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The Special Education Administrative Structure in Private School Systems: A Multiple Case Study

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A Multiple Case Study

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A Multiple Case Study

We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality.

We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.
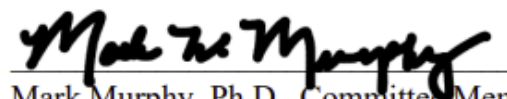
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ABSTRACT

This multiple case study examined the administrative structures private schools have built, compared them with each other, and contributed to the field of research for private schools to learn from each other for continuous improvement efforts in how they serve students with disabilities. I selected three private school systems and interviewed participants (four women, and two men) who were the system directors and administrators of special education for the largest number of schools within the systems at the time of this study, the 2022-2023 school year. Data collection was comprised of semi-structured interviews, supportive documentation, and metamemos. Three major themes emerged from data analysis: 1) current private school special education administrators have uniquely trained and focused job descriptions, 2) historical problems of practice were met with decisive change to bring the current special education administrative structures into place, and 3) current problems of practice have been and will be met with a special education administrator's vision. Findings were analyzed and interpreted through organizational theory (Bolman & Deal, 2008) and change theory, particularly improvement science (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). The findings of this study indicate improvements in special education administrative structures for private school systems through cycles of change.

Keywords: private school system, administration of special education, special education, administrative structure

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To the Lord, my God, who sustains me always and intends purpose from the joys and challenges in life. From generation to generation He is faithful.

To my parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents, who valued Christian, private school education.

To my children, Jonathan, Joshua, and Jacob. You are always with me in my heart and on my mind. This academic work was built with my love for you.

To my colleagues, special education administration professors and cohort members, internship colleagues, doctoral professors and cohort members, and co-educators over the span of my career. We taught, befriended, and upheld each other.

To my students over these twenty-one years, you have given me such joy. Through connection we grew together. I taught you and you taught me. Your resilience and perseverance inspire me every day. You are the reason I am certain being an educator is a career of great worth.

"We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord." (Psalm 78:4)

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

At the end of the summer of 2007, my son was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. It was a gradual recognition of symptoms we had recently seen in a cousin. At the cabin with family, we used that cousin's glucometer to pretend to check all the cousins' blood sugar, but we really checked our son's. The number which should have been between 80-120 was actually over 600. We were devastated. Rather than rush to the hospital, we decided to spend one more night at the cabin to experience life without this awful disease. Saturday morning of Labor Day weekend we drove back to the city and straight to the children's hospital emergency room. We barely understood what kind of life-changing event this would be. Step by step, I walked into the new reality my son would struggle with his whole life. I certainly was not prepared for the impact this would have on me as his mother. The most purposeful part of my life had become making sure his life was filled with everything he needed to grow up loved, strong, and independent. In one weekend, I realized I could not protect my child from everything. The one thing I knew as foundational was our Christian faith, the same faith our son had been raised knowing his whole life.

The plan was to get through diabetes education on Sunday and check out from the hospital on Monday morning so we could meet with the teachers and principal at the private Christian school our son attended. We wanted him to start school on the first day of first grade not missing a beat. As I described what my son would now need within a regular school day, I was encouraged by the eagerness of the teachers to help. That was halted by the principal cutting in mid-sentence saying, "and if any of you choose to do this, it would be considered a liability" (K. Schmidt, personal communication, September 3, 2007). My heart broke in that moment. I had been trained to teach within our faith-based private school system, Christian education meant the world to me for my children, yet here I faced the possibility that my son might not be able to

grow up learning about God's great love every day. The meeting ended with the plan that I would come in throughout the day to tend to my son's medical needs since I was a stay-at-home mom at the time, and we lived five minutes away from the school.

On the drive home we were about to turn into our neighborhood when I glanced up at the public elementary school we were about to pass. There were cars in the parking lot on Monday of Labor Day, so I thought maybe someone would talk with me. I walked right through the door and into the office, asking for the principal. Upon hearing my request, the principal walked toward me from the office. I began to briefly share what we had experienced over the weekend with our son's health. With tears in my eyes, I asked, "Could my son learn here? Would my son have the medical support needed to learn?"

I will never forget the words said to me next. "We will educate any child who comes through that door" (C. Solberg, personal communication, September 3, 2007). With a soft smile the tears rolled down my face. I thanked the principal for meeting with me and for the reassurance offered. As I walked back to the car I wondered, why can our faith-based private school not say these same words? I decided to support the private school in professional development on the educational needs of a student with type 1 diabetes. They allowed me to do a brief training at the beginning of each school year for the first few years for all of the teachers. Over these years, we connected with the school nurse at the local public school district and they slowly took over the school support that I started the first year. This collaboration with the public school system was valuable for my son and many other students, making it possible to learn in the private school environment I preferred for my son.

It would be another two years before I would be led into special education for the first time. During these years, I taught across the public school district K-12 as a special education teacher on variance until earning my Master of Arts in special education and licensure in

learning disabilities and emotional behavioral disorders. While teaching in these roles, I served students at the nearby private school by driving to their building twice a week, teaching the students there as part of my caseload of public school special education students. It was a collaborative relationship between public and private schools similar to my working with the district school nurse to keep my newly diagnosed son with type 1 diabetes in the private school of our family's choosing.

<div align="center">Statement of the Problem, Purpose, and Significance</div>

The following multiple case study explored how private school systems developed special education administrative structures to better educate students with special needs. Private schools have a deep expressed purpose for their existence (Senge, 1994). The number of total students enrolled in private schools has decreased from 5,057,520 in 2005-2006 to 4,652,904 in 2019-2020. However, today, private school systems are working to meet the educational needs of more students with disabilities than ever before in the United States, rising from 104,158 to 133,136 from 2005 to 2020 (see Figure 1; Broughman, 2019, 2021; DeFiore, 2006; Drang & McLaughlin, 2008; Lane, 2015; National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Even with these rising enrollment numbers for students with disabilities in private schools, there is a lack of research about special education in private school systems (Boerema, 2011; Bratton, 2020; Lane, 2015). Despite private school educators and administrators working tirelessly to meet the needs of their students with disabilities, there is still a misunderstanding of special education law, scarce resources, gaps in special education trained educators and administrators, and little research on governance coordinating special education services in private schools (Bello, 2006; Lane, 2017).

Figure 1

Increase of Students in Special Education and Special Educators in Private Schools
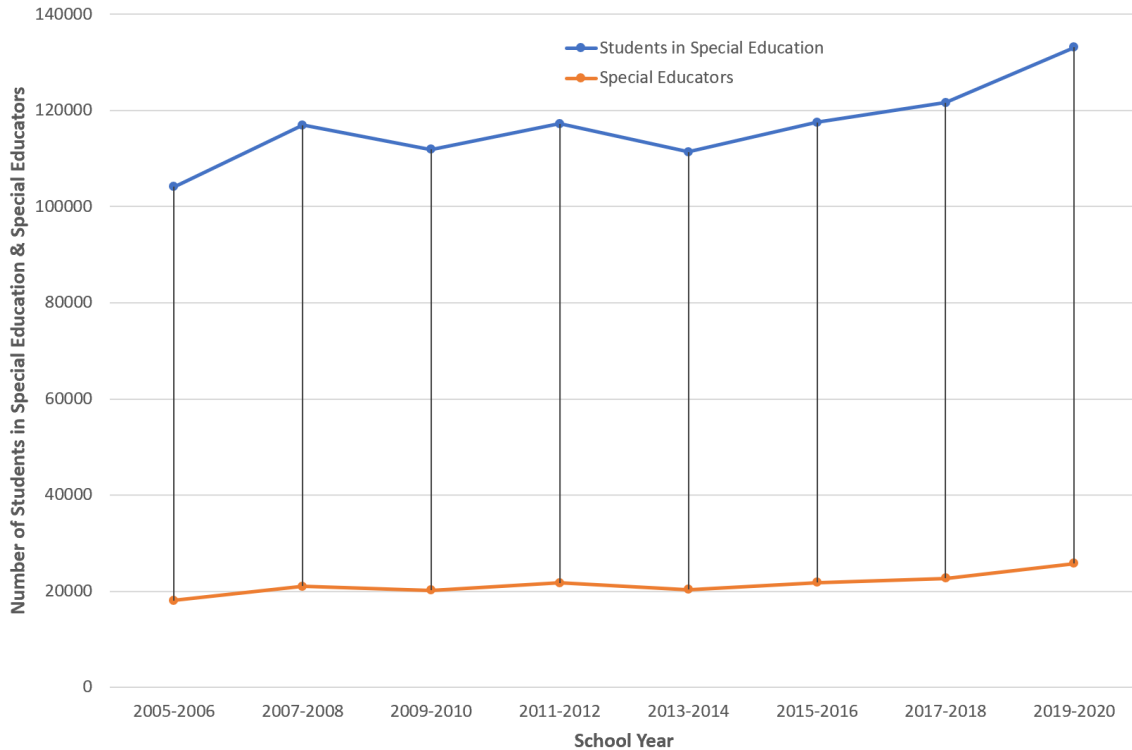
Note. From the National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universe Survey (PSS). Data is collected every 2 years.

One particular concern is the lack of administrators trained in special education in private schools (Bratton, 2021). This negatively impacts administrators, educators, families, and students with disabilities trying to navigate cross-sector collaboration between local education agencies (LEA) and private schools in order to access special education services, which vary from state to state and district to district across the nation (Lane, 2017; McKittrick et al., 2019). According to Lane (2017), educators in private schools misunderstand the child find and prereferral process needed to effectively collaborate with public schools. Positive, collaborative relationships with

public special education professionals are vital for private schools as they identify, provide services, and guide parents who want their children in private schools (Lane, 2017). A possible cause of this problem is the lack of special education trained and licensed administrators within private school systems. This multiple case study that locates special education administrators within private school systems and investigates why and how administrative structure supporting special education programs were created within private school systems adds to the research in the field of special education. Even with the challenges and complexities of serving students with disabilities in private schools, as the data above indicate, increasingly more families are choosing private schools for their children with disabilities.

At this time, there is little known about the structures built to support the rapidly growing special education efforts within private schools across the nation. Religious organizations are beginning to organize to improve how students with disabilities are served (Bacon & Erickson, 2010). There is a creative tension between the strong mission purpose of private schools and the current reality building administrators and educators are trying to carry out on their own when it comes to serving students with disabilities. The purpose of this study is to examine the administrative structures private schools have built, compare them with each other, and contribute to the field of research for private schools to learn from for continuous improvement in how they serve students with disabilities.

Challenges were identified just before the enactment of Public Law 94-142 in 1975. The introduction to the public law reads,

> the educational needs of millions of children with disabilities were not being fully met because—(A) the children did not receive appropriate educational services; (B) the children were excluded entirely from the public school system and from being educated with their peers; (C) undiagnosed disabilities prevented the children from having a

successful educational experience; or (D) a lack of adequate resources within the public

school system forced families to find services outside the public school system. (U.S.

Department of Education, 2011)

These are the same difficulties leaders in private schools and families in search of private

education for their children with disabilities have identified today (Enser, 2012). Families who

wish to enroll their children with disabilities in private schools may be denied or risk a lack of

appropriate services or resources. Many private schools want to include students with disabilities

in their school communities for a variety of reasons. Private schools are beginning to organize

and support administrators and educators as they work toward the inclusion of students with

disabilities (Bacon & Erickson, 2010). Lane (2017) listed three organizations supporting private

schools in their special education efforts. Even though there is an increasing desire to include

students with disabilities in private schools, at this time there are no studies describing in detail

what it takes at the organizational and leadership levels to guide and coordinate special education

services in private schools. This multiple case study has the potential to significantly impact the

field and influence how private school leadership organizes to support students with disabilities

as well as their families and educators. The researched cases are both of general public interest

and address issues that are nationally important, which constitutes a case study of significance as

defined by Robert K. Yin (2006). As a professor of special education preparing pre-service

special educators for a role in private schools, research describing how these educators will be

supported in the field is an ethical concern of mine.

Research Questions

I adopted the following question to frame my multiple case study, which investigated

why and how private school systems have built administrative structures in support of special

education programs. The research on the next steps for continuous improvement of these systems has the potential to add to the research in the field of special education.

RQ: How have private school systems created special education administrative structures?

The following subquestions helped to clarify the findings through organizational theory and change theory.

1. What does the special education administrative structure look like today within private school systems?

2. Why did private school systems choose to implement change within their system to create special education administrative structure?

3. How might private school systems improve these structures next?

Definition of Terms

The following terms and definitions have been adopted for this study:

Council for American Private Education (CAPE): "[I]s a coalition of national organizations and state affiliates serving private elementary and secondary schools. There are over 33,000 private schools in America; in fact, one in four of the nation's schools is a private school. More than five million students attend them. CAPE member organizations represent more than 80 percent of private school enrollment nationwide" (Council for American Private Education, 2022).

Child Find: As defined under IDEA, child find is the responsibility of each state to identify, locate, and evaluate children who have or are suspected as having a disability. Regardless of the amendments of IDEA, each state is responsible for child find activities in the private schools which reside within the public school district (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): A free and appropriate public education is available to all children with disabilities residing in the state between the ages of 3 and 21, inclusive, including children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).

IDEA: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a landmark law that makes provision of education a reality for all children ages 0-21 with disabilities. Originally enacted in 1990, IDEA has been reenacted in 1997, reauthorized in 2004, and continues to be amended, most recently in 2015 with Every Student Succeeds Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Individualized Education Program (IEP): An individualized education program, or an individualized family service plan that meets the requirements of section 1436(d) of this title, is developed, reviewed, and revised for each child with a disability in accordance with section 1414(d) of this title (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).

Parentally-placed: Children enrolled in private schools by their parents (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).

Private School: "[I]s a school that is not supported primarily by public funds. It must provide classroom instruction for one or more of grades K-12 (or comparable ungraded levels) and have one or more teachers" (Broughman, 2021). Private schools are independent of the state and can rely entirely on fees or receive part or all of their funding from the state (Slater, 2013).

School System: Educational structures which include central government, regional government, district government, and schools with consultative bodies (Slater, 2013).

Special Education: Is specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including (i) Instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and (ii) Instruction in physical education (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Specially Designed Instruction: Adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child under this part, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction (i) To address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability; and (ii) To ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Over the last 20 to 30 years, there has been a steady amount of research into the practice of inclusion of students with disabilities in private school systems, and the identification of students with disabilities parentally-placed in private schools has been defined and redefined in federal law. The federal government allowed for services provided to these students by the state educational agencies (SEA) and local educational agencies (LEA) with flexibility. Private school systems have begun to uncover the details within law and engage in cross-sector collaboration to meet the needs of students with disabilities (McKittrick et al., 2019). Current studies summarized updates in federal law, state and local policy, and practices, which are outlined in the following review of literature (Bello, 2006; Drang & McLaughlin, 2008). Consequently, private school systems have begun to organize to meet the needs of all students, including those qualifying for special education and related services (Bello, 2006; Drang & McLaughlin, 2008).

I began my exploration of scholarly literature by searching and cross-searching terms such as special education, private schools, Christian schools, special education administration, and special education leadership in the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) database. I identified several key researchers on the history and current practices of private schools and special education. These key researchers led me to four dissertations, seven government legal documents, one book, 29 peer-reviewed journal articles, and multiple resources cited within each of these works that defined the law specific to private schools, the scope of the role of special education in private schools, and interest in leadership models by private schools. I organized the content literature into three themes: (1) A review of special education problems of practice for leadership in private schools; (2) a call for the organization of special education in private schools today; and (3) analytical theory. While some research gave insight to practices, specific research on special education administration leadership models and governance was

lacking. Still, many researchers called for research to assist in organizational structure and coordination efforts by private school systems (Bello, 2006; Drang & McLaughlin, 2008; Lane, 2017). This multiple case study sought to investigate and understand the changes which have led to the creation of administration of special education in private schools, the impact of the federal special education law, changes to school choice policy, and leadership models.

A Review of Special Education Problems of Practice for Leadership in Private Schools

The vision and mission connected to why students with disabilities must be included in private schools has been on the minds of private school leaders for many years (Long & Schuttloffel, 2006). Researchers described a call for integration of those with disabilities in a way that brings church, school, and community together in these efforts. Efforts were made to include everyone to join in becoming educated in the rights and needs of people with disabilities with an obligation to "infuse" disability education and honor these rights across the Catholic community. Long & Schuttloffel (2006) closed by stating, "This research will be best fostered through collaborative endeavors between theologians, educators, and others in the social and physical schedules" (p. 451).

Barton (2000) shared a vision of an inclusion model with the goal of providing a climate where all can learn by building upon strengths and compensating for limitations. Implementing this inclusion model requires a four-part strategic plan. First, identify what inclusive efforts are going well across the school system so that these may be used as models to be modified within other schools. The second recognition in the strategic plan is that communities throughout the school system were varied and diverse. Due to these important differences, planning and research must be the way to approach the creation of multiple models for meeting diverse needs such as racial, linguistic, and socioeconomic community differences; differences in the educational needs of each student with disability enrolled in a school at any given time; and

programming differences across different age groups. The third area for strategic planning is that professional development must be intense, ongoing, and multi-level. Due to changes in law, students, communities, school personnel of all levels, and unique situations to problem-solve, training efforts need to be robust and ongoing. Lastly, the fourth area for strategic planning is to create a solid and foundational support system to fully take on inclusive practices. The feeling of support must be recognized at all levels of the private educational community, including but not limited to the student, classroom teacher, family, administrator, hired related service professionals, individual schools, and institutions of higher education. Access to necessary resources for educational needs must be something all have within grasp (Barton, 2000).

Private schools are impacted by three specific federal laws: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. For the purposes of this research, I focused on the IDEA law. Special education in private schools has been found in research and law prior to and since the renaming of the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) to IDEA in 1990. IDEA was reauthorized in 2004 and has been amended and realigned as recently as 2015 with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; U. S. Department of Education, 2023). Scholars in private schools have been searching for how to meet the needs of a diverse learner population from varying viewpoints for decades, yet almost every one of them noted the need for more research to clarify the needs, roles, and practices of special education (Bello, 2006). Legal definitions, outlining federal law, guidance for state and local education agencies, and experiences of public and private systems, parents, and their children with disabilities are summarized below.

