling statements were made suggesting that a strong working knowledge of special

education issues was essential to being an effective instructor to those in a principal preparation program. In addition, an overwhelming number of faculty members responded that their knowledge base did not include formal training, but was limited to their own professional experiences in K-12 education.

The expectation that faculty who prepare principals will have some level of expertise in order to effectively guide the instruction of these future educational leaders was well articulated by Dr. #1:

I don't think we can all be expert in everything, but I think we have to be prepared to guide people through different things. There's a debate in this field, as you probably know, guys like Joe Murphy -- with whom I disagree pretty strongly, at least on this issue -- [argue] that nobody should specialize, that we should all be generalists. I think to the extent that it is reasonably possible, and that depends on many things beyond an individual's ability to control, people should try to stick closest to what they best know in terms of their teaching careers; so while we're going to guide people, I prefer somebody with a higher level of expertise, so that if to put it on a scale of 1 to 10 -- well, that wouldn't work either -- I, I'd want someone with greater expertise more than just a guide. I think, to me, and I don't mean to impugn how you're presenting it -- a guide is just kind of pointing the way, whereas an expert knows the way, and can help get you there a little better. So, in a perfect world, the more training, the better understanding you have, the more you "been there, done that", I think better off you are.

The theme of an expert guide was also supported by Dr. #11. His argument for increased expertise among faculty members was also based on student need. He stated:

I think, without trying to equivocate too much, it's really one of both. For example, if you take a look at the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, the acronym IDEA, if the student qualifies, one of the things that are -- let me start from the beginning. The way to qualify, there are certain kinds of things that have to be done. Relative to the professorship, so many of the people who are involved in an enterprise come out of our training enterprise. When a multi-factored evaluation is still held for the student to determine whether he or she qualifies, we're talking about people who often know something about testing measurements. Why is that important? Because we're talking about administrators being on that team. And, if you think about it, there is a certain level of expertise that comes with being on that team. If a student does qualify and is eligible for an individual education program, an IEP, who are the people who by law must be on that team? Special education teacher, regular education teacher, parents, and someone who can make fiscal or money decisions about special education. Hearing about that latter person, almost always that person is the principal, or the principal's designee. That individual has to have a certain level of expertise in order to operate effectively on that team. So, it seems to me that it's imperative that there be a certain level of expertise by which to train such persons to serve. In 1998 -- I think 1997 -- the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act was reauthorized by Congress. In 1999, its enabling regulations were modified. When doing that legislative executive activity,

IDEA was rewritten to accommodate what did not exist before, and that was a fairly healthy and large section on discipline, manifestation determination, and so on and so forth -- that was newly added so as to enhance the authority of school personnel. Who in the school personnel would handle discipline? The same kinds of people that we train.

Although many of the faculty members made comments in a similar vein, Dr. #8 posited another reason why guiding students makes it imperative for a professor to have some level of expertise. He argued:

Well, I think it is more important to be the guide, but I would also tell you that if you don't have some expertise you're not a very good guide. So, I think you have to have enough knowledge that when you guide them in their projects and discussions that they aren't sharing ignorance and prejudice or bias and emotions because that's not helpful. That's not productive. But I do think that what you have to do is guide them, because I think that's the only way they truly learn. Because I really believe that constructive learning is the best way to learn. I think the brain research is pretty clear on that, so if you guide them, you get them into constructive learning. If you play the expert with them, then they become passive, and they just listen to you.

Even those professors who placed less emphasis on expertise still agreed that faculty members involved in the preservice training of principals need to be experienced in order to be effective. For example, Dr. #2 stated that, "Well, if you required someone to be an expert, we wouldn't have very many professors. On the other hand, depending upon the course you teach, you'd better have a pretty substantial background." Dr. #4 added that faculty should serve as guides because they must, "Be able to generate, and this is not telling war stories, but just to generate from real life situations [those things that a principal would have to deal with]." Dr. #6 continued this thought by adding that one of the best ways to be an effective guide is to make, "Principals aware of what their responsibilities are. Part of it is to know what *they* need to ask." Dr. #12 added to the sentiment when she stated that, "If I don't have the information myself, then it is my responsibility to direct my students to that information." In final support of the emphasis for faculty to be knowledgeable, Dr. #10 noted:

Well, if I said he needs to be an expert, I've ruled myself out, because I'm a generalist and I think that I serve a good function in the preparation program. But I do not have "expertise" by formal training or by recognition of a learned society that you would say in special education. My approach to that, Jerry, would be that I am aware of the need to know it, and that ignorance is no defense for a person in an administrative position. Too often, I have administrators who want to take the position that, 'I'll get me a special education director, and I will default everything to that person so I don't have to deal with it.' And that's no longer possible because they have to head up to case conference

and they've got to head up all those ARC -- you know, that sort of thing. So I guess what I'm saying to you is I have a need to know that. But in most cases where I don't have the specific expertise to deal with it, I do at least know enough to refer a student to a place where they can find it.

As one can easily interpret, participants overwhelmingly agreed that the role of a faculty member should be one of an expert guide; however, participants passionately spoke of the disconnection that currently exists between many faculty and the knowledge base essential to the principalship. For the vast majority of those interviewed for this study, participants admitted to having little to no formal training in the area of special education. Participants spoke openly about their limitations. Dr. #3 reported, "There was very little in the way of special ed. preparation for an administrator, so I had to learn it on the job." Dr #10 stated, "Formal education in special education specifically is minimal." "But most of my training came as a result of the job, the various positions I was in" (Dr. #2). Similar thoughts were added by Dr. #5, who said, "Probably, the majority of it [knowledge of special education] came through a combination of in-service training and field experiences." Although most faculty members simply acknowledged their lack of training in this area, Dr. #4 did elaborate:

The way I became familiar with special ed. was historically just being assigned to rooms near special ed. people. When I became assistant principal, and then later principal, I inherited rooms for special ed. kids, a couple of hearing impaired rooms, LD, SBH, all the alphabetical combinations, so no formal training. No course work.