Challenges for Private School Leaders

The articles I reviewed in this section described the scope of special education that leaders are challenged to manage. Russo et al. (2011) found a list of problems for leaders of

private schools in serving students with disabilities. The list included funding, constantly changing state and district policy and practice, ongoing litigation, and facilities. Acquiring special education teachers and service providers who meet or exceed the qualifications in public schools was a challenge tied to the oversight of programs. Monitoring and compliance of special education documentation and services was another difficulty described by leaders (Russo et al., 2011). Specific oversight is required in the implementation and maintenance of special education programs with the ability to consider the perspectives of everyone involved, including various teachers, parents, and students. Cookson and Smith (2011) discussed the tasks and obstacles related to special education such as curriculum, instruction, legal constraints, and related special education services.

Cookson and Smith (2011) stated the importance of involving everyone in a school's change to serving students with disabilities. The use of sensitivity and inclusive training was encouraged (Cookson & Smith, 2011). Bacon and Erickson (2010) reported cost and training as limitations to serving students with disabilities. Those with passion were encouraged to persist in the professional practice of systemic change toward special education in private schools (Bacon & Erickson, 2010). Bello (2006) implicated several factors for improved private school special education practices. Other needs included expanding expertise in the area of special education and restructuring schools to sustain inclusive practices. Leadership must add vision to policy, clarifying the philosophy for serving students with disabilities. A guiding framework shared through a centrally coordinated approach could help establish an official governing body for the coordination of special education services (Bello, 2006). DeFiore (2006) stated private schools would benefit from an increased understanding of special education instructional and professional services to support future planning. DeFiore also noted private schools will continue

to struggle with resources to expand services, and federal aid will be limited, making this aspect of private schools deserving of further research.

I noted several strengths of the studies above, which included a clarification of special education law according to the IDEA amendments and federal updates as they pertain to public and private schools. These legal updates required collaborative and consultative expectations between public and private schools. We know the identification of students with disabilities must be accomplished through eligibility determination by the LEA (Drang & McLaughlin, 2008; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). Coordination of special education services is needed in private schools due to the federal law leaving flexibility for each state and local education agency to provide some or no services to parentally-placed students with disabilities (Bello, 2006; Eigenbrood, 2005; Massucci & Ilg, 2003; Russo et al., 2011). The SEA and LEA policy and practices change regularly (Russo et al., 2011). Funding, programming, professional development, and personnel specific to special education in private schools also increased the need for leadership in the coordination of special education services in private schools (Bacon & Erickson, 2010; Cookson & Smith, 2011). In the next section, I review the literature regarding limitations of special education services in private schools as a common experience due to policies and practices varying state to state and district to district.

Cross-Sector Collaboration in Special Education

In the following section, I detail the ways in which cross-sector collaboration is vital to the work of private school educators and administrators. Federal law defines the identification of students with disabilities in private schools (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). Each state is given the flexibility to decide how to interact with private schools, and some do so through choice and voucher legislation (Massucci & Ilg, 2003). Challenges described by Cookson and Smith (2011) for private school administrators implementing special education

programs include curriculum and instruction decisions, legal constraints specific to private schools, and figuring out how to navigate related special education services.

Brown and Muschaweck (2004) studied the need for collaborative team development. Roles and responsibilities across private and public school boundaries need to be understood and clarified so they can work together more efficiently to benefit student outcomes. The roles listed as critical to inclusive schooling efforts were general education teacher, special education teacher, special education aid, school psychologist, guidance counselor, and principal. Skills need to be developed around collaborative teaming for child find and special education services. An example of skills needed is to understand the purpose for and ability to facilitate involvement of all team members in the evaluation, problem-solving, planning, and programming of services. Another important aspect of collaborative team development is to make sure that all members are working from a shared vision. When a special education team is working collaboratively, there is a clear philosophical understanding that curriculum and assessment decisions are made with the team in mind in order to give all students access to high standards and ensure student progress has a system for being reported in a measurable way. Collaborative team development builds a mindset of confidence and enthusiasm surrounding inclusive efforts. When a collaborative process is built within a system, confidence and commitment are also built.

Federal Law Addressed Private Schools

Federal law defines special education practices for private schools and then allows variability of policy and practice across the nation, state to state, and community to community. There are as many variations of policy and practices as there are communities where private schools are located. This creates a problem of practice for leaders. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Law (2004) expects all children with disabilities to be located, identified, and evaluated whether they are in public schools or private schools (Drang &

McLaughlin, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Drang and McLaughlin (2008)

clarified that the child find process, cost factors, and timeline must be identical to that within the

public school system. Federal funds must be allocated to provide special education and related

services according to the "percentage of children with disabilities enrolled in private schools

relative to the total number of children with disabilities in that LEA" (Drang & McLaughlin,

2008, p. 4; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). Timely and meaningful

consultation within a written affirmation of agreement is required of the LEA with the private

school and parents of the child with a disability or possible disability, in order to design and

develop special education and related services through the child find process, eligibility

determination, planning, implementation, and due process (Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act, 2004). A procedure exists for private schools to submit a complaint of

noncompliance by the LEA and SEA in case of dissatisfaction with decisions made (Individuals

with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). Funding is affected by parental placement or the LEA

placement of children with disabilities in private schools (Drang & McLaughlin, 2008;

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). The SEA is ultimately responsible for the

general supervision of all standards, requirements, processes, and programs ensuring the

education of children with disabilities. However, the SEA is not required "to provide, or pay for

some or all of the costs of, a free appropriate public education for any child with a disability in

the state" when the student is parentally-placed in a private school (Drang & McLaughlin, 2008;

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).

Drang and McLaughlin (2008) clarified in their research that the 2004 amendments in

IDEA included a distinguishing difference in how the programming of special education and

related services would be documented for public and private students with disabilities. Direct and

indirect services for private school students would be detailed through the design of a service

plan similar to the individualized education program (IEP) (Drang & McLaughlin, 2008; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004). The LEA and the private school must meet to implement the service plan. However, once a student has been identified with a disability, the LEA can choose to provide some or no services at all for a student with disabilities enrolled in a private school by their parents, as it is written in IDEA (2004). Together through consultation, the LEA and the private school will determine which services will be provided. Drang and McLaughlin (2008) summarized the amendment in this way, "Children enrolled in private school may receive a different type and/or amount of service than their public school counterparts with similar disabilities and educational needs" (p. 5). The authors also noted several amendments connected to child find, services per age groupings, and carryover of expenditure allocations that are not used within the fiscal year.

Additionally, Eigenbrood (2005) attributed the low number of students identified and receiving services as parentally-placed students in private schools to a possibility that there is a lack of special education knowledge among private school parents and school leaders (Drang & McLaughlin, 2008; Eigenbrood, 2005). Drang & McLaughlin (2008) reported parentally-placed private school students found to have disabilities eligible for services "are not regarded as individual children entitled to FAPE under IDEA" (p. 9). With regard to private school service providers, the amendments state that they must meet the same qualification criteria as public school employees, with the exception that they need not meet the "highly qualified" special education teacher requirements. (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).

School Choice and Vouchers Brought Change

Researchers described how school choice and vouchers allowed parents autonomy and alternative options to public schools for the education of their children, in or outside of their neighborhood and public school district boundaries. Parent activists worked to level the playing

field financially as they advocated for their tax money to be redirected to the schools of their choice. As private schools accepted voucher money, they also became accountable for the public money they received. Voucher programs popularized private school choice, and enrollment in private schools jumped. The first state voucher program was enacted in Wisconsin in 1990. Seven years later, the Wisconsin state legislature passed voucher programs to include religious private schools. Enrollment in these schools through vouchers increased from 1,500 to 6,000 students. Other early states to experiment with vouchers were Ohio and Florida, with mixed reviews. The Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice (2022) reported 32 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia offer some type of financial support for types of private school choice such as education savings accounts, school vouchers, tax credit scholarships, and individual tax credits and deduction programs. Students utilizing school vouchers alone have increased from 166,000 in 2016 to 265,526 in 2022. While school choice offers options to families who have children with disabilities, issues reported were the fight over funding, responsibilities between private and public schools, discrimination against children with disabilities, and the fact that vouchers are a highly volatile issue (Bal et al., 2018; Blackwell & Robinson, 2017; Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, 2022; Massucci & Ilg, 2003).

Researchers recognized a structural factor which impacted parental decisions in school selection related to special education. The availability of special education programming, including designated facilities, related services, and specialist staff, was a factor for parents in 95% of the studies reviewed (Bal et al., 2018). Parents noted upon interview that they would travel distances to access qualified educators and schools with facilities meant to meet the needs of their children with disabilities (Bal et al., 2018). Another factor important to parents in choosing schools for their children with disabilities was an educational system and educators who prioritize relationships and provide quality programs to improve academic and social skill

outcomes for their children with disabilities. Other factors noted regarding special education were "secondary schools that had expert teachers, well-funded and suitable programs, appropriate school provisions and facilities, and a safe school environment" (Bal et al., 2018, p. 322).

A Call for Coordination of Special Education in Private Schools Today

Next, I explore research shedding light on current problems, laws, practices, and solutions in the field of special education in private schools. I paid close attention to studies that described the scope of the role of special education in private schools being carried out by teacher leaders and principals with or without special education training. Bello (2006) reported there are no governance bodies coordinating special education services in private schools. The following studies describe organizational efforts to coordinate special education services.

Special Education Leadership in Public Schools

As shown in Table 1, special education leadership standards have been laid out by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) since 2011, and again in 2015, defining the scope of the role (Bagley & Tang, 2018). Each state also enacts statutory competencies for candidates to prove upon licensure that clearly define the scope of the special education administrative role (State of Minnesota, 2020).

Table 1

Teacher Leader Model Standards, Special Education Specialist Advanced Preparation

Standards, and MN Special Education Administrative Competencies

Teacher Leader Model Standards (2011)	Special Education Specialist Advanced Preparation Standards (2015)	MN Special Education Administrative Competencies (2020)

Domain I: Fostering a Collaborative Culture to Support Educator Development and Student Learning
 	
Domain II: Assessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Learning
 	
Domain III: Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement
 	
Domain IV: Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning
 	
Domain V: Promoting the Use of Assessments and Data for School and District Improvement
 	
Domain VI: Improving Outreach and Collaboration with Families and Community
 	
Domain VII: Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession
	1. Assessment
	2. Curricular Content Knowledge
	3. Program, Services, and Outcomes
	4. Research and Inquiry
	5. Leadership and Policy
	6. Professional and Ethical Practice
	7. Collaboration
		Subp. 1. Core Leadership Competencies for all Minnesota Administrative Licenses core areas:
		  A. Leadership
		  B. Organizational Management
		  C. Diversity Leadership
		  D. Policy and Law
		  E. Political Influence and Governance
		  F. Communication
		  G. Community Relations
		  H. Curriculum Planning and Development
		  I. Instructional Management
		  J. Human Resource Management
		  K. Judgment and Problem Analysis
		  L. Safety and Security
		Subp. 4. Director of Special Education Competencies specific areas:
		  A. Policy and Law
		  B. Organizational Management
		  C. Resource and Fiscal Management

Note. Bagley & Tang (2018) shared this table of CEC standards in their 2018 journal article. The

addition of Revisor of Statutes, State of Minnesota (2020) was added to the table.

The scope of the work of special education from child find to transition to adulthood requires a multifaceted approach in order to enhance the educational experience for students with disabilities. Positive and collaborative environments across settings ensure students' educational needs are met. The norm in special education leadership is centralized administration guiding and supporting building administration and teacher leaders. The key leader role at the centralized administrator level is the director of special education (DSE). The DSE enacts vision and initiates inclusive reform across an organizational system for effective special education programs and services, including "oversight of special education programs, assisting with program development and implementation, ensuring the quality of special education services, and being involved in the education process by working with teachers and parents" (Tudryn et al., 2016, p. 5). The building-level administrator and teacher leaders' roles interact closely with formal and informal leadership to deliver the effective special education programs and services (Tudryn et al., 2016). Collaborative leadership between special education directors, administrators, and teachers usually includes response to behavior, IEP and service plan meetings, and the implementation of special education programming (Hughes et al., 2020).

McKittrick et al. (2019) described the cross-sector collaboration across all public and private organizations involved to improve the landscape of special education and school choice in schools across Washington, D.C. When all professional educational roles involved arrive with deeper information and expertise about special education, the students and their families benefit. The authors defined a gap between students with and without disabilities. Students with disabilities were five times less likely to be proficient in ninth grade on the English Language Arts statewide assessment and were more likely to be "chronically absent, disciplined, and retained" (McKittrick et al., 2019, p. 3). The authors also suggested the community should find solutions together to clarify programming opportunities and the capacity of quality special

education programs. Communities need to find a larger hiring pool of qualified special educators. Special education audits should be designed to ensure the quality of programming and to find out why students with disabilities show such a gap between their abilities and the abilities of their non-disabled peers (McKittrick et al., 2019).

According to Lane (2017), private schools serve students with disabilities through several different service models. Models include general education only, general education with special education co-teaching, a resource room for a portion of the school day, separate classroom for the entire day, public school professionals at the private school, public school professionals at the public school site, and other settings. Even though many models were reported, the design of programming and services within private schools is in demand. Lane (2017) called for special education graduate teaching and leadership programs to provide qualified educators to meet the need private schools face with rising enrollment of students with disabilities. Funding was also mentioned by Lane, as some parents pay private special education teachers out-of-pocket for services.

Lane and Jones (2015) found that even though IDEA amendments do not require private schools to provide services to parentally-placed students with disabilities, parents continue to enroll their children in private schools. The LEA and the private schools continue to work together, as required by law, through "collaborative and consultative child find activities between public and private schools" (Lane & Jones, 2015, p. 214). The authors described how each state and LEA are left with the flexibility in federal law to define how they will fulfill the child find activities and whether or not they will provide some or no services for students who qualify for services. It is through these collaborative efforts that "public and private school representatives have the opportunity to develop a relationship of trust and respect. When trust and respect are established, the evaluation process for the parents can more likely be a positive experience"

(Lane & Jones, 2015, p. 214). Some LEAs will develop an offering of free and appropriate public education (FAPE) with a written IEP and, "if the parent elects to maintain their child's attendance in a private school, the LEA may offer services in the form of an Individualized Service Plan" (p. 215).

Principals tend to have a long list of responsibilities and could benefit from specifically trained leadership in special education or a distributed leadership model of administration (Bratton, 2020). Smith et al. (2020) noted three characteristics of high-quality inclusive schools. First, the culture of high-quality inclusive schools requires a leader impacting a unified vision. This vision includes commitment to inclusion with high expectations for all students. School leaders distribute leadership to transform teaching and learning across the school. Second, high-quality inclusive schools have collaborative and team-oriented environments based on emerging research impacting data-based decision making and instructional response integrated across all school-based professionals. Third, high-quality inclusive schools provide quality instruction for all students within a planned tiered structure, rather than reacting to the needs of struggling students. Ideally, "…all teachers, aides, support staff, volunteers, and professionals in the building community work as a team when they assess students and plan subsequent interventions" (Smith et al., 2020, p. 69). Lane (2017) reported 53.2% of private schools that participated in the survey are educating students with disabilities without special education credentials. Fourteen percent reported having a trained part-time member in the role. Another 32.8% reported having a full-time trained staff member in the role. Other random responses designated more than one trained member in the role, including some that reported paraprofessionals and related service professionals as paid staff (Lane, 2017).

IDEA Law Update

In February of 2022, the United States Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs published a revision of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) with requirements for state and local equitable services for students with disabilities parentally-placed in private schools. In these cases, FAPE does not apply as it would if the students were enrolled in the public school system. The statement makes it clear that it is left to the discretion of the state to decide whether to require the private school to adhere to personnel or curriculum standards. Furthermore, when personnel and curriculum standards are not required of the private schools servicing the student with disabilities, IDEA protections through due process are only available to meet child find requirements. The law does require the LEA to provide equitable services at a proportionate amount to private schools for special education services for these students. Public and private schools must collaborate through timely and meaningful consultation to identify students with disabilities and their educational needs. The requirements of the law for collaboration and proportionate spending could result in a student with disabilities parentally-placed in a private school receiving no services at all (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

Child Find. The responsibility to locate, identify, and evaluate all children with disabilities is designated to the LEA where the private school is located and where the parents live, whether or not the parent resides in another country. The LEA has been given options for how they conduct the child find process and must inform all participants of this process. Child find must be completed in a similar time period as that of the public school. The LEA can interact with the private school, parents, and stakeholders in many ways to carry out the child find ongoing process. IDEA does not require the LEA, nor can the LEA require a private school, to use a scientific, research-based intervention such as that used within a multi-tiered system of

support (MTSS) or response to intervention (RTI) for remedial purposes or child find practices. A child find evaluation cannot be delayed for an RTI process. The clarification is made for all involved to keep in mind that child find is an ongoing process available to children as they develop. A child found not eligible at one point could later be found eligible for special education and related services. If the parent requests an evaluation, the LEA is required to follow through with the child find process. If a child qualifies for special education and related services but parents make it known that their child will attend the private school, the LEA is not responsible for offering FAPE through a written individualized education program (IEP). Each state is required to keep an accurate child count of the number of students evaluated, determined eligible for special education services, and those who are provided equitable services who have been parentally-placed in private schools. At the request of the parent or teacher of a student found eligible for special education and related services, the LEA is responsible for conducting reevaluation to determine continued educational needs through updated academic achievement and functional performance data. Parents who disagree with the evaluation findings of the LEA can request an independent educational evaluation (IEE) at the expense of the LEA. Parents can also file a due process complaint at the LEA where the private school is located or a state complaint if they disagree with the evaluation findings of their child. Most due process provisions are allowed to the parents of the child; however, there is also a due process opportunity for the private school organization or individual. Once parental consent has been granted, a complaint can be filed if the LEA is believed to have violated IDEA requirements or regulations (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

Consultation. The LEA is required to contact all private schools within their district to make themselves available for child find consultation. Timely, meaningful, and ongoing consultation during the design and development of programming is a requirement for the LEA,

private school officials, and the parents or representatives of the parents to discuss equitable services for a student eligible for special education services who is parentally-placed in a private school. Each stakeholder is allowed the opportunity to have input before the LEA decides on programming (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

While much flexibility has been built into the federal guidance, there are consultation requirements that must be addressed with parents, teachers, and private school officials. The details of the LEA's child find process must be shared. The process and outcome of the calculation of the proportionate share of federal funds must be shared. The child find consultation process and its timeline during the year must be communicated. The service delivery details must be discussed in detail. When the LEA and private school officials disagree regarding the services, the LEA will provide in writing the reasons for a differing decision. Thorough and ongoing documentation of these requirements is expected in this guidance, including a signed written affirmation by the private school representatives. Written affirmation must reflect that the participants have been engaged in timely and meaningful consultation in an ongoing manner. If the private school does not engage with the consultation process and does not provide the signed written affirmation within a reasonable time, the state education agency (SEA) becomes involved to ensure child find consultation communication was appropriate and to assist in finding solutions to any disagreements. If the private school official believes that timely and meaningful consultation did not occur with the LEA, there are avenues for resolution. The private school official may resolve the issue informally with the LEA and SEA. They may file a formal complaint with the SEA. As a final measure, the private school official may file a formal complaint at the federal level (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

Equitable Services. Equitable services are defined as "special education and related services, including direct services, provided to parentally-placed private school children with

disabilities in accordance with the provisions of IDEA and its implementing regulations" (IDEA Part B, 2022). IDEA requires the LEA the child attends to provide an opportunity to participate for parentally-placed private school children with disabilities. The outcome of child find and timely and meaningful consultation for parentally-placed children with disabilities is a designation of equitable services funded through IDEA Part B as calculated proportionately. The details of the equitable services are determined by the consultation process. The provision of equitable service must be through the LEA where a private school is located, or contracted by this LEA for the parentally-placed children with disabilities in private schools, as long as those services are not already provided there regularly. It is permissible for the LEA to provide additional services with state or local funds, over and above those required through IDEA Part B federal funds, as long as they are compliant with all IDEA requirements for students enrolled in the public school. While the IDEA Part B funds can be used to provide direct services, through the consultation process and due to local circumstances, the LEA can designate funds to cover indirect services such as consultation, equipment, materials, or training, as long as these are "secular, neutral, and nonideological" (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

Timely and meaningful consultation must include careful planning related to the fiscal year expenditures which are budgeted the year prior and relate to the proportionate share calculations of how services will be provided for a parentally-placed child with a disability in private schools. When calculating the proportionate share of IDEA Part B funding for equitable services, the total number of children ages 3 through 21 with disabilities enrolled in private school located in the LEA is compared to the total number of children ages 3 through 21 with disabilities in the entire LEA. Children whose parents revoke services are included in the child count as children eligible for special education and related services. The IDEA Part B funding is used specifically to provide special education and related services for, and only to benefit, the

parentally-placed private school child with a disability, rather than benefiting the private school. The provisions may include equipment and supplies for equitable services and will be reclaimed by the LEA once these are no longer needed. The SEA is required to monitor the LEA's proportionate share calculations and expenditures for parentally-placed private school children with disabilities. Construction and facilities are not an allowed expenditure under IDEA Part B funding (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

While the LEA is required and monitored to maintain personnel with specific qualifications for the position by which they are contracted, the federal guidance does not require or monitor the personnel qualifications of private school teachers providing equitable services. Public school teachers providing these same equitable services are required and monitored to meet IDEA personnel qualification requirements, fully state certified as special education teachers or by an alternate route. The federal guidance gives the option to the state to require and monitor the personnel qualifications of private school teachers to be equal or exceed that of IDEA Part B upon documentation in writing. An educator in the private school or the faith-based organization may be contracted to provide equitable services under the supervision and control of the LEA. The ability to subcontract is also granted to the LEA and private school for equitable services, including that of the LEA of residents (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

The federal guidance uses statutory language such as "to the extent consistent with law," often when addressing parentally-placed private school children with disabilities. One of these times is in reference to the location of services. There must be a compelling reason services must be provided apart from the student's private school location, "to not unduly disrupt the child's educational experience" (U.S. Department of Education, 2022, p. 28). The topic of location of services and transportation that is "necessary for the child to benefit from or receive equitable services" must be addressed during the consultation process (U.S. Department of Education,

2022, p. 28). Transportation may be addressed when calculating proportionate share (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

Service Plans. Free and appropriate public education (FAPE) is provided for students with disabilities who are enrolled in public schools or are publicly placed in private schools. "No parentally-placed private school child with a disability has an individual right to receive some or all of the special education and related services that the child would receive if enrolled in a public school" (U.S. Department of Education, 2022, p.26). Due to this understanding, there is a difference between the IEP, which is the plan for FAPE written as determined by the IEP team for use and carefully controlled in public schools, and the service plan written for use and minimal control in private schools. The service plan, which is required to meet IEP content requirements, will describe the services offered for the parentally-placed private school child with a disability by the LEA. The service plan must be updated consistent with IEP requirements to the extent appropriate. The federal guidance is that service plans be developed, reviewed, and revised with parent involvement not less than annually to ensure annual goals are met and revised appropriately. The process for developing a service plan is that the LEA must initiate and conduct the meeting to ensure the parent, private school, and LEA representatives are present for development, review, and revision of the service plan consistent with IDEA law (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

State Voucher and Scholarship Programs. Many states have chosen to designate funding for parentally-placed private school children with disabilities through voucher and scholarship programs. According to federal guidance, the child find and consultation process is the same for states that utilize voucher and scholarship programs for the identification of private school children with disabilities within the jurisdiction of the LEA. Parents might encounter a revocation of consent of FAPE, including IEP services; however, this does not negate the

responsibilities of the LEA or SEA to provide equitable services to eligible parentally-placed

private school children, unless the parent refuses or fails to respond with consent for evaluation

for eligibility. The child could be enrolled in a public school at a later date and still be considered

a child with a disability, making FAPE again available to the child unless determined no longer

eligible (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

Due Process. The parent of a parentally-placed private school child with a disability has

the right to due process through a formal complaint regarding the LEA or SEA's failure to meet

the requirements of IDEA for child find and equitable services. A private school also has the

right and may file a complaint as an individual or organization. The complaint should be

submitted to the State according to its complaint procedures. It is important to remember there

are no individual rights to parentally-placed private school children to receive some or all of the

services they would receive if they were enrolled in the public school. Through the complaint

procedures, which include mediation, possible resolution could include compensatory services;

however, no new IDEA Part B funds can be allocated. State or local funds can supplement the

resolution (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

Communicate Vision

Smith et al. (2020) emphasized the critical component of the delivery of effective,

learner-centered, professional development to increase the quality of inclusive schools: "The

inclusion of ALL learners, and thus, all family members, is not only necessary but also possible"

(Smith, 2020, p. 76). Lane (2017) reported the necessity of private schools embracing the need to

serve this special population of students in order for programs to be successful. A shift in school

culture that values the diverse learner must be led by school leaders. Principals are reported to

notice the obstacles to serving students with disabilities, such as lack of buy-in from all

educators, and yet persist due to the positive attributes that enrich the school environment through their presence (Lane, 2017).

Instructional Leadership

The learning environment is structured with clear and individualized learning goals, "based upon the students' readiness and [should] include a variety of instructional styles (e.g., explicit instruction, whole group, small group, peer tutoring, cooperative learning) and assessment techniques to allow student to demonstrate their knowledge" (Smith et al., 2020, p. 69). Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is described by the authors to be evidence-based instructional practice meant to meet the needs of students identified through universal screening to determine appropriate academic, behavioral, or social-emotional instruction. Within this model, varying roles such as teacher, aids, support staff, and specialized professionals work together to assess with relevant universal screening tools, make data-based decisions, accommodate and/or modify instruction and assessments, and use the appropriate instructional methods with students according to their needs. Bonfiglio and Kroh (2020) incited effective inclusive practices through creating framework for funding and advocacy and the implementation of evidence-based practices such as MTSS, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), High-Leverage Practices (HLPs), and other Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs). The authors concluded by highlighting that inclusion takes time and so will effective models. Continue new implementations as works in progress. Future considerations include increasing intervention time in middle school grades, expanding the use of research-based interventions, increasing mental health supports for students, and revising Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (Bonfiglio & Kroh, 2020). Lane (2017) described how more research needs to be conducted to clarify the current staffing qualification in private schools serving students with disabilities. This same study discussed concerns about 45% of regular education teachers

supporting students with disabilities without special education support. Another concern of this study was that "professional development as related to disabilities … is not occurring" (Lane, 2017, p. 233).

Administrative Structures

The landscape of education is changing across the nation, which sets the tone for leaders who can innovate and reform for the improvement of outcomes for students, closing skill achievement gaps and graduation rates. According to Slater (2013), high-performing and improving education systems have a centralized ministry, regional government, and schools with consultative bodies of council. The central ministry and regional government will distribute or decentralize leadership to local or community organizations. The central ministry utilizes a framework for how decentralization is put into practice and evaluated in order to ensure quality and equity in curriculum, student outcomes, resource allocations, workforce, operations, quality assurance, data collection, and accountability (Slater, 2013). The frameworks include the economic, political, and social influence contexts; the rationale for decentralization; the form and level of implementation, including structures and policies; and the stage and outcomes achieved through decentralization structures. Over time, school systems were established by groups or clusters of schools where a superintendent has responsibility to mentor principals through the "dissemination of good practice, professional development and taking the lead in enriching student learning in their areas of expertise" (Slater, 2013, p. 17).

The central ministry also establishes specialist bodies to advise on specific aspects of policy development and implementation (Slater, 2013). Due to a strong emphasis on the full inclusion of diverse learners, there is a wider definition of educational success that must be legislated and taken into consideration for quality assurance by the central ministry. Policy must include frameworks for curriculum, monitoring, and quality assurance. External funding and

support are the guiding factors, though selective and discriminate. According to Slater (2013), private schools that receive public funds have a greater chance to embed quality and equity than those without these funds. While the voucher system has allowed access to services in private schools for students, there are problems that come along with vouchers, such as: 1) access to information for disadvantaged parents; 2) transportation and supplementary costs for parents of lower socioeconomic status; and 3) the quality outcome for students in private schools is better. Slater (2013) stated these problems can be solved through organizational efforts to target funding and enact inclusive policies. Effective use of resources requires relevant data to be available for the planning of quality education, training and guidance to support initiatives, budgets linked to educational outcomes, and auditing to ensure compliance (Slater, 2013).

Administrators, mainly principals, are responsible for placing qualified educators in specific roles, overseeing evidence-based and inclusive instructional practices, and providing resources to ethically support and improve the instruction, assessment, programs, and services. The importance of collaboration in special education across the educational environment creates a need for shared forms of leadership. Three different types of collaborative leadership were described by the author: distributed, embedded, and teacher leadership. The study described the need for both strategic and collaborative leadership to accomplish the scope of the work. Concerted action is valued and described as the sum being greater than the equal parts separated across the organization (Tudryn et al., 2016).

According to Tudryn et al. (2016), distributed leadership is the practice of supporting the improvement of an organization through the contributive efforts of an interactive group based on the goals, needs, and contexts of the organization, adjusting over time. Leaders who are committed to inclusion can ensure that no teacher works alone in support of a student with disabilities through a collaborative or distributed leadership model. Partnerships with parents and

families were emphasized. Administrators and teachers work together for continuous improvement, developing "meaningful accountability measures … of student learning and use data to set goals and make informed instructional decisions" (Smith et al., 2020, p. 68). Adjustments are made to schedules and roles to meet the instructional needs of students who qualify for services.

Embedded leadership is a purposeful and cultural coming together of a community to own, plan, and achieve a common goal. A continuum of distributed leadership is described with embedded leadership on one end, with a hierarchical or external leadership model on the other. However, embedded leadership would include the entire community as well as those in a visible hierarchical leadership position. What is made clear is that one person is not how the work of education is accomplished. "Leadership tasks are distributed among formal members of the leadership team based on function and activity rather than based solely on role or position" (Tudryn et al., 2016, p. 5).

Special education teacher leadership is increasing in importance with qualified educators "working closely with administrators to design and develop instructional programs, monitor operations, and identify problems and solutions" (p. 6). Teacher leadership includes working from "a clear vision, listening to staff, provides a good role model, identifies and values colleagues' strengths, trusts colleagues, and supports colleagues" (p. 6). The Tudryn et al. study found teacher leaders believe a well-functioning leadership team at the top is necessary to keep systems running smoothly at the building level. Quality of instruction of special educators requires the guidance of a knowledgeable leader in order to ensure students' best interests and data outcomes of progress (Tudryn et al., 2016). When a system has effective distributed leadership intact, teacher leaders are guided to increase their awareness and use of effective special education practices for the provision of services for students with disabilities in the least

restrictive environment (LRE). Special education teacher leaders mentor, collaborate, influence

building-level curricular decisions, and lead professional development on child find and special

education services. These are the collaborative, flexible, and adaptive problem solvers.

"Administrators view special education teachers as leaders because of their expertise and training

within a specialized area related to a vulnerable student population," in order to develop school

policies that truly include all students (Hughes et al., 2020, p. 87).

Administrative structures within private school systems have innovated to improve

outcomes for students. Decentralization of policy-making, administration, and funding led to

positive outcomes in educational quality. A centralized role remains clear across private school

systems. Concerted action between decentralization and the centralized role stabilized the

organization. (Tudryn et al., 2016; Slater, 2013).

<div align="center">**Gaps and Tensions in the Literature**</div>

The aforementioned studies clearly show the depth of specialized knowledge, constant

legal maneuvering, and consistent interest required of private school systems to enroll parentally-

placed children within their schools. The need for coordination of services is rarely specifically

addressed if it is mentioned in research (Bello, 2006; Russo et al., 2011). Boerema (2011) found

more research is needed in areas of special education leadership in private schools and the role of

the community in serving students. Many of the foundational studies reported a lack of research

in the area of special education practices in private schools and a compelling need for such

information (Bacon & Erickson, 2010; Bello, 2006).

Long and Browne (2007) described a plan to create teacher leaders who understand the

collaborative and consultative role required for special education. The plan included the

facilitation of rapid gain of special education core knowledge, inclusive practices, and

implementing new teaching positions. Other challenges reported were recruitment, planning for

new educational practices, and performance indicators to evaluate effective programs. Long and Browne (2007) expected the enrollment of students with special needs would continue to grow and so would the need to hire teachers with special education collaborative and consultative experience. Private schools would continue to request the funding of the state government to rise to the need in private schools (Long & Browne, 2007).

Reffett (2020) defined a gap in the research with regard to schools that are not yet ready for inclusive and/or special education practices. While a private school system may make a blanket statement that all students be reached, there is a need to understand how different school communities manage the details of the actual implementation required to include all learners. Reffett (2020) emphasized that all are welcome, yet noted that some school communities might need to take a different approach to meaningfully serving students one step at a time. Lane and Jones (2015) reported a gap in understanding the existence, characteristics, and performance of special education programs in private schools.

There are clear tensions in the research in regard to the fact that child find practices require a collaborative relationship between public and private schools, yet there is still a lack of understanding regarding the law and ever-changing policies and practices within each state. Private school systems expand across the nation and even internationally. How can private school leaders keep up with the changing laws, policies, and practices that are laid out specifically within the federal law but remain flexible and fluent at the state and local levels? Lane (2017) concluded with recommendations for evaluation of the effectiveness of services and instructional practices to close skill gaps, as well as a call for "quality education by trained professionals in structured and well-developed programs" (p. 234). Foraker (2020) called for evidence-based practices to be understood through specific professional development by all private school general and special educators so students with disabilities can be uplifted by their

proven student outcomes and all students can benefit. How can effective practices and structured, well-developed programs be put into place without leaders who have special education specific training? The research points to a need for organizational structuring and coordination of special education services. This can be further explored through a multiple case study.

Analytical Theory

I organized my literature review into two broad categories for analysis through change theory and organizational theory. Through the literature review, I wanted to understand the topic of the organizational structure of special education in private schools through change. The first half of my literature review was an overview of the history and special education law pertaining to private schools (Bal et al., 2018; Bello, 2006; Blackwell & Robinson, 2017; Cookson & Smith, 2011; Drang & McLaughlin, 2008; Eigenbrood, 2005; Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, 2021; Massucci & Ilg, 2003; Russo et al., 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2011, 2022). The second half of my literature review describes recent studies defining the scope of special education in private schools and the call for more research describing the coordination, oversight, and organizational structure of special education programming in private school systems (Bello, 2006; Bonfiglio & Kroh, 2020; Tudryn et al., 2016; Drang & McLaughlin, 2008; Foraker, 2020; Hughes et al., 2020; U.S. Department of Education, 2022; Lane, 2017; Lane & Jones, 2015; McKittrick et al., 2019; Reffett, 2020; Slater, 2013; Smith et al., 2020). This multiple case study focused on what has caused a change in private schools to organize structurally to include the administration of special education. The call for more research allowed me to apply the tenets of change theory to the administrative structure of special education in private schools. How have private school systems created special education administrative structures? I chose to research three questions that flow through the process of change theory and include organizational theory: 1) What does the special education

administrative structure look like today within private school systems? 2) Why did private school systems choose to implement change within their system to create special education administrative structure? 3) How might private school systems improve these structures next? The cyclical process of the theory of change for learning is defined visually in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2

Research Questions and Change Theory
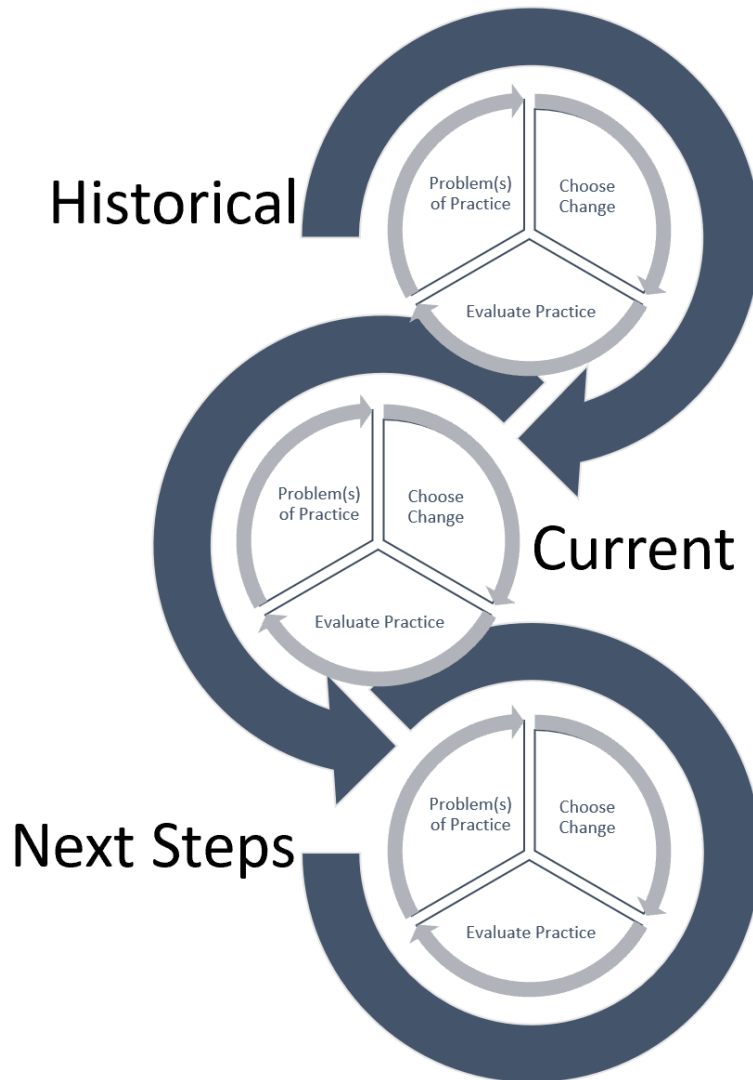
Note. Tenets of the Theory of Change are in direct relation to my research questions.