Dr. #8 also added some depth in his description of his lack of training in the area of special education. He stated:

As far as my training to do anything with special education, there has been none. No formal training at all. Any knowledge base that I have concerning special education has been basically with the people that I've worked with over the last 22 years in the public schools.

This lack of training has even greater significance when considered in light of the reports participants made about the apparent discrepancy between many faculty members, and their knowledge of the job for which they are specifically training students. Dr. #2 discussed his concern in this area as being one of credibility when he said:

It's so hard to -- it's hard to discuss these issues to people who are in it on a daily basis and make it sound real. I think that the credibility issue -- and fortunately I was 30 years in the profession, and so I have some background, and I have big city, urban school

district experience, and a suburban school district. I have a wide range of experience, so I speak from in the field. But each year that I am removed from it, it brings credibility issues to it. So I would think that would be the most difficult -- to try to convince the students that this is not just an academic exercise, that this is an important issue and the discussion of it will help them be good principals in regard to this area and this field.

In sum, faculty interviewed in this study referred to academic freedom and collegiality as supports to the inclusion of issues of special education in the courses they teach. However, academic freedom also was noted to be a barrier to the inclusion of special education issues, primarily because it enables faculty members disinterested in special education to exclude these issues from the content of the courses they teach. Personal disinterest, coupled with a lack of training on special education issues, creates a disconnection between current educational practices and the level of expertise necessary to adequately prepare principals.

#### Faculty Perspectives of Special Education

An important variable in the perceived relevance of special education issues to the preservice training of principals is the perspectives of faculty regarding special education. A series of questions were included in the interviews that specifically sought the opinions of faculty as to whether or not the study of special education was worthwhile as a component in principal preservice training. The importance of this study would be lessened if participants believed that special education was irrelevant or negligible to the adequate preparation of principals. Overwhelmingly, participants of this study voiced their belief that the study of special education for principals was not only relevant, but integral.

#### Supports

There is little doubt, based on the comments made by the participants of this study, that issues related to special education are considered to be essential components of a comprehensive principal preparation program. Therefore, one of the more significant supports expressed by faculty is the high value placed on the inclusion of special education issues into the preservice training of principals. Dr. #11 noted that special education training in the preparation of principal must be viewed as, “a vital component” and Dr. #12 added that training in this area

needs to “play a central role.” In fact, the need for principals to possess an adequate knowledge base regarding special education issues was described as both “crucial” (Dr. #2, & Dr. #4), and “critical” (Dr. #10). A strong conceptual understanding regarding how to effectively deal with special education was described by Dr. #12 as being “an expected skill set” that principals must possess. Other participants added that principals should be “very knowledgeable” (Dr. #3, Dr. #5, Dr. #6, Dr. #7, Dr. #8, & Dr. #9) when it came to issues of special education.

### Barriers

Despite the apparent emphasis placed on special education by the majority of the participants (Dr. #1, Dr. #2, Dr. #4, Dr. #5, Dr. #6, Dr. #7, Dr. #8, Dr. #9, Dr. #10, Dr. #11, & Dr. #12), problems continue to exist with its integration across the curricula of principal preparation programs. Dr. # 8 commented on this irony:

Everyone is aware the need exists, but I think that there’s almost this wall, that people want to pretend that it’s not something they’re ‘gonna’ have to deal with. If you have a good staff that works with special needs students, there’s a lot of things you don’t have to deal with as an administrator, because they do a good job of it for you. That’s not to say that you still don’t need to be knowledgeable of it, and be there, and be supportive of those people. That’s where I think we flounder a little bit, is that we’re not good at that. Part of that probably can be related to the preparation programs.

Special education as a whole, based on the way it is treated, can be considered a fringe to the norm of education. Dr. #4 made the statement, “I think some people don’t believe special education exists.” In a similar comment, Dr. #12 noted, “I guess it’s just a continued lack of awareness about people who are different from ourselves. I think that it permeates the whole of our society, and this is no different. You know, until we’re forced to confront it, we don’t.” Dr. #5 explained a possible reason why the dilemma exists. He stated:

I call it the Theory of Just Because. People become comfortable with doing what they have always done, and there is a reluctance to change, and there is particularly a reluctance to change when it is perceived as changing for a group that is seen in a marginal, last position. So it is hard to make changes for folks who are, what I would call, at the margins.

Dr. #5 was not the only participant to posit that societal issues and regard for children with special needs is reflected in the attention special education issues receive in principal



preparation programs. “We talk about issues of special ed. because we really haven’t accepted the need to integrate it. People really need to understand, up close and personal, what that really means” (Dr. #1). In a compelling statement, Dr. #8 added:

I don’t think enough people perceive the education of handicapped as an issue that’s at the top of the priority list, because I don’t think they see these people as productive toward making us a stronger country from a, you know, nationalistic prospective. Because universities are under the same pressure on accountability measures that are not related to special education at all. For example, there’s the Praxis, which all principals test, which is kind of like a national teacher exam for administrators. There’s so little emphasis on special education in that, it’s amazing. And you know what the emphasis is? On the legal basis. So they come back to me and say, ‘I’m glad I had your class because they asked me what Honig vs. Doe did.’ But -- and I’m not answering for myself, I’m answering for the university -- I think that once again it’s being driven by a different set of national demands, and the national demands for principals are more in content, development, cognitive development at a higher level than it is on any knowledge of special education.

Some participants elaborated on the point, and even indicated the current shortcomings of principal preparation programs in adequately addressing this consensus area of importance.

Once such participant was Dr #8, who noted:

I have asked a lot of the students in my classes who are principals or assistant principals two questions: ‘What area did we not fully prepare you? Where are you spending a lot of your time?’ The interesting thing is that the first answer is usually, ‘Well, you didn’t tell me that it would be November before I even had time to think about any of the concepts that you taught, because I’m putting out fires and just trying to get the students and the teachers into a schedule and organized and so forth.’ But the second area is that they say, ‘My goodness, I spend 30% of my time on special education. And the one course that I had -- and incidentally, in our program, school law is probably the place they get the most exposure to special education, but that’s from a legal prospective more so than a pedagogical prospective. And there’s one course that we have which is called Issues In Special Education, but it’s not a required course, and a lot of them skip it. So I would tell you that they’re not prepared well at all, and we’ve got to remedy that, because they’re spending a heck of a lot of time with it.