Private schools require a system structure of support to carry out the scope of the work to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Brown & Muschaweck, 2004). The literature did not reveal specific descriptions of organizational and systems change within private schools coordinating special education efforts, but did shed light on types of structures considered by

researchers. Continuous improvement efforts require the understanding of different perspectives on change theory.

Theory of Change

Serrat (2018) defined a theory of change that is rooted in the social change of Auguste Comte (1798-1857), "that applies critical thinking to the design, implementation, and evaluation of an initiative ... to foster emergent, projectable, or transformative change" (p. 239). Theory of change also leverages logic models such as the cascading logic model for its framework (Blase et al., 2015; Serrat, 2018). A pathway of change is developed from logically and carefully placed interventions based upon assumptions and beliefs that will lead to the realization of a prioritized outcome. The focus and scope of a theory of change involves the external context, beneficiaries, results, time span, interventions, and assumptions (Serrat, 2018). The relationship between the theory of change and concept models can be found in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Proposed Analytical Change Theory
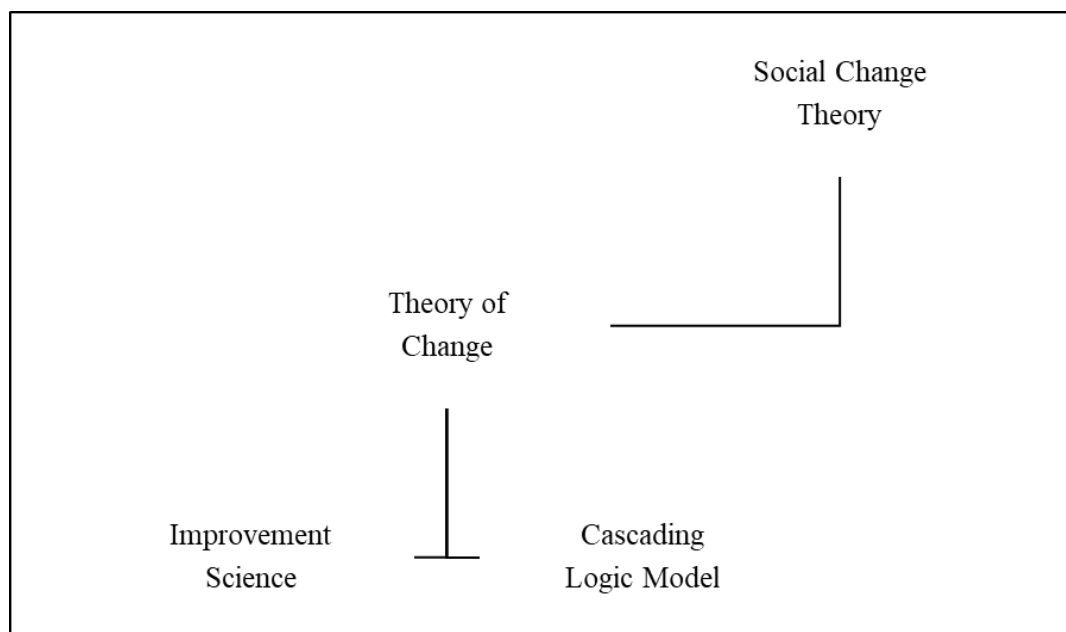
Note. Social change theory overarches theory of change with tenets of improvement science and cascading logic model below.

I developed assumptions that led to change in private schools based upon the review of literature that I examined through this multiple case study. Specific federal law and state statutes regarding the child find process and placement of students with disabilities by their parents into private schools has led to change in private schools (Bal et al., 2018; Bello, 2006; Blackwell & Robinson, 2017; Cookson & Smith, 2011; Drang & McLaughlin, 2008; Eigenbrood, 2005; Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, 2022; Massucci & Ilg, 2003; Russo et al., 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2011). The scope of the role of special education in private schools has also led to change in private schools (Bello, 2006; Bonfiglio & Kroh, 2020; Drang & McLaughlin, 2008; Foraker, 2020; Hughes et al., 2020; Lane, 2017; Lane & Jones, 2015; McKittrick et al., 2019; Reffett, 2020; Slater, 2013; Smith et al., 2020; Tudryn et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

Improvement Science in Education

Hinnant-Crawford (2020) defined improvement science as "a systematic approach to continuous improvement in complex organizations" (p. 1). The cycle of change theory is the foundation of improvement science: 1) evaluate the current landscape, 2) define the complex problem or problem of practice, and 3) introduce decisive change. Criteria of success are defined within the approach as a cyclical process of testing and learning. Improvement science is founded upon the epistemological process of observation, hypothesis, experiment, and conclusion developed by Ibn al-Haytham (965-1040). Francis Bacon (1561-1626) contributed inductive reasoning to the approach with the process of "observations to axiom to law" (Moen & Norman, 2009, p. 3). The connection between science and education was made by merging it

with the "wisdom about the nature of improvement from business, engineering, and medicine" (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020, p. 8). *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), also known as Taylorism, sought to identify the best way to educate through scientific processes applied to educational tasks. This is where we coined the term "best practice" which has moved to "evidence-based practice." Specific application of this theory is gathered within this definition from Hinnant-Crawford (2020):

> Improvement science is a methodological framework that is undergirded by foundational principles that guide the scholar-practitioners to define problems, understand how the system produces the problems, identify changes to rectify the problems, test the efficacy of those changes, and spread the changes (if the change is indeed an improvement). (p. 29)

The first steps in improvement science are to evaluate the current practices and define the problems of practice. The clearest definition is formed from a collaboration of stakeholder perspectives. The questions asked are: What works? For whom does this work? Under what circumstances does this work? Who was involved? Who is impacted? The power of the collective is utilized to make the research most beneficial (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Kegan & Lahey, 2009). My research questions can bring forth a better understanding of the organizational structure of special education in private schools through a multiple case study with historical, current, and future cycles of change theory.

Framework: Cascading Logic Model

An organization must have a purpose for change and the guide of root cause analysis according to the cascading logic model (Blase et al., 2015). The five "how" questions that describe the framework offered by this model are: How will students benefit? How will teachers be supported? How will district and school implementation teams be developed and supported?

How will regional supports be developed to support district and school implementation teams? How will state transformation specialists and state capacity building workgroups be developed? The goal of developing answers to these questions within a system is to improve student academic and behavioral outcomes. This model allows for measurement of system change on a large scale, "analyzing and planning for the infrastructure and supports" (p. 1). Morris and Katon (2006) defined a variation of improvement science that started with clear vision, success criteria, and an action plan for the effective improvement of special education. While this research was implemented within public school systems, it can guide the process of this multiple case study of private school special education by providing a cascading structural glance within the interview protocol.

Organizational Theory and Organizational Change Theory

Due to the scope of the role, the administration of special education must include an understanding of organizational theory. The ever-growing population of students with disabilities in private schools creates an environment ripe for a leader with a mindset of continuous improvement and knowledge of organizational change theory (Blackwell & Lilly, 2022). The origins of organization and organizational theory go back to the 1700s with Adam Smith's discussions on the division of labor and manufacturing for the outcome of economic efficiency (Blackwell & Lilly, 2022). The theory of capitalism developed by Karl Marx in the 1800s gave us the beginnings of collective work. While Max Weber began to define types of leadership for social order in his theory of bureaucracy, it was Frederick Winslow Taylor who defined the organization through the addition of scientific methods, standards, and management, creating a foundation of certainty in order to maximize the benefit for all associated with the organization.

Luther H. Gulick built upon Taylor's scientific approach by developing what was known as the science of administration and administrative theory. His theory emphasized clear task

definition, specialization of task roles, and a focus on organizational efficiency. Ludwig von Bertalanffy defined the organization through general systems theory, with a refining of scientific theory to include regulations across a hierarchy of subsystems that rely upon one another to accomplish the goal of the whole organization. Boulding's hierarchy of systems added a clear understanding of how each subsystem supported those below and above through feedback (Blackwell & Lilly, 2022; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Hatch, 2006; Senge, 1994, 2012).

Bolman and Deal (2008) sorted the origins of organizational theory into a four-frame model. These are known as the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic organizational frames. The person or persons in a leadership position have the responsibility to consider the goals of the organization and the unique situation and environment to match organizational needs to the use of the appropriate frame. Research has found significant positive effects over short and long term with use of multiple frames or reframing techniques in organizational management, giving leaders a 90-98% advantage when facing challenges. Ultimately it takes the consideration, mastery, and utilization of each of the four frames to lead an organization. The leader or group of leaders inspires the empowerment of people across the social architecture through advocacy.

Leaders build systems across all four frames, empowering the organization from each of the four directions. The structural frame is used by leaders to position roles and relationships to what needs to be accomplished within the organization to keep it strong. The human resource frame is built with both the needs of the organization and the people who are at the center of it in mind, strengthening workers' commitment and loyalty by meeting their needs as well as the organization's needs. The political frame allows the leader to consider and navigate the power agendas and conflicts of multiple stakeholders and special interest groups as a reality of organizational leadership. Lastly, the symbolic frame reminds the leader to utilize the most

important skill of inspiration, reminding all across the organization of the valuable mission they press toward every minute of every day (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

There are three elements required to set into motion organizational change or growth. The first is that a deliberate and guiding idea is articulated with philosophical underpinnings that become a shared vision for those within the organization. Next, an innovative infrastructure is put into place so that new organizational practices can be established. Central communication of the authority and accountability of practices is key. Lastly, leadership must be able to step back to take in the system as a whole, identifying patterns and dynamics (Blackwell & Lilly, 2022; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Hatch, 2006; Senge, 1994, 2012).

Furthermore, Senge (2012) described theory connected to how schools change. Change within schools happens slowly and naturally but can be swayed by leaders when they can engage personal commitment within the system through multiple layers of leadership. When organizational learning is applied during a change process, time and money are not concerning factors (Senge, 2012). The experience of pilot groups can provide wisdom to future implementations. Challenges can be identified and considered for adjustments through a cyclical process when schools apply learning through organic growth.

Educational leadership within a system for change is described to do so without the need for control (Senge, 2012). Instead, leadership is focused on engagement of layers of leadership and stakeholders, systems thinking through the whole and its parts, leading learning that is learner-centered on outcomes, and self-awareness of the impact leaders are having on their educational ecosystem. When a system is learner-centered, there are no throw-away children (Senge, 2012). In private schools there is no mandate to accept into enrollment any student. However, within this theory difficult conversations frame decision-making around the mission and vision of the educational organization. Decisions are made to impact the system and

ultimately the learner by understanding how the principles of neuroplasticity enact true change.

Finally, schools that learn can measure to know when true change has occurred (Senge, 2012).

Summary

The content and theoretical review provided a description of existing literature and theory addressing my research questions. My study attempted to contribute to the body of research on special education in private schools. I wanted to know if private school systems have made changes within their organizational and administrative structure to include special education specifically, what the improvements look like today, and what their next planned steps are to improve these systems. Change theory, improvement science, and organizational theory give definition and framework to these three questions. The cascading logic model provides strategic planning to the methodology as I interview the cases identified. The change I hope to find occurring is that private school systems have indeed organized structurally to provide administrative support for special education to meet the needs of the increased enrollment of students with disabilities.

The structural system requires the ability to differentiate through integration across layers and parts. Through the definition of roles, responsibilities, vision, and goals, the educational system is stabilized by applied structure (Bolman & Deal, 2008). As private school systems have uncovered the need to improve structural systems surrounding special education efforts, how have they defined the causation? What conclusions and solutions have developed? How are these systems identifying the quality of applied changes? I adopted change and organizational theories from multiple perspectives as an analytical lens to guide the development of my research methods to investigate the governance structures for the coordination of special education in private schools.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

I investigated the administrative structure and coordination of special education services within private school systems as a snapshot taken during the summer of 2022 through winter 2023 in the United States of America. Using a qualitative multiple case research study, I planned to gather data in two cycles of interviews and documentation gathering with directors of private school systems: (1) Cycle 1 to define their system's coordination and organizational structure for special education; (2) Cycle 2 to find out why they chose to implement change within their system to provide administrative structure for special education, coordination of special education services, and how leaders might redesign or improve these structures next. Through the lenses of organizational and change theories, I hoped to understand the work of private school systems trying to support the professional practice of special education within their systems and how and why it has changed over time.

Qualitative Research

I took the research perspective of a social constructivist with this qualitative multiple case research study to better understand the causation of change in private school systems to serve students with disabilities. Qualitative research is used when issues need to be explored to identify impactful variables which can be acted upon wisely by a group or when understanding real live perspectives in contemporary times (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I chose qualitative research as a method because it allowed me to closely examine private school systems that chose to actively support diverse learners across their system rather than exclude them. I wanted to know what data and beliefs influenced their decision to implement change, what their structures specifically look like, and how their efforts are working or not working to influence the next steps for continuous improvement. I took a close look at the organizational or administrative structure of

special education leadership in private schools from multiple perspectives in a natural context

(Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 2006).

Table 2

Framework of This Multiple Case Study

Components of Research Design	This Multiple Case Study

1. Research questions	How have private school systems created special education administrative structures?
	  1. What does the special education administrative structure look like today within private school systems?
	  2. Why did private school systems choose to implement change within their system to create special education administrative structure?
	  3. How might private school systems improve these structures next?

4. Propositions	Leadership model Special education leadership role(s) Leadership mission and vision Historical background and change causal
5. Units of analysis	3-5 Private school systems within membership of CAPE Interview of the director or directors within each private school system (Special Education Director or Director of Student Services, if exists)
6. Logic linking the data to the propositions	Cross-Case Synthesis Organizational Theory Change Theory
7. Criteria for interpreting the findings	Interview Data & Member Checking Supportive Documentation Metamemos within the Interview Protocol

Multiple Case Study Research Approach

I adopted the method of descriptive and exploratory multiple case study due to the research questions seeking understanding of the contemporary organizational structure and coordination of special education (Yin, 2009). "Multiple case research starts with a quintain," which is a condition to be studied and is shared by each of the cases (Stake, 2006, p. 6). Each of the cases were studied in depth through two cycles of interviews with directors, supportive documentation, and field notes. With triangulation of this data, I gained a well-rounded understanding of the data. For this multiple case study, the goal was to understand as clearly as possible the perspectives of each case. Areas of investigation included a description of the special education leadership model in private school systems as it looks at this time in history, an exploration of the theory of causation of the creation of special education leadership models, and what changes may lie ahead to improve special education leadership and practice in private school systems. Many variables have been uncovered and guided the outcome of this study through the research cycles of collection, individual analysis, cross-case analysis, and triangulation of the data.

Institutional Review Board

I secured my CITI certificate in March of 2021 (Appendix A). In March of 2022, I submitted a project application and received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of Saint Thomas (Appendix B). My role was to serve as the principal investigator with guidance from my dissertation committee and my advisor, Dr. Shelley Neilsen-Gatti, on this study: [1878387-1] Governance Coordinating Special Education Services in Private School Systems: A Multiple Case Study. The privacy and informed consent were considered in depth by the IRB and summarized below.

Privacy was and will be protected for all who participated in this study. Interview participants had control over the date and time of the interviews and what they chose to share. The interviewees chose to answer or not answer any of the questions during the interviews. Interviews and documentation information from each private school system were anonymously labeled as Case A, Case B, and Case C. Any identifiers within the body of the information were neutralized with common nouns. An example: when the interviewee said the name of a school system on the audio recording, upon transcription, the title of the school system was changed to a common noun such as private school system Case A. Data was transcribed immediately after the interview sessions. Identifiable information was redacted, removed, or replaced with common nouns. Transcriptions were saved directly to my OneDrive account for the length of term expected by the Institutional Review Board of The University of St. Thomas.

The voice of the director being interviewed was collected in the audio-recording. No name, email, or location was connected to the voice of the director. The label took the place of any identifier upon transcription of the audio-recording. The audio-recording was deleted once transcription was completed. All information will be kept on the University of Saint Thomas OneDrive account under my login credentials. While not being directly worked on, I stored handwritten notes and printed documentation in a locked file cabinet in my office. Identifiable information has been removed or redacted immediately upon download, printing, or as being written. All data will be destroyed three years after the estimated completion date. The data will be destroyed on estimation: May 15, 2026.

The directors of private school systems provided permission to be interviewed, for the interview to be audio-recorded, and for data collected to be used within a dissertation study. I have requested permission and have collected fully signed and executed General Consent Form for Adults from each director to provide documentation such as organizational and

administrative models, job descriptions, policy that oversees program, credentials for hiring, professional development, training, and others that came to light during the interviews. The informed consent discussion began with the agreement to participate, continued upon scheduling the interviews for each cycle, and member checking. The informed consent questions were: How will the information I share be protected? What should you do if you wish to withdraw from this study? and Who should you contact if you have a question? As each interview cycle began, and at the end of each interview cycle, I asked the consent questions again to allow for discussion. I shared emergent themes with the participants for member checking approval prior to including them in the final written report. All of these actions were preapproved by the IRB of the University of Saint Thomas.

Recruitment and Selection of Participants and Setting

According to Stake (2006), the cases invited to the study shared common characteristics and conditions that are meaningful to the researcher. Directors of private school systems at the time of this study in the United States were the target participants. There are 20 private school organizations listed as having Council for American Private Education (CAPE) membership. As a cross-sampling of convenience, I chose to invite 7 of the 20 private school organizations listed in CAPE membership to my study. Four directors responded and were interested in the study. One of the four had mostly early childhood centers in their school system and did not believe they had any data to offer on the topic of special education. The directors of the three remaining organizations were targeted as participants due to the position's level and scope of oversight of educational programming across the entire school system. A letter of invitation and informed consent describing the case study design, data gathering and analysis, and request for anonymous participation was emailed to the current directors of these three private school systems. A reply was requested by a specific date. All three directors respond to the request for participation in the

study, agreed to be participants, and signed the General Consent Form for Adults. I signed the

form and returned it, fully executed, to the participants. Each private school system was

anonymously labeled as Case A, Case B, and Case C. Systemwide directors were labeled as

Director A and Director B. Administrators of special education were labeled as ASE-A, ASE-B,

and ASE-C. The Case C administrator interviewed served in a role that acted as both the

systemwide associate superintendent and administrator of special education. This participant was

labeled as ASE-C.

In the selection of cases, sometimes they are known in advance and sometimes they are

randomly selected (Stake, 2006). Prior to this study, the private school system I work within had

been looking for models to learn from in the coordination of special education. Our special

education leadership team brought in a special education director from another private school

system to share their model with us. Due to this prior baseline research, our special education

leadership team had seven specific private school systems from CAPE membership that we

intended on inviting to the study. All seven were faith-based private school systems and not all

were Christian. Some private school systems were selected due to relevance in system size or to

provide diversity across contexts. The minimum number of participants for this study was

identified as three by my committee and advisor (Stake, 2006). All participants were engaged

through both cycles of data collection from start to completion. Table 3 below displays the

demographics of the three cases and six participants that agreed to participate in the study.

Table 3

Demographics by Private School System

L	Private School System Totals		With Special Education Administrative Support		
	Total Schools	Total Number of Students	Number of Students with Disabilities	Number of Special Education Teachers	Setting
Case A					
Director A National Private School System	431	45,500	5,048	194	Urban Rural Suburban
ASE-A	3	1100	93	3	Urban
Case B					
Director B1 (retired) **Director B2** (new) National Private School System	1855	162,074	n/a	n/a	Urban Rural Suburban
ASE-B	110	n/a	2458	88	Urban Rural Suburban
Case C					
Director C District Private School System & **ASE-C** (both roles)	35	7,331	650	20	Urban Rural Suburban

Note. Information for this table was gathered through data collection from each director

interviewed, and online research at the websites for each private school system or organization.

Data Collection

Data were collected in three ways in two cycles. I interviewed directors in two cycles.

During each interview cycle, I requested supporting documentation. The data gathered through

these methods were analyzed for emerging themes and triangulated. Official supportive

documentation and interview data were collected, coded, analyzed, and compared across cases.

These documents provided a sense of reality and legitimacy to the description of the case

(Saldaña, 2021). These documents were analyzed and a list of them is included with anonymity

in the appendices of the dissertation.

Pilot Study Early Summer 2022

In an effort to pilot the interview questions and consider the appropriate director-level

interviewee from each private school system, the special education director who met with our

special education leadership team agreed to pilot the interview with me and offer feedback. Since

all correspondence had been approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of

Saint Thomas, I reached out with the recruitment letter, scheduled, and completed the interview

in June of 2022. I met with the participant virtually on Zoom and recorded the interview with the

voice memos app. The voice recording was then translated with the Otter.ai app. All voice

recordings were deleted once the translation was verified and secured in file at the University of

Saint Thomas OneDrive.

Cycle One and Two Interviews

Once each participant was identified upon reply to the recruitment letter, the two cycles

of interviews were scheduled. These interviews took place through virtual meetings on Zoom

due to the continuation of the COVID pandemic and the nationwide locations of the participants.

Each case submitted a fully executed General Consent for Adults Form in agreement to

participate in two cycles of interviews: Cycle 1 early summer 2022, Cycle 2 late summer 2022,

and a reserved possibility for follow-up during mid-fall 2022. The interviews were scheduled as

1.5 hours of question and answer. Supporting documentation of various kinds were requested as

evidence of what was discussed in the interviews. Per cycle, the interviews lasted between 0.5

and 1.5 hours each. During and after the interviews, I kept a record of my metamemos or

professional interpretations making sense of and organizing the data for later reference. After analyzing the interview data, an email was sent to each participant requesting a list of common documents (See Appendix F).

Data Cycles

Data were collected in three ways in two cycles. Cycle 1 began in early summer 2022 with the pilot study and continued with other participants in late summer 2022. It was a live virtual interview with the focus question requesting a current description of the administrative structure and coordination of special education services by the systemwide director and a trained administrator of special education who oversaw the coordination of services for the largest number of schools in the private school system. Systemwide demographics data were collected at the time of the interview verbally and in documentation form later through email. The conversation was recorded, transcribed, prepared, and run through NVivo for analysis. Cycle 2, in late summer 2022, focused on the historical background of why the current structures were put into place by the private school system and the next steps for continuous improvement of the private school system's administrative structure and coordination of special education services. Specific data that drove change was requested and shared in documentation format. Follow-up questions were included regarding Cycle 1 analysis. The conversation was recorded, transcribed, prepared, and run through NVivo for analysis. Follow-up questions were included regarding Cycle 2 analysis. Again, the conversation was recorded, transcribed, prepared, and run through NVivo for analysis. Cycle 3 was reserved for follow-up but was not needed. Coding methods were identified as seen in Tables 2 and 3 according to the research question(s) being addressed in each cycle (Saldaña, 2021).

Cycle Topics and Coding Methods

Table 4

Cycle Topics and Coding Methods

Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Structural Description	**Supporting Data**
Elemental Coding Methods	**Cumulative Coding Methods**
Structural	Pattern
Descriptive	**Affective Coding Methods**
Process	Emotion-Passion
	Values
	Procedural Coding Methods
	Causation

Note. The Coding of Cycles table provided by Saldaña (2021) has been used here in application to the four cycles of interviews I will conduct.

Data Analysis

According to Yin (2009), high-quality case analysis requires a researcher to show they have attended to all the evidence, rival interpretations, the most significant aspect, and show my own prior, expert knowledge. Cross-case synthesis was used and strengthened by including more than two cases through data comparison displayed individually side-by-side according to a uniform framework. Cross-case patterns emerged as data became saturated through the development of argumentative interpretation supported by the data.

Interviews and Documentation

The interviews were captured during a virtual Zoom meeting with a voice memos app audio recording and transcription through Otter.ai app. I used NVivo software for qualitative analysis of the transcriptions into textual narratives for coding and themes. I wrote memos during the live interviews, taking note specifically of non-verbal communication elements providing additional depth to the data (Saldaña, 2021). Following each interview, the recording was transcribed, prepared, and coded for the identification of emergent themes. NVivo was used to assist in coding inductively so an open mind remained while opinion and bias were blocked as much as possible from the process of analytics (Saldaña, 2021). Interview questions were developed based on category and subcategory. Coding was rated according to importance and organized within a table similar to Table 4 above. The common important themes were listed within a table similar to Table 5 for triangulation. I coded solo and needed to discuss and consider the data and themes found in the data with my special education colleagues and advisor. Saldaña (2021) stated, "coding requires methodological sensitivity" (p. 55). This sensitivity is "the skill or aptitude required by researchers in selecting, combining, and employing methods, techniques, and tools in actual research situations" (Bryant, 2017, p. 36).

During the interviews and after them, I wrote metamemos as reflections on information gathered. According to Saldaña (2021), analytic memos can serve as valuable reflections, such as: (1) summaries of data; (2) personal relation to the data as a researcher on the topic; (3) participants' actions, reactions, and interactions; (4) participants' routines, rituals, rules, roles, and relationships; (5) intriguing, surprising, or disturbing findings; (6) my code choices and their operational definitions; (7) emerging patterns, concepts, and themes; (8) possible connections; (9) emergent or related existing theory; (10) problems with the study; (11) personal or ethical dilemmas; (12) future study; (13) metamemos; (14) tentative answers to the research questions;

and (15) drafting for the final report. These metamemos captured and guided my analytic thoughts as a researcher. During the interviews, I requested common supportive documentation and relevant documentation based upon the conversation at the time of the interview. Data within the documentation was cross-referenced and triangulated with that of the emergent themes in the interview and metamemo data as found in Table 5.

Table 5

Planning the Multicase Final Report Organization

	Pages	Director A	Director B	Director C ASE-C (both roles)	ASE-A	ASE-B	Quote Impressions
Main Topic							
Theme 1							
Sub-Themes:							
Theme 2							
Sub-Themes:							
Theme 3							
Sub-Themes:							
Documentation							
Field Notes							
Assertions							
Limitations							
Recommendations							
New View							

Note. From Multiple Case Study Analysis, by Robert E. Stake (2006). Worksheets was retrieved with permission due to book purchase from www.guilford.com/p/stake.

Interview Protocol and Metamemos

The cascading logic model provided a framework for creation of the interview protocol outlining the three research questions within the cycle of change theory (see Appendix E; Blase et al., 2015; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Kegan & Lahey, 2009). My personal professional interpretations, memories, discussions, and struggles with the data were kept within the interview protocol from each interview as an important part of the multiple case study data and have been cross-referenced with the emergent themes from the interviews and supportive documentation in order to triangulate the findings for validity (Saldaña, 2021).

<div align="center">

Researcher Experience and Bias

</div>

The experiences I have had as a woman educator have allowed me to see from multiple perspectives as a researcher. My career began as a private elementary school teacher wondering how best to serve struggling students in my classroom when connections with the local public school district were limited. Later in my career, I became a public school special education teacher who served students with disabilities at private schools within the district. Now my perspective has shifted as a professor of special education at a private institution of higher education to the preparation of qualified teachers to serve students with disabilities in our private school system.

Due to these experiences, my position at the college, and work across the private school system, I am biased to eagerly find an improved way to serve students with disabilities. I have been focused to find any literature in the field of research regarding how organizational structure has been created in support of students with disabilities in private schools. My goal was to uncover what is working well structurally and organizationally in service to students with disabilities in private schools. However, negatives will also exist in the data. I had to be mindful of how successes and failures are both valuable research findings that benefit how the research

can be used by many more researchers in the field of private education across the globe. I had to mindfully state the interview questions neutrally in order to avoid leading the participant. It was my goal as a researcher to interact in a way that would not impact the system in any way. As I reflected on the data, I had to consider the benefit of the wide range of questions and answers on the topic of special education in private schools to a wide range of cultural, political, social, linguistic, and economic perspectives (Patton, 2015, p. 70). When I interacted with the participants and in data analysis, I did so with empathetic neutrality to extract the richest understanding possible.

Criteria for Evaluating Qualitative Research Reliability and Validity

Preliminary coding in the format of nouns emerged from the data through the use of NVivo technology for data analytics. While I reflected upon the data through analytical metamemos, the use of technology and the emergent themes led the direction of the reflective process. Saldaña (2021) guides the researcher to look for the development of social theory through five main characteristics: 1) expression of a patterned relationship between two or more concepts, 2) use of if-then logic, 3) parameters or variations of empirical observations, 4) explanation through causation, 5) insightfulness and guidance for improving social life. Cross-case analysis or triangulation serves the purpose in multiple case studies of asserting the findings directly rooted in case evidence. Triangulation means getting to the best possible conclusions through considering every possible angle of the private school system leaders' perspective on special education (Stake, 2006). I triangulated three forms of data. There were two cycles of interviews, a collection of documents, and my metamemos. Through these three sources of data, I was able to corroborate evidence to validate my findings. Lastly, I asked the participants to verify the emergent themes through member checking.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations within my research were to protect the identities of all school systems and people who were quoted or participants in this study. Pseudonyms were given to all people and school systems. Consent forms were distributed through email, signed, and collected to inform participants of the risks and protections used throughout the interview and data collection cycles. All names and identifying information have been removed from the interview transcripts and metamemos. All emails corresponding with participants regarding participation in the study, the scheduling of the interviews, documentation, and member checking have been deleted. The data collected will be stored within the password protected UST OneDrive according to the pseudonym and kept in a safe location for a number of years until it is destroyed upon maturation of limitations.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This multiple case study was designed to examine how private school systems have built special education administrative structures, compare them with each other, and contribute to the field of research for private schools to learn from each other for continuous improvement efforts in how they serve students with disabilities. Specifically, my study examined: 1) What does the administrative structure of special education look like today within private school systems? 2) Why did private school systems choose to implement change within their system to create administrative structure supporting special education? and 3) How might private school systems improve these structures next? I collected qualitative data from 12 interviews, various supportive documents from three directors of private school systems and three administrators of special education, and from my metamemos. Using NVivo data analysis software, I coded the data as it aligned with my research questions and grouped the commonalities into themes as summaries. As the researcher, I engaged with the data with high-quality analysis in mind that attended to all the evidence, investigated all plausible rival interpretations through multiple cycles of review and member checking, addressed my research questions in the light of all the data, and connected my expertise in the field of special education to the prevailing assertions along with relevant discourse on the topic (Saldaña, 2021; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2018). Finally, I have presented the findings through separate, single case presentations and then through a cross-case analysis (Yin, 2009).

In this chapter, I present the findings of these interviews with a multiple-case study compositional format (Yin, 2018), through sections of single-case descriptive framework and cross-case analysis of the three major themes that emerged from data analysis: 1) special education administrators have a uniquely trained and focused job description, 2) historical problems of practice have been met with decisive change, and 3) current problems of practice

have been and will be met with a special education administrator's vision. This chapter presents the findings of the interviews from the leaders' various perspectives historically, today, and in their vision for the future.

Figure 4

The Organization of Cases and Emerging Themes and Subthemes

SPED Administrators Have A Uniquely Trained and Focused Job Description	Historical POPs Met with Decisive Change	Current POPs Met with a SPED Administrator's Vision
Human Resource Management & Supervision	Changes in Federal & State Law	Changes in Federal & State Law – Consistent Voice for Private Schools
Community Partnership Collaboration	Changes in Local Policy	Differences in Local Policy
Federal & State Law Navigation	Program Funding	Sustainable SPED Program Funding Leadership
Local Policy Navigation	Administrators & Educations Need for SPED Support & PD	Shortage of Qualified Special Educators
SPED Practices	Data Trends	Consistent Data Collection & Response to Trends
Curriculum & Instruction Supervision & Evaluation	Fear of Disability or Inclusion	Lack of Inclusive Culture
Professional Development	Need for SPED Administrators	Need for SPED Admin Structure, Isolation, Formal Job Description
Coordination of Services	Member Needs	Consistent, Quality SPED Titles, Practices, Access to Continuum of Services
	State of Public Education	Consistent, Quality SPED PD for Private school General & Special Educators

Current Descriptions of Each Case

Each participant was first asked to describe the current administrative structure of special education within the private school system connected to the first research question: What does the administrative structure of special education look like today within private school systems? All six leaders described the current special education administrative structure and role unique to their viewpoint within the private school system. Each of the administrators of special education had different names for their titles within the administrative structure. ASE-A holds the title of director of student services, ASE-B is a director of special education, and ASE-C has the title of assistant superintendent. Summaries of the special education administrative structure of each case are depicted in Figures 3, 4, and 5 and described below.

Case A

The first participant was the national director of a private school system called Case A (see Figure 5). The director described a private school system that was divided up into 12 districts across the nation, usually by geographical region. Each school had independent leadership with governance from a district-level president and coordination team. Data were collected systemwide annually and special education was among the data collected. Director A stated, "We continue to try to get more granular data as the number of students with special education needs continues to grow in our circles."

Figure 5

Case A Administrative Structure that Includes Special Education
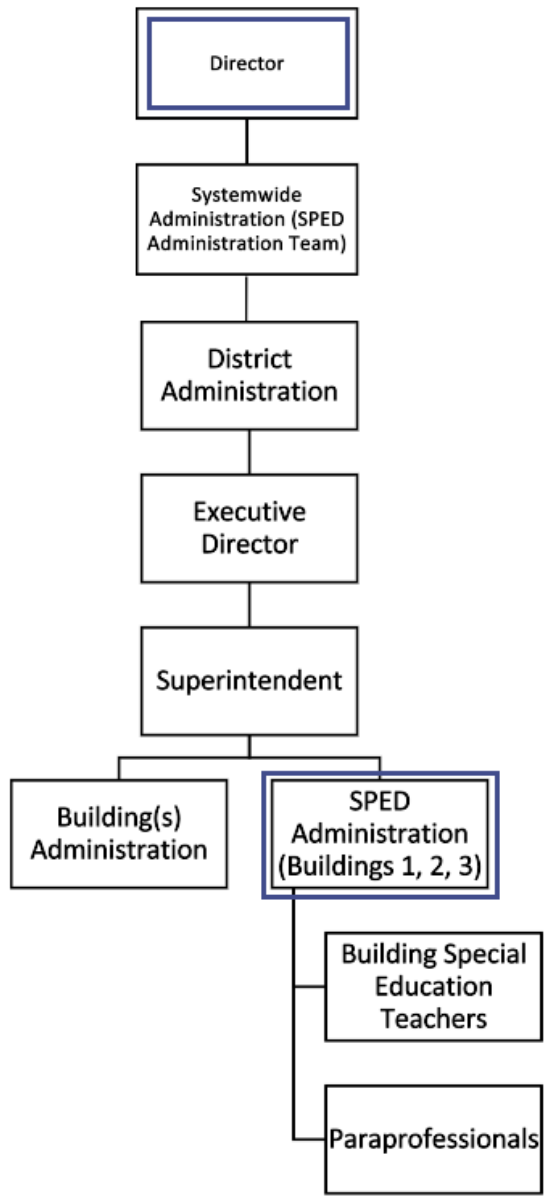
Note: The participants interviewed from each case have been double framed within the structure.

Administrative support for special education across the private school system was through a new special education leadership team that provided guidance, training, and directed private schools to resources. Only a few districts had a trained special education coordinator at

the time of the interviews; otherwise, the associated teacher training college supported special education programs through professional development and licensing and credentialing educators. In some regional areas, groups of special educators were beginning to meet at the area high school to support one another's work. Principals oversaw their special education programs and had a variety of titles for the role of the lead special education teacher for those programs; however, these principals widely did not have special education specific training or background. Director A shared a decision to learn more about special education administration with another private school leader.

I also interviewed a special education administrator, ASE-A, who oversaw special education services, Title I services, mental health counseling, speech language pathology, and healthcare across a network of three campuses within the private school system Case A. ASE-A was part of the executive team that included three principals, the superintendent, and the executive director. This administrative team met weekly where programming needs were presented. The two operating campuses each had an enrollment of 550 preschool through eighth grade students, with 91 of those students served in the special education program by a lead special education teacher, four special education teachers, a grades five to eight replacement curriculum teacher, two resource teachers, three support teachers, and one speech language pathologist. The special education program served students through a state voucher program that provided funding for students who met eligibility requirements for special education from four-year-old preschool through eighth grade. Over 50 students were being served by a speech language pathologist for early intervention. One of the three campuses was currently under construction, and they envisioned it to serve the same number of students as each of the other buildings over the next few years. They learned from the last school expansion and through their

work with a community partner for strategic planning to analyze budget, departments, staffing, and special education as they roll out into the new location.