Dr. #3 also elaborated by noting that, despite the high level of awareness that special education issues should receive in principal preparation programs, these future leaders are not adequately being prepared. He stated that, “I’m not sure even in terms of our own program here that we do as much as we should do in the area of special education.” This statement was supported by yet another participant who said, “I don’t think course work specifically does a real

good job of preparing them knowledge-base-wise for (the principalship), at least at our level”(Dr. #7). Summing this theme up nicely was the statement made by Dr. #1. He added:

I think that most principals I’ve encountered are low [regarding their knowledge of special education issues], and I think part of the reason why educators -- or principals, rather, but I’d put teachers in the same category -- are low is that we don’t do a lot to prepare them for it. I’m just amazed when I speak with my students; some of them are administrators, others aspiring administrators, how little they know about special ed. How much expertise do they need to have? Obviously, the more the better. I think principals ought to have better than just plain passing knowledge; they need a working knowledge of what’s going on there.

In sum, an overwhelming number of study participants were keenly aware of the importance of including special education issues into the preservice training of principals. Therefore, the single largest support for faculty was simply their understanding that this topic is essential for adequately preparing principals. Barriers included the low comfort level these faculty members have when it comes to dealing with topics outside their area of expertise. This discomfort, coupled with the belief that all topics related to issues of special education can be delegated to others, creates a false sense of security among some faculty members that they can avoid their responsibilities in this area.

#### Faculty Perspectives on Students Enrolled in Principal Preparation Programs

Faculty were never specifically asked questions regarding their perspectives on students enrolled in principal preparation programs. This theme emerged from the data. Study participants volunteered specific observations that students were, in a variety of ways, a driving force behind the content and direction of their departments’ principal preparation programs. Ironically, students had both a positive and negative impact on the inclusion of special education issues; this duality mirrored faculty, whose decisions regarding the content and direction of the courses they taught were noted to be directly related to their personal interests or comfort levels in the area of special education.

## Supports

Many participants in this study noted that student feedback was a driving force behind some of the content they integrated into the courses they taught (Dr. #1, Dr. #3, Dr. #4, Dr. #5, & Dr. #6). But, as was argued by Dr. #3, in order to be effective, student feedback must come as a “constant stream” back to the faculty who teach courses in which the change is desired. Dr. #1 also commented on student feedback when he remarked:

I think some of the support comes from the fact that students recognize the need to have these things, and even if faculty themselves are reluctant in response to perceived or actual student needs, I think they’re less willing to continue to remain. The real support comes when the students begin to talk about the need for it. People [faculty] will get out of the way rather to be seen as obstructionist --if that makes any sense.

One of the most significant supports for the inclusion of special education issues within the content of courses participants teach occurs when a student with a background in special education is enrolled in their class (Dr. #6, Dr. #8, & Dr. #9). When this occurs, attention is drawn to special education issues to a much greater degree. As Dr. #5 shared, “They remind everybody else [laughing] that [special education] is an issue they [principals] ought to be thinking about.”

## Barriers

Interestingly, there was only one barrier discussed by the study participants with respect to this area: the apparent disconnection of these aspiring educational leaders from the realities of the very positions they are seeking, especially in regard to special education. Several participants noted that some students seeking principal certification enter the program with preconceived ideas, prejudices, and a lack of interest regarding special education (Dr. #8 & Dr. #10). As one participant, Dr. #11, noted, “Many people see this [special education] as just that, a responsibility as opposed to a calling. It’s something that they have to do because the law says they have to do it.” Dr. #11 went on to comment that he believed that negativity served as an “internal inhibitor” for students’ learning, not only in terms of information, but also the importance of special education. As Dr. #5 described, the negative influence on attitude was a direct result of “lack of knowledge” regarding issues of special education upon entry into the principal preparation program. This perspective was also shared by Dr. #9, who complained:

The knowledge of the students that come in, where they start with their knowledge of special ed. [is a barrier to the inclusion of special education issues]. If they haven't had a whole lot in undergrad or doing a whole lot, and then you have other students who have, you don't want to bore them with that. So usually we use them. We use the expertise of the ones, but I think that's a barrier, in bringing the ones up to speed with the ones that already know a lot.

Dr. #9 was not the only participant to recognize poor entry-level knowledge of students regarding special education as a barrier to the inclusion of more principal preparation issues being discussed in preservice training programs. Dr. #1 said frankly, "I'm just amazed when I speak with my students -- some of them are administrators, others aspiring administrators -- [about] how little they know about special ed." Dr. #11 added, "I'm often not sure whether principals and superintendents get an actual course or set of courses in special education, and how to address the learning needs of that population. You see -- I think that's a barrier." In addition, Dr. #5 explained that many students seeking to become principals do not, "foresee the level of involvement that they are going to have as principals in it [special education] because they haven't had that level of involvement as teachers and so the assumption is that it [special education] is something somebody else deals with."

Although student feedback was mentioned as a support, not all study participants agreed, some noting that the lack of sufficient entry-level knowledge about both the job and special education can preclude a student's ability to voice his or her concerns early enough in the program (Dr. #6). She also added, "oftentimes [they] don't realize that until they are in practice. So it may be too late then [to voice their concern for more attention to issues related to special education]."

Dr. #5, who commented that student feedback was critical, also expressed concern that not all faculty heed the call for curriculum changes. In his department, faculty are beginning to hear students comment that they are "floundering and needing more knowledge" in regard to special education, yet those comments sometimes do not result in action and are occasionally dismissed (Dr. #5).

In sum, student feedback was noted to be the primary support for the inclusion of special education issues into the courses these faculty members teach. Of special interest was the weight participants gave to having someone with a background in special education in their classes. The presence of a special education-knowledgeable person was seen as a significant support to

increasing the overall attention provided to special education issues. The primary barrier identified in this area was that many students enrolled in principal preparation programs are disconnected from the realities of special education and the negative impact that being unprepared in this area may have on their jobs as principals.

### Faculty Perspectives on the Curriculum

Faculty responses regarding their perspectives on the curriculum were diverse and delivered, in many cases, passionately. Some participants believed the solution to improving the preservice training of principals to be simply adding a specific special education course, whereas others noted that change in this area was more complex. These latter participants recommended the infusion of special education issues within every possible course in their department's principal preparation program. The only opinion unilaterally agreed upon was that an increased attention to special education was necessary, and that without increased emphasis in this area the preservice training of principals would remain insufficient.

### Supports

The greatest support identified by the study participants was the acknowledgement that reform in the area of principal preparation is necessary. In fact, two of the participants commented that reform of the entire principal preparation program is needed. Such were the remarks of Dr. #6, who stated:

I think it [the call for reform] exists because it is not just special ed. There is a whole national focus right now on challenging what we do in traditional preparation programs -- that we not meet an instructional side for any student, that it tends to be too much of a management approach and the whole ethic standards, interstate licensure standards -- all of that is about taking an instructional approach and looking at inequality issues, equity issues, and to me that's about all kids and their needs met with special ed. So I think it's a call for changing preparation. I just don't know that universities have been as responsive to those issues over the years, and I know right now a number of national foundations are putting a lot of money into looking at the whole principal preparation issue, and feel that the performance in schools and high drop out rates -- all sorts of things -- are attached to the effectiveness of the principal. So I don't think it's just special ed.; I think the call is to revise each program broadly.

Dr. #12 also spoke of the need for global reform in principal preparation programs. She stated:

A larger concern that we have in ed. admin programs nationally, and that is a big part of the problem is that we still, as yet, have not teaching and learning at the center of what we do. You know, it has been -- for so long been -- an endeavor built around management issues in very traditional understanding of school administration. Now we take a course in personnel. We take a course in collective bargaining. You take a course in finance. You take a course in business administration. You take a course in -- maybe, one course in -- curriculum if you're lucky. And so, I think that larger concern about teaching and learning is really directly related to whether or not we get it in terms of special ed. Because if we're convinced about teaching and learning being at the center, then my guess would be that the teaching and learning needs of all students would much more easily follow suit. But I think that, for me, the concern is much broader, and if we're able to use the ISLIC standards as they're intended, to really push us and hold our feet to the fire in terms of curriculum revisions that were accomplished, a shift in focus from this -- you know, the debate has been almost as long in terms of are we preparing instructional readers or are we preparing managers, or what's the balance of those two, ad infinitum? If we really are convinced that teaching and learning is at the center, and everything we teach is in relation to improving instruction for students, then I think that gets us closer to the reforms necessary.

Many participants commented that a gap continues to exist between their ideal and their current classroom practices regarding the inclusion of special education issues into the courses they teach (Dr. #1, Dr. #2, Dr. #5, Dr. #7, Dr. #8, Dr. #9, Dr. #10, & Dr. #12). Some of the comments regarding the gap were extremely honest. Dr. #5, describing the difference between his ideal and his classroom practices, said, "There is a mile gap. There is a mile gap in that perception. I think we barely scratch the surface in terms of what I think is really important to understand." Dr. #9 simply stated that, "Ideally, we would spend more time on it than we do." Dr #1 agreed that, "The amount of time I spend [on special education] is arguably inadequate." Dr. # 7 made the comment that special education is discussed in the coursework, but the specific issues discussed are "really hit or miss" in relation to what an ideal, comprehensive preparation program would offer. In a very rich description of the difference, Dr. #10 provided some honest reflection when he noted:

Well, operating within the constraints that there are so many things that need to go into a preparation program, I would say that special education is one of the essential ingredients. Why? Because there are so many legal strings attached to that that you can get into litigation if you don't comply and do it well, okay? But more than that, in our society we have embraced the concept of special education children either being included or mainstreamed, but their needs provided. I think a principal in the concept of a servant

role in leadership has an obligation to lead that charge. In practice, in my classroom I think we fall short of that. Okay. I don't think we get it done, and I think we probably shortchange that in the guise of dealing with things that we're more comfortable with. I don't teach those things that I don't know anything about very well, Jerry, you know? And I only know what I know. I'm limited in my knowledge of special education, and I think my students would probably tell you that I don't teach as much as they would like for me to about special education.

Many participants openly expressed their desire to lessen this gap, and expressed their desire to have their students "prepared to face most of the issues" (Dr. #3). In support of this concept of best preparing students to perform the principalship, Dr. #2 noted:

I think you're constantly looking at special interest groups, or other people saying this has to be done, and we need more law classes and that. I think if you sit down and you analyze the principalship and you say, 'what is it that they need to do?,' I think it's pretty clear. Law is important. Finance is important, but not nearly as important as it is at the superintendent level. I told you earlier, I think the two most important issues principals deal with -- and they'll tell you that -- is discipline and discipline-related issues, and special needs children. So if you take away from those two areas in the preparation program substantially, you are not doing what the principals out there -- the people who are preparing -- say you ought to do.

### Barriers

One of the most frequently noted barriers to the inclusion of special education issues was the amount of time available in principal preparation programs. Dr. #3 summed it up best when he said, "You can't teach everything at the university, we know that." This sentiment also was conveyed by Dr. #4, who added, "I think it's a juggling act. You just have priorities." Dr. #9 commented on the impossibility of teaching everything at the preservice level, and indicated that principals need to learn how to create the networks necessary to get their jobs done. As Dr. #5 stated:

I think we have to look at the programs, and look at some redesign of the program. I don't think it is feasible to continue to add things to the program. If focus shifts, we need to take a look at what it is we are doing, and take a serious look at what are we doing that we can stop doing in order to put the new stuff in. I think it is lubricous to think that we can really add to the program and make it more effective. I think we can make it more effective, but we can redo that by reorganizing what we do.