The administrator of special education shared their qualifications and specific focus on special education within this role. The administrator of student services within Case A, ASE-A, shared the official job description after the interview. This leader held a Bachelor of Science in elementary education, a master's in Educational Leadership, a state administrator license, a state teaching license, and 21 years of experience in education. This participant supervised special education and title teachers and reported to the superintendent and campus principals. Overseeing title instruction across the three schools included communication with the outside Title vendor and supported the title teachers as needed. Supervising special education instruction across the three campuses allowed vision to action on the administrative strategy team, oversight of the special education teachers and teams, and coordinated services to ensure student needs were being met through replacement curriculum, push-in or pull-out instructional services, or accommodations.

During the interview, it was noted that overseeing the two registered nurses, healthcare aid, and mental health counselors and therapists was also part of the job description which, according to ASE-A, needs to be updated for accuracy. Statewide legislation on instruction for students with dyslexia had made its way into the job description, defining collaboration with the dyslexia consultant. The job included consultation and communication with parents for tutoring support for their child. A large part of this job was to manage the special education process, student records, and the financial management of title, EANS, and voucher funds across the three schools. The budgeting of these funds drove meeting student needs through programming, staffing, instruction, assessment, professional development, and use of space.

Case B

For Case B, I interviewed the national director of the private school system who served from a central office and traveled to schools and conferences to collaborate, connect, support, and provide structure for school improvement systemwide. This private school system reported current student enrollment as 1855 schools with more than 160,000 students from infants and toddlers through twelfth grade, divided into 35 districts across the nation. Each district had a regional office with an education executive and staff providing various local level services for schools within the district (see Figure 6). Schools were surveyed each year collecting demographic information; however, special education specific data was not being collected nationwide at the time of these interviews.

Figure 6

Case B Administrative Structure that Includes Special Education
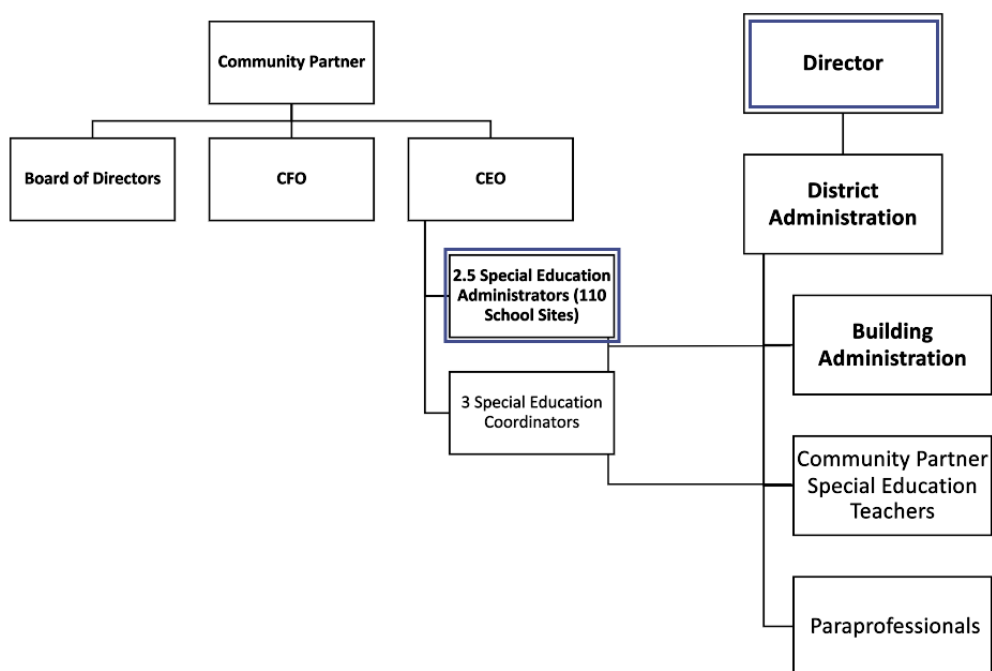
Note. The participants interviewed from each case have been double framed within the structure.

Schools across Case B are independently owned and operated by a church or association of churches and supported by recognized service organizations. Each school developed their own governance model through a school board that developed their policies. The director's goal was to make sure districts are equipped to provide a quality program to meet and exceed state standards for educator licensing and training which is documented in the accreditation process. Special education was included in the school accreditation process the director supported systemwide. Another part of the director's role was to travel to the districts at their national conferences, work with national groups in education associations, and generally help schools remain connected rather than feel isolated. Many district schools hired or developed their own special educators depending on the population of their school which drove the need for special education programming, according to Director B. Many schools with special education programs provided a powerful model that not only serve students with special needs, but also provided professional development, supervision of instruction, oversaw mental health counseling, and worked closely with local education agencies to identify those eligible for services and provide services collaboratively.

Director B retired prior to documentation collection during this study but was willing to member check the themes. I was able to get in contact with the new director, here known as Director B2. While this participant had only been the director of the private school system since December of 2022, the director's professional background included the associate director role for a year and director of a state district of schools within the private school system of 35 districts. Before these systemwide leadership roles, Director B was head of school within a large city for nine years, an upper school principal for eight years, and had been an educator as well. One of the schools previously led by Director B had a special education program within it. Director B has been a champion of special education programs ever since that leadership experience.

Director B2 described the duplicated model of membership with a recognized service organization (RSO) for special education administration within the private school system. One of these RSOs supported schools across one state and the other supported schools nationally and internationally. The latter was the organization where participant ASE-B leads.

Within the private school system Case B, the largest of the recognized service organizations that served in the area of special education for this school system was a nonprofit organization known for its expertise in the administration of special education. This was where the participant ASE-B served full time. The organization had a board of directors, chief executive officer (CEO), senior director of operations, director of advancement, finance manager, special education program director, two part-time special education program directors, and three office support staff. ASE-B was the one full-time equivalent (FTE) director who oversaw special education and delegated to the part-time special education program directors and coordinators. The 110 schools that chose membership with this organization were divided up equally between the 3.0 FTE directors with 36 schools per director, split for the part-time directors. Underneath the purview of the special education directors, there were six coordinators supporting special educators locally with a more detailed presence. Together, this administrative structure supported 88 special education teachers in these 110 schools across 16 states. The current number of overall students who were receiving special education services at the time of this study was 2,458. If the caseloads of each teacher were equalized, their caseloads would be about 28 students per teacher. However, caseloads vary across this private school system which includes rural, urban, and suburban schools.

The administrator of special education of Case B held the highest level of qualification amongst the participants in the area of special education with a PhD in special education leadership, endorsement for administration of special education, bachelor's in elementary

education, master's in education with special education, and gifted and talented certifications. ASE-B's experience included 11 school years as a special education teacher, assistant resources director, special education director, and most recently as an adjunct professor for the private school system's higher education college.

This job description clarified the work of each member in the non-profit organization's leadership model as it related to special education. Although job descriptions for each of them were undergoing updates during this study, their duties can be separated into three categories. First, the supervision of special educators, which included curriculum and instructional supervision, the awareness of what was going on with each special educator across the 110 member schools, problem-solving special education issues, making sure there was systemwide common professional language, ensuring educationally sound practices, helping to equalize access to special education programming across all schools in the private school system, and supporting principals in consultation. Second, professional development, which included professional development for all special educators, building-wide professional development, article publication, and conference presentations. Third, the governance of special education, which included service on nonpublic education boards at the state, service on legislative committees for choice and voucher workgroups, involvement in research for nonpublic schools, and deciphering and communicating federal and state special education legal updates, especially choice and voucher details in each of the 16 states where member schools were located. ASE-B's role had recently been filtered to the work which required the level of education achieved. The organization tripled the number of member programs they were overseeing over the last six years. However, the number of directors had not grown. The work had to be divided more carefully, using the qualifications and titles of director versus coordinator with definitive purpose. When a principal called to ask about a specific concern or situation, ASE-B dropped

everything to provide onsite support for member partners. ASE-B described a time when they

had fewer member schools and it was easier to know what was going on in each program. Now

that they have tripled the number of programs and not increased the number of directors, it is

harder to know, since they are more disconnected. The most important goal, according to ASE-

B, must be quality control in meeting the needs of the students to close skill gaps rather than

simply providing homework help.

Case C

The participant from Case C was the associate superintendent for a regional group of 35

private schools serving early childhood through twelfth grade students within one state. This

position was a newly expanded assistant superintendent role that included the administration of

special education, federal programs, early childhood programs, teacher development, and

membership on several boards in support of these programs. ASE-C was also the executive

director of a consortium of private schools of all denominations, nonreligious, and independent

schools across the state. This case was unique in that the participant operated with national and

state level perspective as well as administrated special education for schools in the private school

system (See Figure 7).

Figure 7

Case C Administrative Structure that Includes Special Education
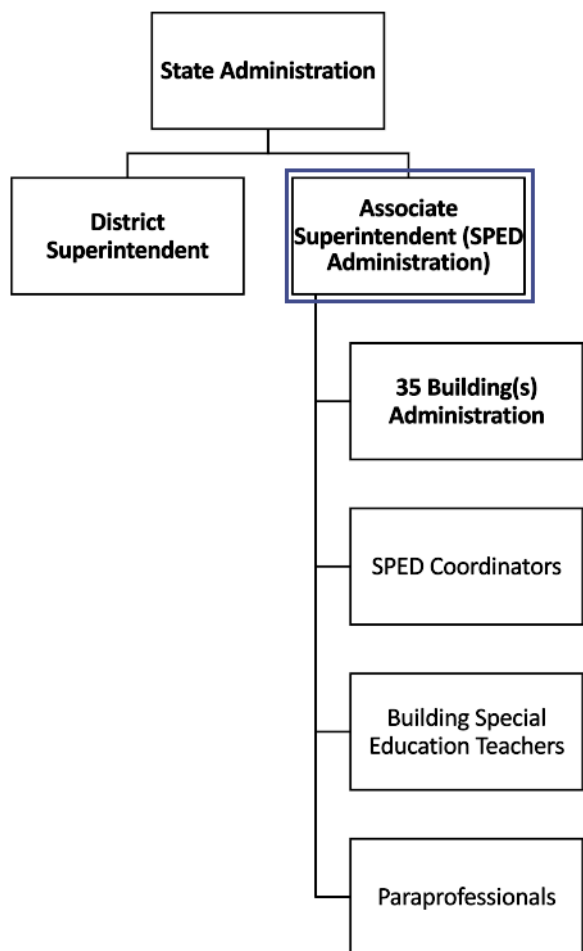
Note. The participants interviewed from each case have been double framed within the structure.

The organizational model within Case C was separated across the nation geographically. The state Case C was located within had four regional groups of schools with about 250 private schools statewide. Case C encompassed a wide variety of urban, suburban, and rural schools. A national association collected data for an annual report, but the accuracy of that report was unknown by Director C and ASE-C. The reported data on special education had not been made actionable at the time of the interviews, according to Director C and ASE-C. The role this

participant held was the top of the leadership model and included special education. Most of the 35 schools have identified a certified special education teacher who carried a caseload of 50-75 students in prereferral, with an accommodation plan, or who have met eligibility for special education services. Sometimes the role was full time, part time, or shared between schools.

Participant ASE-C had a Bachelor of Education in elementary and special education and a Master of Arts in educational leadership and administration. ASE-C has been a general and special education teacher at the high school level, a special education teacher at the elementary level, an inclusive education coordinator for the private school district, supervisor of student teachers in their field experiences, director of special education for the private school district, and is now an associate superintendent for the private school district. At the time of the interviews, ASE-C was the executive director of a state CAPE chapter and continued to provide inclusive educational environments to empower students with disabilities, their families, and teachers through a business ASE-C founded almost 10 years ago.

Special Education Administrators Have a Uniquely Trained and Focused Job Description

Next, each participant was asked to describe the special education leadership role as the directors see it across the private school system and as the special education administrators experience it within their roles connected to the first research question: What does the administrative structure of special education look like today within private school systems? The systemwide directors described the special education administrative role as they experienced it while supporting districts and schools on a larger scale. All three administrators of special education described their role and purposes for the role that included the administration of special education job description. Eight common areas of competency emerged within the job descriptions: 1) management and supervision of human resources, 2) community partner collaboration, 3) federal and state law navigation, 4) local policy navigation, 5) special education

practices, 6) curriculum and instruction supervision and evaluation, 7) professional development, and 8) coordination of services. Summaries of the participants' view of the special education administrative job description aligning with the themed competencies are shown in Figure 8 and described below.

Figure 8

Cross-Case Analysis Special Education Specific Job Description Per Participant

Management and Supervision of Human Resources

A noted commonality of all three cases as reported by the ASE participants included the management and supervision of human resources. All three administrators of special education referred to a flow chart of other special education positions supervised as part of their role, such as special education coordinators, lead special education teachers, and directors of programs such as Title services, healthcare, mental health, or related services. ASE-C added that some coordinators also taught part time but received additional pay for the coordination role. The administrators of special education were involved in hiring special education teachers and contracting related service specialists. By all three ASE participants and the systemwide directors, it was an expectation upon hiring that a special educator be qualified with a state license, certification, or endorsement in special education and a bachelor's degree, and alternatives to these qualifications could be considered by the ASE. ASE-A preferred the special education license and general education license together when hiring special educators.

All three ASEs described managing and supervising special educators. The basic job description of the special educator, according to the ASE of each case, was to provide individualized instruction for students and work in consultation in support of parents and classroom teachers. Also, part of the special educator job description, as overseen by the ASEs, was to guide families to community resources and through the LEA's child find process toward referral for comprehensive evaluation if needed. If the student qualified for special education, the special educator remained part of the IEP team to support the writing of the IEP and ISP by the public school special educator. The private special educator then wrote the student education plan (SEP) that described services provided at the private school. ASE-B included human resource services the organization provided to members. Some of the reasons listed for choosing

their services included quality assurance, flexibility of services, personnel solutions, and partner schools having access to a nationwide support system.

Community Partnership Collaboration

During data analysis, community partner collaboration was an unexpected theme that emerged across all cases within the job description. Private school systems partnered with community agencies to support the administration of special education and provide special education services. Throughout the interview process, both the private school system directors and all of the administrators of special education described how community partnerships made the scope of special education possible. This collaboration was a significant part of their administrative responsibilities. Altogether, and with minimal interview protocol prompting, all three cases described 57 community partners that came alongside the private school system to support the work of special education in many ways, such as: 1) strategic planning, 2) prereferral instruction, 3) funding, 4) collaboration to serve community children well, 5) evaluation for special education eligibility, 6) special education programming and service plan, 7) instructional coaching, 8) mental health counselor for students, families, and staff, 9) federal and state legal updates and legislative involvement from a private school special education perspective, 10) legal updates for collaboration with the LEA and SEA, 11) contracting related service professionals and specialists, 12) other private schools to transition special education students to the next level, 13) understanding how best to collaborate with the LEA or SEA, 14) professional development training, 15) special education hiring and staffing, and 16) administrative services and collaboration. Below is the description of how each case utilized community partners uniquely.

ASE-A is situated within a large urban location and mentioned 15 community partners during the interview process. This network of three schools utilized a community partner for

strategic planning to consider departments, staffing, and budget as they expanded, making the most recent expansion more effective and efficient than they experienced during the last one. According to ASE-A, they partnered with several community organizations for healthcare and mental health therapy. This administrator of special education drove a community partner initiative for students, families, and all school staff to have mental health screening and access to therapeutic resources. Staff were screened for the effects of workplace stress and access to support through this community partnership. Due to the multicultural makeup of this school community and its urban setting, one of the community partnerships assists faculty and staff through identifying, training, and supporting educators and leaders within urban schools. The state school choice advocacy organization assists this network of schools with awareness of state legislative updates and how to navigate collaborative prereferral child find and special education efforts with the SEA and LEA. Many students require related service professionals or specialists, and community partners provide these professionals through contract agreements. Partnerships with higher education institutions provide appropriately licensed and qualified administrators and educators specific to the needs and purposes of Case A's private school system. Over time and through effort, ASE-A built a strong relationship with the LEA within the large urban city in order to navigate the child find process and programming for students found eligible for special education. ASE-A described a process that works between the LEA and this network of schools. Systemwide Director A described many of the same community partners as ASE-A and added another six to the list, for a total of 21 community partners mentioned during the interviews.

The Case B directors and administrator of special education also described how 21 community partnerships support efforts to provide special education within their schools. The non-profit organization that employs ASE-B is a recognized service organization, which schools across the private school system and other private schools can join as a member to receive

administration of special education services. Another organization was a boys and girls club which provided residential treatment and education for children and their families. An urban group of schools provided alternative education for underserved populations with access to specialized educators for comprehensive program support. Mental health organizations brought social work, screening, and therapeutic support to students and families within many schools systemwide. There are organizations that offer special education support directly to schools within the private system. The support provided ranges from access to specialists with onsite instruction and consultation services for students with mild to moderate needs, to self-contained programs when students need more intensive care. When schools did not have the capacity, often due to size, within their own staff to support learners with disabilities, they relied on an organization that provided qualified special educators for hire and oversight of the work of these special educators due to their qualified administrative expertise in special education.

Case C was described as having its roots started through a group of parents with children with disabilities. These families developed an organization that advocates and funds inclusive education in private schools. In total during the interviews, Director and ASE-C mentioned collaborating with 15 community partners to support the work of special education within their 35 private schools. Six of them were in support of federal or state legislative efforts assuring a private school special education eye and voice was active within the writing of laws. Another community partner provided funding for paraprofessionals so that students with more severe needs could attend private schools. Funding, administrative collaboration, professional development, higher education of special educators, and collaboration for child find were reasons for collaboration with eight other community partners. These partnerships were established over time, according to ASE-C, to meet the needs of students with special needs within the private school system.

Federal and State Law Navigation

The common subtheme of federal and state legislative involvement and navigation emerged within the interview data for administrators of special education in private school systems. Participants from all three cases shared that the state level impacts what happens in schools with students; therefore, communication from a private school perspective is needed with the state education agency and legislators. ASE-C stated that laws change at the federal and state level, often requiring private school leaders who know special education to be involved at these levels to review and define guidance when the private system and politics are in conflict. All three ASE participants pay close attention to the federal legal updates from the United States Department of Education's Office of Nonpublic Education (ONSE). All interview participants reported that they keep a close watch on federal and state education legislation being discussed and moved forward where their schools are located through the SEA, state school choice advocacy organization, and cooperative educational service agency. As you can see from Table 6, the participants may work with as many as 46 states, or as few as a single state, which makes navigating state policy more complicated for some.