Dr #6 added to the concern of continually adding to the program when she stated that there exists, “only a certain amount of time and how you pull something in, some things out, reduce -- I mean how [do] you cover it, and do it justice?.” Dr. #10 explained:

Um, I think we’re asked to address so many issues, that nothing’s ever taken away, it just keeps cumulating more and more and more. We keep adding on, but we never take anything away. I think most people are struggling with the issues just like we are as in, ‘what do you take away?’ And it isn’t a fact that we haven’t recognized or weren’t aware of the need, but where do you provide balance? We’re scrambling right now in trying to figure out what do we put in, where do we put it in, and what exposure do we give to it, okay? In that are we ‘gonna’ have a 30-hour masters, or are we ‘gonna’ have a 36-hour masters, or are we ‘gonna’ have a 39-hour masters? And when we talk about 39 hours, we’ve got these people over there [who] are foundations [faculty] that say you can’t send a principal out there that doesn’t know something about educational foundations, okay? Is special education one of those? One might argue it is. But maybe the other one comes along; you can’t send someone out here who isn’t well founded in public relations. Another one comes over here, you can’t send someone out here who doesn’t know how to analyze data and use data to make decisions, so all of those stakeholders have their impact on us as to us making the decision to say this is covered in a primary way, this will be covered in a secondary way.

Other barriers identified included the lack of consensus regarding ways to reform principal preparation programs to include greater coverage of issues of special education, and the cynicism faculty members have regarding the reform process. As Dr. #4 noted:

And think of how long it takes higher ed. to respond to something. If the state mandates something, it takes us a year to make a change. The system is so complicated at the university level it takes us that long to make a change. Even right now if they agreed to make special ed. a priority, it would be a year before we could get retooled to have it reflected in our classes, unless it is just individual people, you know.

Dr. #2, commenting on the barriers involved in the reform process, added:

You go down here [the hallway of faculty offices]. Now this -- this week and some people are in; some people aren’t in. There are times where I go two or three weeks without seeing a faculty member on the first floor. It’s just -- you know, because we have off-campus sites. You know, we’re entrepreneurs, and, therefore, we get assignments, and then we’re off doing our own thing, so I think that’s the biggest issue that we have in terms of addressing it [reform].

Dr. #6 also commented on how difficult the process of reform is. She stated:

I would say right now just succinctly that we’re not quite sure where—what we’re doing, in the sense that we all teach different courses. That was a conversation we had a couple of weeks ago, that we need to look at what are we covering, who’s covering it, and are



there holes. So we don't know at this point how far from the ideal we are, but there is a recognition that this is an important topic, and we need to make sure it's covered.

Many participants expressed their belief that a viable solution for reforming principal preparation programs was to devote an entire course to only special education issues (Dr. #1, Dr. #5, Dr. 9, Dr. #11, & Dr. #12). However, even among those faculty who agreed on this solution, the exact nature of the proposed course varied. Some participants favored a special education law class (Dr. #1, Dr. #11, Dr. #9, & Dr. #12), some favored a comprehensive issues course (Dr. #5, Dr. #8, & Dr. #12), and some believed that a strong internship or practicum in special education was essential to improving the content of the principal preparation curriculum (Dr. #5, Dr. #7, Dr. #8, Dr. #9, Dr. #10, & Dr. #12). It is also interesting to note the overlap among participants who believed that a combination of the above strategies was necessary to facilitate effective change.

However, Dr. #6 cautioned that whenever an issue becomes one of emphasis, the initial response of those calling for reform is to add a new course. She described other alternatives, such as integrating the subject matter into pre-existing courses. Dr. #6 explained her rationale as follows:

When it is embedded, it becomes more important, because it is more central to the work. We teach a couple of foundations courses in this department for the teacher undergraduate majors. And several of my colleagues who teach in that area say that they always have felt that they are marginalized because it is not in teacher ed. These kids have to have a social foundations course. It is what those people in EDL do, and it is not really important. It is not about teaching; you're not teaching how to teach. It is not a methods course. It is not a content course. Whereas, we have argued that you probably need a social foundations course, but how do you thread that through the other work so that issues are going on -- equity, gender, social justice -- all those things are embedded, and then that really forces what is taught. So in one sense--I would not want to argue for a special ed. course, because then it just is over there as a separate area as opposed to being viewed as central.

An excellent example of the controversy regarding specific solutions to reform principal preparation programs is noted in the comments made by Dr. #1, who refuted the idea of integration, alone, as a practical means to adequately address special education issues. Dr. #1 remarked:

I think in a perfect world, yeah, you integrate it [special education] across the curriculum and everybody team teaches and you bring different people in. I tried to get some team

teaching done here, but it was such a hassle to try and get course loads adjusted that, administratively and bureaucratically, it just wasn't worth the hassle.

Dr. #1 was not alone in his commentary on the inadequacy of integration of special education topics across the curriculum as a reform strategy. Attempts to successfully integrate special education issues across the curriculum have not been successful according to one participant, Dr. #9, who explained:

We have a 32-hour program, and we don't have a class called special ed. anything. A lot of universities do, and it's one of those [topics] that we decided to cover in our plans, and I'm not sure that was the best idea -- maybe we should have had a special ed. class.

In sum, the fact that faculty openly acknowledge the need for reform in this area is a support for reforming principal preparation programs; however, despite the agreement that change is needed, faculty did not appear to agree on a strategy. This lack of consensus is a barrier to successfully making the changes needed. In addition, several of the study participants commented that another barrier to achieving reform was the inefficient way in which universities facilitate change.

### Summary

The attitudes of both faculty and students to the field of special education were perceived as both barriers and supports to the inclusion of special education issues in the preservice training of principals. Faculty and students with a personal interest, knowledge, or comfort with special education were more inclined to promote the inclusion of special education issues during classes. In contrast, faculty and students with less personal interest, knowledge, or comfort in discussing special education issues were far less inclined to include these issues as topics open for study or discussion.

### Supports

The greatest single support to including a greater emphasis on special education in principal preparation programs identified by the participants of this study was the academic freedom in universities that empowers faculty to modify their course content to meet the current

needs of their students. The overwhelming number of study participants who were keenly aware of the importance to make reforms in this area constitutes another support. Participants overwhelmingly agreed that training on special education issues is essential for the adequate preparation of principals in today's K-12 educational environment. The reform movement within principal preparation programs could be supported by the voice of students, who can provide the necessary feedback to faculty that more attention is required in the preservice training of principals.

### Barriers

The single greatest barrier to the inclusion of special education topics in the preservice training of principals relates to the disconnection of faculty, free to teach their courses as they wish, from the current educational practices and the level of expertise necessary in today's principalship. Academic freedom can serve as a barrier for those faculty either disinterested or unknowledgeable in special education by allowing them to exclude these issues from the content of the courses they teach. Faculty are not alone in this disconnection, according to the participants in this study. Many students enrolled in principal preparation programs also are disconnected from the realities of special education. Study participants noted that students often lack not only a basic entry-level knowledge of special education, but also have no appreciation for the importance of being knowledgeable in this area. These students enter principal preparation programs with preconceived notions that they can delegate responsibilities related to special education to someone more knowledgeable. Finally, a disconnection exists among those involved in the preparation of principals about how to achieve much-needed reform in a university environment, where the change process is viewed with much cynicism.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to give voice to the faculty of principal preparation programs on their perceptions and opinions about the importance, if any, of including special education issues as part of their courses or programs. This study also offered insight into the supports and/or barriers that currently influence faculty in their decision to include or exclude special education issues in both course curricula and departmental requirements for graduate students in their principal preparation program. This chapter synthesizes the views of study participants. Implications for existing practice are highlighted and suggestions for future research are offered.

#### Summary of the Problem

Reforming the preparation of principals to include greater emphasis on special education issues must be considered a high priority in education today, given the research evidence that the current preservice training of these practitioners offers insufficient preparation to appropriately respond to matters relating to children with disabilities (Aspedon, 1992; Burdette, 1999; Goor, Schwenn, & Boyer, 1997; Hirth & Valesky, 1991; Johnson & Bauer, 1992; Monteith, 1994; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994).

Researchers repeatedly noted that most aspiring principals have both limited academic knowledge and exposure to special education related issues (Burdette, 1999; Goor et al., 1997; Hirth & Valesky, 1990; Kritsonis, 1994; Monteith, 1998; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994; Valesky et al., 1998). In an effort to better prepare educational leaders, principal preparation programs need to increase the amount of instructional time and structured experiences with students with disabilities so that school administrators will be prepared to deal with the ever-increasing demands of special education (Bateman, 1998; Hirth & Valesky, 1991).

The existing literature leaves no doubt that the increased presence of students with disabilities, the regulations of federal special education legislation, and the inclusion movement have dramatically changed the roles and responsibilities of school administrators (Daresh et al.,

1998; Valesky, & Hirth, 1992). Principals can no longer relinquish the responsibility for ensuring the educational safeguards of children with disabilities as they once did (Sarason & Doris, 1978).

### Participants

The 12 participants of this study were all full-time professors at universities offering principal preparation programs. The universities were located within a 100-mile radius of Dayton, Ohio, where the researcher currently lives. Research participants represented seven universities in three different states.

### Summary of the Research Findings

The attitudes of both faculty and students to the field of special education were perceived as both barriers and supports to the inclusion of special education issues in the preservice training of principals. Faculty and students with a personal interest, knowledge, or comfort with special education were more inclined to promote the inclusion of special education issues during classes. In contrast, faculty and students with less personal interest, knowledge, or comfort in discussing special education issues were far less inclined to include these issues as topics open for study or discussion.

### Supports

The greatest single support to including a greater emphasis on special education in principal preparation programs identified by the participants of this study was the academic freedom in universities that empowers faculty to modify their course content to meet the current needs of their students. The overwhelming amount of study participants who were keenly aware of the importance to make reforms in this area constitutes another support. Participants overwhelmingly agreed that training on special education issues is essential for the adequate preparation of principals in today's K-12 educational environment. The reform movement within principal preparation programs could be supported by the voice of students, who can

provide the necessary feedback to faculty that more attention is required in the preservice training of principals. This identified support is consistent with existing literature (Daresh et al., 1998; Monteith, 1994; Podemski et al., 1995; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994; Valesky & Hirth, 1992).

Reform within principal preparation programs could be supported by the voice of students, who can provide the necessary feedback to faculty that more attention is required in the preservice training of principals. Unfortunately, the impact of student feedback on the direction of the preservice training of principals is minimized in the existing literature. Similarly, this study's participants noted that a student's entry level knowledge or prejudiced beliefs often serve as more of a barrier than a support to the inclusion of special education issues.

### Barriers

The single greatest barrier to the inclusion of special education topics in the preservice training of principals related to the disconnection between faculty, free to teach their courses as they wish, from the current educational practices and the level of expertise necessary in today's principalship. Academic freedom can serve as a barrier for faculty disinterested or unknowledgeable in special education by allowing them to exclude these issues from the content of the courses they teach. This barrier creates a gap between what faculty are willing to teach, and what is actually needed in the preservice training of principals. The resulting gap is well documented in the literature, with general comments exposing the difference and noting that principals are not being taught special education issues despite their importance to survive in the principalship (Burdette, 1999; Goor et al., 1997; Hillman, 1988; Kritsonis, 1994; Monteith, 1994; NAESP, 1990; NASSP, 2000; Valesky et al., 1998).

Faculty are not alone in this disconnection, according to the participants in this study. Many students enrolled in principal preparation programs also are disconnected from the realities of special education. Study participants noted that students often lack not only a basic entry-level knowledge of special education, but also an appreciation of the importance of being knowledgeable in this area. These students enter principal preparation programs with preconceived notions that they can delegate responsibilities related to special education to someone more knowledgeable.

The disconnection between aspiring principals and the realities of special education also is well documented in the literature. Campbell and Fyfe (1995) noted that some students enter principal preparation programs with “deep-seated biases,” and that during their program students’ anxiety can grow and “feelings of helplessness develop or skepticism takes over.” (p. 11) The literature repeatedly notes that most aspiring principals have both limited academic knowledge and exposure to special education related issues (Burdette, 1999; Goor et al., 1997; Hirth & Valesky, 1990; Kritsonis, 1994; Monteith, 1998; Sirotnik & Kimball, 1994; Valesky et al., 1998). Further, as noted by Sirotnik and Kimball, a significant portion of students in principal preparation programs would be happy to keep the existing, relatively limited emphasis on special education issues.