Table 6

State Education Agencies Per Case

	Total Schools	Number of States
Case A Director	422	33
Case A Administrator of Special Education	2	1
Case B Director	1855	46
Case B Administrator of Special Education	110	16
Case C Director	35	1
Case C Administrator of Special Education	35	1

Note. Information for this table was gathered through data collection from each director

interviewed, and online research at the websites for each private school system or organization.

According to all participants, involvement in state legislation is an important part of the

role for administrators of special education in private schools. This is no small feat since each

ASE described working to understand and be involved with legislative practices at the state level

where private schools are located. The ASE-A shared a problem of practice: their executive team

is considering legislative involvement to give voice to private schools for their students with

special needs. The state statutes provide funding for parentally-placed students with disabilities

in private schools through a voucher grant starting at preschool age four; however, there has been

a need for special education support for their students in preschool age three. The ASE-A also

reported that the CAO of the network of schools remains involved in legislative practices that are

relevant to their school organization. The ASE-B is on the Nonpublic School Association Board

of the state where the organization is located, which led to involvement in the state department of

education. The ability to create working professional relationships with state education agency policymakers has led to the voice of nonpublic school special education to be heard when legislation is being created and passed. The executive director of that board takes the discussions into the legislative session and then reports back to the board. Within Case B, this role is shared between the three FTE directors of special education across the 16 states. When concerning legislation is brought up in a state, each of the directors compares similar legislation packages to help make sense of them.

Participant ASE-C is active on a state special education advisory panel and co-leads the state nonpublic workgroup. ASE-C describes their state as one with a highly restrictive constitution. There are only two bypass states in the nation where not even Title I services can be directly provided to the private schools. LEAs have refused to provide any special education services onsite at private schools. Amendments in 2008 created statutes stating that special education services can be provided in a neutral space. The most recent updates included the expectation for services to be onsite at the school the student attends, unless there is a compelling reason. ASE-C compared the restrictive constitution of one state to the expansive constitution of a state consulted with a few years ago. There, all students received transportation to and from school, public or private. If the student had paraprofessional support in their service plan, then a paraprofessional would be provided, public or private. Other expansive states pay for safety renovations and book purchases for private schools. ASE-C described what was once a stagnant and uncooperative relationship between public and private schools, now becoming possible due to the knowledge, creativity, and focus of the administrator of special education role. More and more students were receiving services through the LEA, and those that did not receive all or some of what they need were "now getting those services due to our creative internal solutions," in private schools. ASE-A had a good relationship with the large urban city LEA where they are

located; however, sometimes they had students residing in other LEAs with less or no experience collaborating with private school special education programs, even though they are required to consult and provide equitable services due to the voucher program. In those instances, the SEA allows collaboration with the LEA where the school was in support of that student.

Each of the participants included in their role the communication of legal updates to administrators, educators, and families in the schools they oversee through emails, blogs, newsletters, and through virtual or in-person visits. ASE-C described the layers of filters for information. The special education administrator is the first filter, sharing necessary information with administrators and educators; the next filter is the educator who informs the parents and families with what they need to know. ASE-C attends principal meetings quarterly to give updates on local policy, state legislative, or federal updates. ASE-B stated, "If you are talking special education in nonpublic schools, you have got to call me." ASE-B worked to have relationships systemwide with district education executives in order to share what was working for providing services within special education programs. This reputation allowed for the opportunity to be involved in a statewide study on the collaboration between the local LEAs and the private schools. As a result of this study the state's department of education did a statewide training for principals on consultation. Outcomes from an open dialog at the special education administrative level allowed laws to be rewritten to include the voice of parentally-placed students with disabilities in nonpublic schools. Public school professionals operating within the consultation process will be trained as the next step by the state.

According to the ASE participants, working in collaboration with state education agencies is a vital part of their role. Recently, due to COVID, Emergency Assistance for Nonpublic Schools (EANS) funding was accessible to private schools. ASE-A oversaw $2.5 million in EANS funds for the network of three schools. ASE-B had avoided hiring and

providing paraprofessionals until 2021. Within Case B, the original thought process was for building principals to hire and provide daily supervision for the paraprofessional role. Principals were enlisted to hire paraprofessionals, but they were paid for through the EANS granted funds from ASE-B's community partner organization. Once the funding is used up, the organization will likely not continue to provide funding for paraprofessionals. The ASE participants for all three cases have tried to find a way to sustainably access funding for related services such as occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), vision and hearing services, school nursing, speech language pathology, reading specialists, and applied behavioral analysis (ABA) but have not found a way to provide all these services consistently when a student needs them. This is usually due to the small amount of need at any one location. Some of these services have been successfully contracted through community partners.

Another role described by all three ASE participants was oversight of funding directed by the SEA voucher and federal EANS funds due to COVID. Some states legislate voucher or Educational Savings Account (ESA) Scholarships for students with disabilities that are parentally-placed in private schools. ASE-C worked within the legislative teams to get a new ESA bill passed last year. During the legislative process, it helped for the director of special education to bring the perspective of a special education trained private school administrator to the development of language within the bill. The private schools used this money to pay for the special educator and services provided to the school for the qualifying students. Some private schools billed through Title 1 in their states. Some states required parents to fill out a form and submit the invoice for services in order to be paid. The administrator of special education supported the understanding of the funding model of the state. When EANS funds were available over the past few years, the administrator of special education assisted administrators to understand the use of those funds.

All three ASE participants agreed that the unique funding pathways require the support of someone who knows the ins and outs and legalese of special education. Locally there were some confusing school district policies for providing proportionate share for schools with parentally-placed students with disabilities in private schools. ASE-B supported the special educators in the 110 member schools to understand the uses of the funds and reimbursement process. Another area of funding oversight was to have special educators with access bring a supportive third party into the consultation meetings. Some schools preferred to charge different tuition amounts for specialized support for special education, which is an individual school board decision that has created some problems. Other schools charged the same price per student regardless of need.

Sustainable funding was reported to be unique per case systemwide, districtwide, and building location. ASE-B works through an organization in which schools can become membership partner schools through fees. These fees provide 66% of the organization's income. Grants, legacies, and donations provide 8%; beneficiaries provide 2%; the endowment fund interest provides 7%; and general operations provides 17%. Participant ASE-C described the funding of special education programs overseen to be part of each school's operating budget. Proportional share provides some services for students with special needs according to the service plan. Lastly, ASE-A reported parents, staff, and church members as tuition paying with discounts. Students who qualify for the voucher pay tuition through the state voucher funding.

Special Education Practices

The ASE participants reported the guidance of special education practices across their schools. One area of support was directly related to building administrators. All three ASE participants described accountability factors that allowed them to support building principals with no special education training or background. Quarterly, monthly, or weekly regularly scheduled visits to each building with a special education program were reported by all three

participants. They all encouraged special educators to work closely with the LEA through consultation and special education services or to collaborate with the building special education team. When a positive bridge was described to have been built with the LEA for the child find process, time was not wasted for the struggling student in the private school. Academic and behavioral screening procedures were reported to be overseen by the ASE participant for Case A and C. Case B left this practice to the building principal and special education teams but regularly fielded questions and gave guidance when asked about prereferral data, instructional and collaborative practices. The ASE-A led the student support meetings, title services, and—if progress was not made—the parents, title teacher, and the administrator of special education wrote the referral together.

Parents and the private school special education team worked together throughout the whole process. The ASE for Case A shared that parents often respond when facing their child's referral for special education by describing their own bad experience in special education as a child. ASE-A calmed their fears: "It is really about taking that journey with a parent. I am sorry you had that experience, but we are different here." The utility of listening, caring, and reassuring parents that special education intervention was different today than it was twenty years ago makes all the difference. ASE-A said that without parental support, you cannot help the student.

Navigating the educational evaluation for special education versus needing an outside neuropsychological evaluation for medical diagnosis was another management need for administrators of special education. Once they have access to medical evaluation documents for a diagnosis, other doors for support resources became available to the family and the private school for the student. Families often needed guidance when navigating interactions with the LEA in order to access resources for their child throughout the process. The ASE-A attended all

the prereferral, evaluation, and IEP team meetings, unlike the ASEs in Case B and C who left the

meeting attendance to the building principals.

The participants explained their role in the evaluation and programming process. Once a

student qualifies for special education, the individualized educational programming step begins.

Each ASE described the private school perspective of the IEP process. An equation shows the

programming documentation experience within collaboration of the private school and the LEA

as described by all three ASE participants: IEP = ISP + SEP. The IEP laid out the clearest picture

of services to meet the student needs if the student attends the public school. The ISP clarifies

what the public school will provide, "some or none" if the student attends the private school.

Both the IEP and ISP are written by the public school. All three cases provide their own SEP to

define what the private school special educators will provide in connection with the ISP to meet

all the educational needs of the student that together would be equal to the IEP. The SEP that is

provided by the private school is expected documentation by the special educators and is signed

by the family in case of legal challenge. The administrator of special education monitors these

documents regularly, especially in states where vouchers or state scholarships have money

exchange hands due to the legal requirements connected to the funding. Case C's director of

special education says their SEP form is up for review and will be addressed as a team with the

group of special educators. The directors of special education Case B and Case C monitor closely

the legislative practices of every state they have placed a special educator in to make certain their

practices match the legal requirements of the state. In some cases, they modify their service plan

document to meet the legal requirements of the state.

The ASE participants report private schools have more flexibility of their services than

public schools. Participant ASE-C described a philosophy that guides practices in their group of

schools "to meet the students where they are at, to support student success." Some students are

tested through the LEA and qualify under IDEA and may or may not receive services through the LEA. Another set of students with official or unofficial diagnoses receives consistent accommodation through inclusion in the general education classroom. Often the director of special education is called in in all three case situations when there is a difficulty with parents, educators, or the LEA. All three administrators of special education describe a more flexible continuum of services accessible to students in private schools due to the non-union environment and what can be provided with parent permission to close the skill gap most effectively. They have not experienced any legal challenges due to their transparency and strong communication with parents about the special education programming they provide.

Transition to high school for private school students with disabilities is an area of concern for ASE-A and ASE-C. The ASE-C described a transition policy for students going from middle school to high school within the private school system, developed to help parents understand that ninth graders require more support as they begin high school rather than the approach of letting them start fresh and waiting for them to fail. "Let's not wait until eight weeks and they're failing every class and that's their start to high school," said the ASE-C participant. The policy defines how the high school counselor is to meet with every grade school about every incoming student to circumvent parents' unwillingness to disclose student needs. The policy is designed to smooth out transitional points within the private school system. Participant ASE-A shared that the nearest high school within the private school system they are a part of does not have a special education program, so they transition students to a different private school system's high school.

ASE-B described a programs and services handbook that clarified many of their special education practices. First, it described the value of joining Case B's nonprofit organization as a partner. The handbook described services such as a resource room educator, consultation services, gifted and talented services, after school and summer programs, screening and

assessments, professional development, and services for secondary schools as valuable resources this service organization can provide for an annual partnership fee. Donor and funding options are defined in the handbook as well. Some of the reasons listed for choosing their services included quality assurance, flexibility of services, personnel solutions, and partner schools having access to a nationwide support system. ASE-A and ASE-C did not have a special education handbook at the time of this study.

Curriculum and Instruction Supervision and Evaluation

The supervision and evaluation of curriculum and instruction was a common part of the job description of all three participants; although ASE-B and ASE-A were more deeply involved, while ASE-C was more of a guide. Participant ASE-B was involved in instructional supervision of the special educators hired and provided by the non-profit organization. ASE-B used an evaluation tool with special educators regularly, but has not used it recently due to the pausing of in-person visits because of COVID. This director did not prefer to evaluate an educator based on a 30-minute virtual observation. When the tool was used regularly through multiple observations it had value and is expected to be back in use soon. ASE-B's organization also provided curriculum resources through a request process for providing specially designed instruction to meet the service plan goals in multiple areas of needs. This was one way that curriculum choices were overseen and guided by the administrator of special education on an evidence and research basis.

Specially designed instruction was guided by ASE-C. Special educators write goals for students with disabilities and then teach them one-on-one or placed them in small groups through data practices for reading and math interventions designed to close academic achievement gaps. They collaborate with general education teachers to modify instruction and assessment for students with disabilities. ASE-C supported curriculum and instruction decisions more as their

programs began to organize. At the time of the interview, ASE-C's role was more in support and training of the building principals and special educators to navigate the consultation process, which included the use of funds to purchase instructional and data resources. ASE-C often supported the differences in special education services at the various age levels and disability categories, such as early intervention in early childhood, reading and math interventions for elementary students, front end loading or pre-teaching content for middle and high school students, academic intervention for high school students with Down syndrome, and flexible instructional options to promote inclusion of students with disabilities.

Professional Development

ASE-B and ASE-C's roles included the creation of professional development for new and all special educators in the schools under their care. Layers of training were recorded and ready for use as needed by any of the special educators. The first layer, for initial trainees, is more generic and helps the new special educator to understand special education in private schools in collaboration with public schools. New teachers watch the videos and have planned access to the director and their area coordinator for questions. Ongoing trainings become more specific and are re-recorded for important updates. Both Case B and Case C had regional special educator meetings where the special education administrator or coordinator who had paid administrative time led group gatherings to encourage community building, giving new special educators an immediate connection to an entire network of special educators. Last year Case B hired and placed 48 new special education teachers. Usually, the directors of special education would get to each location to visit the new placements in person within the first three weeks, but during COVID they had to rely on virtual meetings and the coordinators to accomplish settling in new special educators. ASE-C did not have much turnover in special educators due to their pairing

with an experienced mentor, group chats, and regular meetings. They produced strong connections to the supportive community created within the system by their mission and vision.

ASE-B targeted supportive professional development for general educators to learn about special education and serving students with disabilities with inclusive practices through a virtual conference. Part of the role was keeping in tune with educators in the field to know what topics are critical at specific times over the years, then finding a person knowledgeable on the topic to provide the training—or study and learn the topic to provide the training for schools or districts.

New teacher training and mentoring was included in the job description by all three ASE participants. The ASE-A met with the new special education teacher weekly, matched the new special educator with a veteran special educator for mentoring, and connected them to the urban community partner for coaching. A recent hire was from the public school and was learning the differences between private and public school special education practices. ASE-C prepared teacher development workshops for each fall that included a robust special education track. Presenters were brought in and special educators were asked to present on various topics available to other special educators, administrators, and general educators. After new legislative information from the state or adjustments from the federal government were received, ASE-C provided training to the principals of the 35 schools in the private school system. One example of this was a recent training on new procedures for consultation with the goal of empowering and educating school leaders. As the executive director of a state consortium of private school leaders, ASE-C provided webinars on trending topics in special education. Principals were provided highlights of the actual guidance from the local, state, or federal agencies to bring to consultation along with an "if, then" chart for responding to barriers in consultation meetings.

Coordination of Services

The ASEs of all three cases guided private school special educators to work closely with the way each LEA defined their child find process. This included the coordination of prereferral practices through LEA consultation, through the child find process, and continued once a student became eligible for special education. All three ASEs provided documents and resource guides through the special education process, and reference materials for teacher documentation either through a handbook, website database, or upon request. At the time of the interview, ASE-A did not have a handbook for special education within the network of schools, but they had a brochure describing their special education program and staff. If they needed anything through the process, the director was there with further materials and support as they worked with the local school district. Often the LEA would change or adjust their policies for how they carried out consultation or provided equitable services with the private schools. ASE-B shared that the special educators did not have the administrative capacity to keep up with local policy changes and instead designated this role to the special education coordinators or building administrators. In all three cases the ASE assisted administrators to understand practical application and the jargon associated with local, state, and federal policy and law. At times, principals requested support in the consultation process when the public and private school relationship was strained. Some districts were community partners, and some did not work in such a collaborative way. All three ASEs described how the knowledge of and involvement in legislative details allowed them to best support consultation between the LEA and private schools in the system as a prevention of these stop points with the LEA. One ASE described the principals' access to guidance through the consultation and special education processes. Some principals chose not to follow the guidance and then returned for help. The struggle continued between the private school and LEA that could have been dealt with proactively by accepting the earlier guidance.

All three cases described the need for clearly defined practices for pre-enrolling students and accessing documentation prior to completing enrollment registration. Participant ASE-C described the importance of enrollment policies established and communicated up front to avoid confusion. Enrollment policies expecting documentation of the educational needs of students that includes data with actual numerical scores helped to clarify how to help new students to be successful. If a parent looked to enroll a student with documented needs, a release of information was signed for the school to access the documented information from former schools and psychological service providers for all diagnostic evaluation information and education programming the student had received. The special educator did an observation visit to the student's current placement to understand the current learning environment. Once the special educator understood the needs of the student, a team meeting was held to write an SEP to clarify the services provided by the private school special education program. Community partners were identified, private insurance was considered, and the private school special education program's resources were considered in the development of a comprehensive plan that was documented in the SEP. Parents then understood their options for enrolling their child prior to the finalization of enrollment. Participant ASE-A described the enrollment process as one of the most critical roles, where determining the most ethical way of entering students with school choice and special education voucher statutes is paramount. A priority was that student needs could be met through current staffing and resources. As part of the voucher scholarship process, the SEA required parents to sign three forms: 1) a rights comparison document, 2) the profile of the private school special education program, 3) and the agreement of services.

Historical Problems of Practice Met with Decisive Change

The second major theme to emerge from the data analysis was connected to my second research question: Why did private school systems choose to implement change within their

system to create special education administrative structure? The participants reflected on historical problems of practice met with decisive change, which led to the creation of administrative structure for special education according to the individual experiences of the participants. The participants either experienced the history of special education administration inception, took part in its beginnings, or were aware of the historical rendition of how the support of special education came to be in the private school systems. As I analyzed the interview data, problems of practice emerged that led to the development of an administrative structure for special education in each of the cases. I first summarize the history of inclusion for each case and then describe the problems of practice that led to administrative structure as nine emergent subthemes: 1) changes in federal and state law, 2) changes in local policy, 3) program funding, 4) administrators' and educators' need for special education support and professional development, 5) data trends, 6) fear of disability or inclusion, 7) need for special education administrators, 8) member needs, and 9) the state of public education. These problems of practice were each met with decisive change as described by the participants.