Finally, a disconnection exists among those involved in the preparation of principals about how to achieve much-needed reform in a university environment, where the change process is viewed with much cynicism. This barrier too can be found in the literature. Sirotnik and Kimball (1994) noted that competition was a huge barrier in changes in higher education programs, with only a finite set of instructional hours available to address many issues in principal preparation programs. Campbell and Fyfe (1995) warned that curricular modifications could be viewed as “one more thing to do” and, thus, make faculty reticent to consider revising their current syllabi. Gibbs (1995) added that no financial consequences are in place for responding to calls for curricular change.

### Conclusions

The results of this study are consistent with the existing literature. Issues such as the need for increased resources in both time and money to effect reform and the complexity of the change process have been noted. The results of this study, however, are unique in that, for the first time, faculty involved in the preservice training of principals were given the opportunity to directly address the continuing call to reform principal preparation programs and increase the attention paid to issues concerning special education. The responses were overwhelming passionate and direct. Faculty members spoke of special education as a topic that is often and inappropriately viewed as someone else’s concern. Strikingly, this disconnection from special

education is often held by both faculty who prepare principals and by students aspiring to become principals.

Faculty untrained, inexperienced, or disinterested in special education have the academic freedom to include or exclude whatever topics they desire from the courses they teach. According to the participants in this study, faculty are solely and exclusively responsible for the content and direction of the courses they teach. With little to no safeguards to ensure which topics are being presented across a program, it is quite possible and probable that students are not exposed to necessary information simply based on which faculty taught the courses in which they enrolled. Positively impacting the three factors of being untrained, inexperienced, or disinterested significantly complicates evaluating the steps required to modify or reform a preparation program. Academic freedom (coupled with tenure) is very effective in enabling faculty to remain locked within their comfort zones. Thus, they can easily remain untrained and inexperienced, and consequently can remain disinterested in topics related to special education. It is quite easy, therefore, to rationalize that someone who is more knowledgeable, better trained, with experience and a passion for special education, is a better person to teach topics within that area.

Not so prominent in the existing literature is the notion that the same level of disconnection held by faculty is held by students enrolled in principal preparation programs. Although the literature refers to limited knowledge and experience among people in this group, participants in this study added that students also possess an ill-placed mindset that when they become administrators they can delegate issues of special education. According to participants in this study, there is a portion of students enrolled in principal preparation programs who are just as disinterested in special education as some of the faculty who prepare them. Although this group is a captive audience and can be mandated to learn about issues related to special education, the greater problem that exists is changing the attitudes of these professionals, which is much more difficult than teaching a specific skill set (e.g., identifying different philosophies of education or listing several different managerial approaches).

The combination of disinterested faculty and disinterested students noted in this study is quite serious, especially because an overwhelming voice in the literature notes that special education knowledge is essential for a person's survival in the principalship.



### Recommendations for Further Research

1. It is recommended that future investigations focus on the specific entry-level knowledge of aspiring principals related to special education.
2. It is recommended that future investigations conduct pre- and post-attitudinal assessments on special education with aspiring principals enrolled in principal preparation programs.
3. It is recommended that future investigations conduct attitudinal assessments regarding special education with faculty involved in principal preparation programs and analyze the results among different groups (e.g. those with tenure/those without tenure, those with experience in public schools/those without experience in public schools, those who were principals/those never having been in the principalship, etc.).
4. It is recommended that future investigations seek to identify a specific basic skill set of special education knowledge essential for principals to be adequately prepared in this area.
5. It is recommended that this study be replicated in ten years to evaluate changes noted after the retirement of those professionals who were educators during the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the duality between special education and regular education was at its zenith.

### Recommendations for Practice

1. It is recommended that school systems develop opportunities for training special education issues to their school principals.
2. It is recommended that school systems pressure local universities to improve the attention given to the training of special education issues in principal preparation programs.
3. It is recommended that states' Department of Education standardize the training requirements for principals to include an extensive exposure to special education issues.

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Appendix A  
Audit Report

To: Gerard O.L. Farley  
Doctoral Candidate, ETSU

From: David A. Ott, Ph.D.

Re: Audit Report

The purpose of this memo is to report the results of audit processes I have conducted for your dissertation. It has been a real pleasure to work with you and serve as the auditor for your dissertation research.

The external audit procedures have been completed carefully in accordance with the criteria identified by Guba and Lincoln, and have been documented and confirmed through meetings and discussions we have had throughout the process of your dissertation. Accordingly, the audit addressed the dependability, confirmability, transferability, and credibility of the tapes, transcripts, and data analyses used in the completion of your research.

In the area of *dependability*, the data from selected samples were accounted for. No significant errors in transcription and/or typing were noted, and no adverse effects upon data analysis or categorization were noted. Both supports and barriers to the inclusion of special education, as identified by the participants, were noted. I noted consistent efforts on your part to not lead or otherwise influence participants' responses.

Following the initial review of the audiotapes to ensure the accuracy and dependability of the transcription thereof, we met to review the supports and barriers to the inclusion of special education issues in principal preparation programs we each identified. The congruence noted in our identification of supports and barriers participants noted bears testament to the *confirmability* of the study results. This process also decreased the likelihood of researcher bias in the identification of supports and barriers and provided support for the logic of the supports and barriers identified.

The consistency of participants' responses argues strongly for the *transferability* of your findings. That this consistency of response was noted in a sample of educators with divergent personal experience with respect to prior positions held (and the resultant potential difference in their perspectives on the questions posed) who are teaching in different university settings provides strong evidence for the applicability of your findings beyond the sample reported in your dissertation.

In conclusion, the processes of data collection, transcription, analysis, and identification of supports and barriers are dependable, confirmable, transferable, and credible. Please accept my sincere congratulations on the completion of your dissertation. The results you obtained

represent a significant contribution to this area of the literature, a contribution that can only be strengthened by presentation of the research findings at conferences and in the published literature.

Appendix B  
Letter of Request to Department Chairs

Jerry Farley  
1645 Blue Ridge Drive  
Small Town, Ohio 45000  
e-mail address

(937) 555-1964

October 10, 2002

Dear Department Chair;

As a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, I am currently in the information gathering stage of my dissertation.

I realize that your time is extremely valuable and that is why I would greatly appreciate the willingness of members of your department, and yourself, to spend some time with me. My study focuses on the perceptions and opinions of faculty of educational leadership programs regarding the significance they believe special education issues play, and should play, in the preparation of aspiring principals. In addition, this study will seek insight into the extent of the supports and/or barriers that currently influence faculty and programs in their decision to include or exclude special education issues in both the curricula of their courses and their department's requirements for principal certification.

The confidentiality of each individual, as well as your institution is guaranteed. Each interview should take approximately one hour. Interviews will be audio taped with each participant's approval and will be transcribed for use in my dissertation.

I would also be very grateful for the chance to review such documents as you graduate catalog, relevant syllabi, course materials, or any other information that you feel may help in my understanding of the topic.

If you and members of your department are willing to assist me in my studies, could you please fill out the enclosed information sheet and mail it back to me as soon as possible. I have provided a self-addressed, stamped envelope for your convenience. I look forward to hearing from you.

Please feel free to contact me (937-555-1964) or the Institutional Review Board at East Tennessee State University (423-232-5640) if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Jerry Farley

Enclosure

Appendix C  
Directed Sample Return Letter

University Name  
Department of Educational Leadership  
Somewhere, U.S.A. 28012

(704) 555-1212

Dear Jerry,

On behalf of myself and the other faculty members involved in the principal preparation program, we would like to accept your invitation to participate in your dissertation study. I have completed the list below indicating those faculty members who I believe may be able to provide you with valuable information and insight.

I understand that you will contact me so that arrangements can be made regarding your visit (s) to our campus.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. John Doe  
Department Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Note:** There is NO minimum or maximum number of faculty members required.  
Also, please feel free to include yourself in this list.

NAME	CONTACT NUMBER OR ADDRESS



Appendix D  
Question Flow Sheet

**Question Flow Sheet**

I would like to begin by again thanking you for your participation in this study.

Some of the questions may appear to be relatively quantitative in nature, however you can expand your answers as much as you would like to.

I would like to begin by asking you some questions about yourself.

1. Describe the ways that you have developed your professional knowledge base on the subject of special education; specifically, please elaborate on any formal education, field experiences, and inservice training.
2. In your philosophical beliefs is it important for the professor to be an expert or simply a guide regarding the preparation of principals in order to handle issues of special education?
3. Describe the ways you prepare yourself to fill this role (expert or guide) regarding special education issues.

Thank you. Next, I would like to ask you some questions concerning the role of special education and its relationship to the preservice training of principals.

4. How knowledgeable do you believe school principals need to be regarding special education issues?
5. To what extent do you believe special education issues should be included in the preparation of principals?

Thank you. I would like to ask you questions about your role as a faculty member regarding the study of special education issues.

6. Are provisions for special education issues outlined in your course syllabi?
7. To what extent are special education topics discussed in your courses?
8. What specific special education topics are discussed in your class?
9. When discussing topics related to special education, who generally initiates these discussions?
10. What are the trends regarding special education issues that are generally discussed with your students?
11. In what areas of special education do you feel principals need to be knowledgeable in order to be effective leaders?
12. Describe the difference between your ideal perception of the role of special education issues in principal preparation programs and your classroom practices.

13. Do you have interest in bringing these two points closer? If yes, where does this interest stem from?
14. What do you believe are the barriers that prevent or impede the reduction of this difference?
15. What do you feel are the supports that enable or empower you to have reduced this difference?

Thank you. I will now ask you questions about the direction of your department's principal preparation program regarding the study of special education issues.

16. Describe the difference between your perception of the role of special education issues in principal preparation programs and your department's current practice?
17. Do you have interest in bringing these two points closer? If yes, where does this interest stem from?
18. What do you feel are the barriers that prevent or impede the reduction of this difference?
19. What do you feel are the supports that enable you to have reduced this difference?
20. If you had complete control of all principal training programs what changes would you make regarding how these educational leaders are prepared for special education issues?

Thank you. The last several questions are not grouped together; however, your responses and insight into these issues are important and valuable to the study.

21. Why do feel there continues to be a call for reform in this area after years of research indicating the need exists?
22. What is your response to other topics being included like technology, finance, law, etc. in the preparation of principals?
23. What do you believe needs to happen in order to get people to agree that increased attention to special education issues is required in the preparation of principals?

VITA

GERARD O'LEARY FARLEY

- Personal Data:      Date of Birth: March 4, 1964  
                            Place of Birth: Baltimore, Maryland  
                            Marital Status: Married
- Education:            Parochial Schools, Baltimore Maryland  
                            Belmont Abbey College, Belmont, North Carolina  
                                    Special Education, B.A., 1986  
                            Belmont Abbey College, Belmont, North Carolina  
                                    Special Education, M.A., 1997  
                            East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee  
                                    Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, Ed. D., 2002
- Professional  
Experience:            Director of Education, Eastway Behavioral Healthcare;  
                                    Dayton, Ohio, 2001-Present  
                            Doctoral Fellow, East Tennessee State University, College of  
                                    Education, 1998-2001  
                            Director of Quality Enhancement and Training, Holy Angels:  
                                    Belmont, North Carolina, 1996-1998
- Publications:        Brooks, B.L. & Farley, G. (1998) History of School and Clinical  
                                    Programs. In D. A. Sabatino & B. L. Brooks (Eds),  
                                    *Contemporary Interdisciplinary Interventions For Children  
                                    With Emotional / Behavioral Disorders* (pp. 31-44). Durham,  
                                    NC. Carolina Academic Press.

Honors and

Awards: Who's Who Among American High School Scholar Athletes  
Pi Gamma Mu, International Honor Society in Social Sciences  
Kappa Delta Phi: Excellence in Education  
Phi Kappa Phi: Honor Society, East Tennessee State University