The History of Inclusion

Case A

Director A recalled how students with disabilities have been included in their private schools since the 1970s in his personal experience. Early in his career, educator training did not include coursework to understanding the exceptional child and this left behavior to be misunderstood. Director A stated that possibly half of the educator workforce today lacks education on including students with disabilities and may believe that it does not apply to them. Director A also described how many educators have seen student needs and have purposefully found ways to support them. The mid-1990s brought about more awareness of what could be done to educate students with educational needs. Title programs, choice programs, and vouchers

have allowed the funding for more purposeful inclusion to be done with specific focus. Director A recalled a principal who said they could not serve students with ADHD. This comment was met with support and encouragement that they certainly could educate students with ADHD, especially with knowledge about how to collaborate with the LEA. Many passionate educators, administrators, and organizational leaders have contributed to the intentionality and collaboration to take strides in how the private school system serves students with disabilities, according to Director A.

The participants from Case A shared their experiences with the history of inclusion and special education practices across their private school system and network of schools. "Students with disabilities have always been integrated, always, even when we didn't have special education," reported ASE-A, "I feel so passionate that they learn from other students, and that they have other students learn from them." Some parents have come to this network of schools looking for a self-contained classroom, but ASE-A told them the philosophy was that they will learn with their peers as much as possible through some push-in support and some replacement instruction when the student had an intellectual disability. ASE-A told parents, "Growth comes in the challenge." When expectations were held high and support was appropriate it was transformational for students. This quote by ASE-A shows the personal value of inclusion and its impact,

> I think there is this viewpoint that students are somehow negatively impacted by students that are different from them. No, you learn to become a better friend, and a more patient friend, and your gifts and talents are brought out by serving them.

ASE-A told about a predecessor and the current CAO actively taking part in the legislative testimony for the inception of school choice 25 years ago, and later the voucher movement in the state. The voucher movement was brought about by a suburban parent who did

not believe that their child's needs were being met in the public school and wanted the option of placing the child in a private school. The movement highlighted the fact that with parent choice, student need came first. ASE-A has been an educator in this network of schools for 16 years and observed as the special education program began. Classroom teachers like herself wondered how to help struggling students. They tried volunteers and teacher assistants, but, ASE-A said, "It wasn't a special education teacher." The next step was adding Title I instruction and it was used as special education, "because we knew that these students needed something different at a different level at a different pace." ASE-A became a Title I teacher at the private school for many years. The school continued to grow and so did the influx of students with more significant needs. Eventually, the administrative team realized Title I was not meant to serve as special education services. A retired special educator from area public schools took the leadership role in developing the special education program and remained in that role for 12 more years solidifying that program. This passionate visionary approached the administrators with careful planning and influenced them to act, creating a mindset shift about special education in the private school. It was challenging to influence the administrator due to an ethical tension of not wanting urban students to be qualified for special education when behavior was more so the cultural context of the community. However, ASE-A stated that students who originally qualified with emotional behavioral disorder (EBD) did not requalify due to the positive learning environment, structure, and high expectations this network of schools has set as school culture. Over time, this champion influenced the administrator that they had a population that needed to be served differently and the classrooms needed more Title I support that was being used as special education. The program was started by two public charter special educators willing to take on this new special education program one year before the state voucher program was passed through legislation in 2015. ASE-A shared that their program began for 50 students to receive special education

services, rather than for the funding of the voucher program. Each year they added staff and continued to grow. Next, they added a Speech-Language Pathologist. The private school system's worker training college began its special education licensure program in 2014 to assist the schools with qualified educators for this new role. ASE-A said it was important to have "people trained for special education to drive programming in schools." They also paid to have passionate educators go back to college to add the special education license.

Over the years, ASE-A had many private schools reach out for guidance on how to start a special education program. The answer ASE-A gave to those interested in starting a program was, "That is up to your leaders. It is up to your school's commitment. You need to have passionate people about special education to carry this forward. Who will oversee it?" Most schools that asked for guidance did not have an administrative structure like the network of schools and the level of commitment required financial and resources commitment not only for student support and instruction but also for the administration of the program. Once a program was established parent inquiries became abundant, but ASE-A guided new programs to keep program quality a priority over the quantity of students or funding.

Case B

Historically, this private school system operated with the mission statement to equip every child for a life of (Christian) citizenship as described by Director B and ASE-B. For close to 175 years, Case B has integrated all students into their schools. While students have been integrated for many years, full inclusion or belonging was described as something they are still working to accomplish. Administrators and educators have noticed there are students with educational needs they are not able to meet, and want to do something about it to make a difference. Some schools purposely have not integrated students with disabilities. Some want to serve the students they have without broadening their reach. Those who have decided to include

students with disabilities have had a history of not knowing what to do with them in their classrooms, so send them to the special education teacher and ultimately exclude them from their peers, according to ASE-B. ASE-B reflected, "I feel like schools still have a long way to go to move beyond that physical presence to the whole of belonging."

Director B2 stated that special education programs have come into existence within the private school system one school at a time through a principal, educator, or family who championed the cause. According to Director B2, once an administrator or educator had experienced a special education program, they moved to the next school with the mindset of,

> Why do you not have a program like this? It is amazing. I think it can benefit you greatly in terms of enrollments, exposure to the community, among other things. But obviously, the bottom line of it is, it can benefit all of your students whether they are participating in the program or not. It has that across-the-board impact.

According to ASE-B, the inclusion of students with disabilities has been happening mostly in urban or underserved areas. Rural areas have historically underreported student needs. ASE-B described the history of the nonprofit organization as having been around since 1873. It was started as an orphanage right after the Civil War, turning into a residential school for the deaf shortly thereafter, and operated that way for close to 100 years. In the 1970s, as federal laws were changing with the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) that eventually became what we know today as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the way they provided their services changed and they no longer operate as a private residential school. Federal law defining the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) stated that students with disabilities must be educated alongside their peers. They almost closed completely, until one of the board members asked what would become of the students that now had to be educated within the schools. What do they need to be successful? How can we help our schools?

Over time they reimagined their purpose to include sending special educators into private schools to meet those students' needs. In the 1980s the organization was renamed to expand past their work with the deaf student population to all special education, focusing on the schools those students attended. This became their model for partnering with schools in support of special education programming. The leader of the organization in the 1980s was highly connected to the mission, passionate about the work, and able to move his vision into action through his charismatic strengths. The next CEO was driven by the bottom line of the financial portfolio. Every time they added a program, they lost money. A letter was sent out to the 40 programs with special educators saying there were about two years of operations left before they would not have enough money to remain open. The current CEO engaged with the philosophy that whatever the question is, we say yes. The yes may have to take on a creative angle; or, it was simply about saying yes to having a conversation about the situation. This leadership vision pushed the team of directors to think beyond.

Case C

ASE-C described a history of over 25 years of inclusive education where all students learn side by side with their peers. However, 30 years ago a group of parents who had a commonality of children with disabilities formed a nonprofit organization to advocate and fund inclusion, first for their own children, and have continued the work in the state for more children with disabilities. Their goal was that all children could have access to private school education as part of the community. The first project they accomplished was to fund two paraprofessionals and a shared special educator for their children with various disabilities in the kindergarten classroom of one of the private schools. Over time, the children learned at the private school with these supports until getting closer to high school. Each year they built on the success of the teacher before them, and no one wanted to be the teacher that was the weak link.

Everyone wondered how they would be supported in high school. The private school community culture of inclusion had grown with their peers' and educators' acceptance of these children who were now adolescents. ASE-C was the first special needs coordinator hired at the high school in support of these students among others, establishing a baseline high school program in the private school system. The title of the role changed multiple times over the years. It was 15 years ago that this director created a peer mentor program where juniors and seniors in high schools can elect, as a practical art credit, to fill the role of paraprofessional for a student with significant needs like Down syndrome or a student with a learning disability needing additional support in the classroom. This has led to mentors pursuing education or special education as a profession. Peer mentors have also acted upon their own vision for their peers with disabilities to be even more included. One group of peer mentors noticed that students with more significant disabilities were not experiencing what it is like to learn to drive. They raised some money, purchased a golf cart, and petitioned for clearance to give driving lessons to students who would normally never get that experience in their high school years. The peer mentor program was wildly successful and solidified the culture of belonging for students with disabilities across the private school system as a whole.

When asked how long students with disabilities have been included, ASE-C said, "For some schools, 40 years, and for other schools, 17 days." Five or six of the 35 schools the director serves have a special educator that has been in the role for close to 40 years. ASE-C has a philosophy of inclusion that is focused on ownership. Students with disabilities are embraced as authentic members of the private school learning community while receiving their education in a way that is appropriate for them. "Students, regardless of their ability or diagnosis, belong to their classroom teacher." Sometimes that is through parallel or modified curriculum. A few of the types of disabilities students in their private school system have are mild to moderate to

significant learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, cognitive impairment, and hearing loss. The only concerns that might keep a student from enrolling are significant medical conditions (due to limited access to onsite school nursing services), or mental health needs that require a therapeutic environment. The one request for enrollment that always gets a yes answer is when a student has an educational need in the areas of reading, writing, math, or accommodations to access learning in the general education setting. No gap is too big, according to the director. Differentiating instruction at or below grade level is what private school educators do well. Students are not enrolled to fill desks or spaces or to make people feel good that they are here. They are in private schools to reach their full potential, according to ASE-C. ASE-C recalled the days of teaching fifth grade and having a nonverbal student with Down syndrome in the class. It was difficult to know how to prepare the student for middle school without being professionally equipped with a specialized set of educator skills. ASE-C wondered if there was a better way to meet student needs.

Participant ASE-C defined inclusion as a new spectrum of understanding. If your understanding of differentiation is between typical students and one with mild learning disabilities, then that student receiving accommodations such as having a test read to them, or extended time on a test, could seem an unfair or unequal advantage. If your understanding is broadened to reach students with cognitive and physical disabilities, then getting a test read or extended time seems so much more typical. ASE-C added,

> Until you see somebody that looks like you in an environment, how do you know you
>
> could be there? Once families started to see students that didn't fit the private school
>
> mold being successful, being included, being a part of a community, there really was no
>
> turning back.

Historical Problems of Practice Drive Change

As visible in Figure 9, many common problems of practice emerged during the analysis of each participant's description of the history of inclusion. A few uncommon problems of practice are also included to give a thorough picture of the data while allowing clarity on how similar the participants' experiences were during the historical portion of the Cycle 2 interview. Very few differences arose. Each of these problems of practice, when met with decisive change, led to the development of the current administrative structures supporting special education. These nine problems of practice were each met with decisive change as described by the participants.

Figure 9

Cross-Case Analysis of Historical & Current Problems of Practice Per Participant
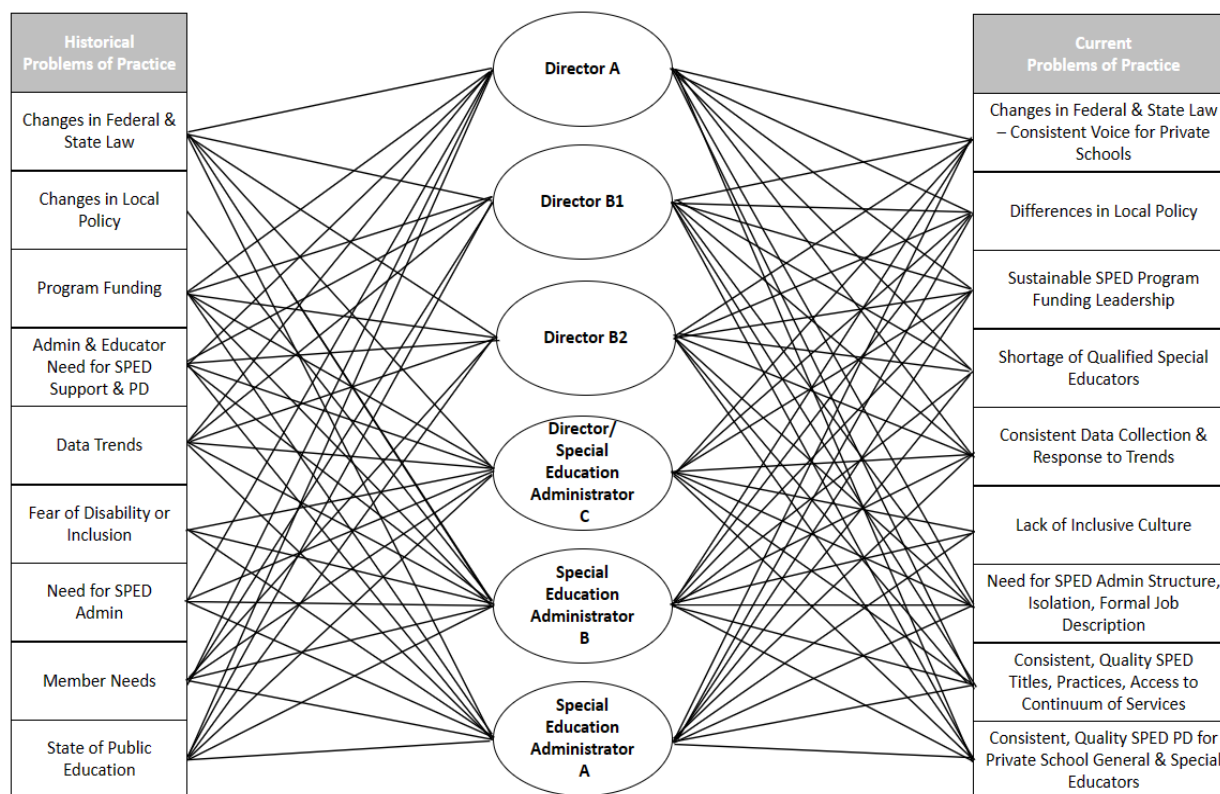
Director A and ASE-A highlighted passionate visionaries as those who met problems of practice with decisive change to bring special education practices into the private school system to meet the needs of member's children. Director A mentioned many passionate educators, administrators, and organizational leaders who collaborated to bring about change. Participant ASE-A described a passionate visionary who planned carefully and influenced administrators to impact change for students in the urban community. New special education teachers were brought on board and the program came into existence the year prior to the state voucher program inception. New funding avenues drove enrollment in private schools and the ability for private schools to fund a special education teacher.

Director B and ASE-B reported that change came due to several factors in response to the problems of practice. Director B stated, "It was the number of students that are in need. When it begins to tip the balance in the classroom, when it doesn't feel manageable to the teacher, then we must do something." Special education administrators began to provide professional development to equip general educators. Special education teachers in a building allowed them to meet and exceed state standards and became a much-needed commodity due to the growing complexity of the system's students over time. Changes in state and local policies improved collaboration for schools working together through community engagement. When the relationship between community schools became defined well in law and policy, students' needs were met. A group decided they needed to do something about this and began the process of developing a unique financial model to include tuition for services which allows them to hire special educators licensed to do that specific work.

ASE-C shared stories of administrators and educators moving from fear to a willingness to try inclusion. In one story, a group ASE-C was asked to consult almost failed when the school leaders were not open in any way to the idea of special education and would not agree to meet.

The parents pressured the principal to take a day trip to experience one of the special education

programs to see inclusion in action. After the visit there was no doubt in their minds that they

had to build a similar program at their location. Now these leaders are advocates for inclusion in

the private schools in their state. Another story shared in the interview was one of building

capacity for inclusive education with principals. When encouraging principals to start a special

education program, ASE-C tells them to go to the neighborhood playground and observe the

high emotional quotient of a child with Down syndrome. Their relational capacity is so valuable

in the private school community. Educators who begin their inclusive practices with students

with Down syndrome learn to slow the pacing of questioning, physically adapt the classroom,

accommodate working memory, and support speech or language impairment. The next student

with a disability that learns with that teacher will be supported due to the toolbox of strategies

the teacher has gained that not only support students with disabilities but also every learner in the

room. Students with autism might struggle socially but they bring different strengths to the

classroom. The most important change factor that has led to inclusive practices and successful

special education programs is the willingness of an administrator and teacher to try when they do

not want to try. Change does not happen when people are expected to make a 180-degree turn.

Participant ASE-C says the biggest catalyst for change is an educator's willingness to shift two

degrees, become inspired, and continue to shift over time. ASE-C also shared that the restrictive

state constitution where their system schools are located has led them to turn inward and

creatively build a system that supports their students with special needs.

    All three participants reported common responses to similar problems of practice. States

that moved legislation into action for School Choice and voucher funding, as well as federal

EANS funds during and post-COVID, have allowed for continued expansion and improvements

of their special education programs. Leaders across all three private school systems have met

problems of practice with creative solutions that include funding models, new or expanding special education administrative roles, furthering their education by adding special education degrees to their staff, sharing success stories, influencing other educators, putting research to practice, and being willing to try.

Special Education Administrators Have Vision to Meet Current and Future Problems of Practice

A third major theme emerged through data analysis in answer to my last research question: How might private school systems improve these structures next? Directors and administrators of special education of private school systems described their vision to meet current and future problems of practice. As shown in Figure 9, nine common problems of practice emerged during data analysis of the current practices portion of the Cycle 1 interviews and the vision portion of the Cycle 2 interviews: 1) changes in federal and state law drive a need for a consistent voice for private schools; 2) differences in local policy; 3) sustainable special education program funding leadership; 4) shortage of qualified special educators; 5) consistent data collection and response to trends; 6) lack of inclusive culture; 7) need for special education administrative structure, isolation, and formal job description; 8) consistent, quality special education titles, practices, and access to continuum of services; and 9) consistent, quality special education professional development for private school general and special educators. During Cycle 1, the participants often shared not only their focused and innovative decisive change for these current practices, but for anticipated future problems of practice as well.

The participants reported few differences in these current and anticipated future problems of practice connected to visions of decisive change. Director A, Director B1, and Director B2 did not speak to the lack of inclusive culture in current and future terms. ASE-C was not concerned with the educator shortage due to the longevity and purposefully cohesive group culture

described across the current educators the ASE role supports. All other problems of practices reported by participants were common.

Changes in Federal and State Law Drive a Need for a Consistent Voice for Private Schools

The first common problem of practice met with a vision of decisive change was the constant change in federal and state law regarding the special education of parentally-placed students with disabilities in private schools. Director A, Director B2, and Director and ASE-C participants planned to be aware of all legislation introduced per term, intended to communicate it with private school stakeholders, and had vision to respond to necessary legislation at the national or state level as a member of CAPE, state CAPE, and through interaction on policy with the U.S. Department of Education. The goal of these three directors was to ensure the voice of the private school system is heard at the national level. At the time of the interviews, ASE-C engaged regularly with the Office for Nonpublic Education (ONPE) to remain current at the federal level on how to meet future challenges.

Legislative involvement at the state level was also necessary for the administrator of special education. ASE-C stated that due to working with one of the most restrictive state constitutions in the nation, also known as a bypass state, an important vision of the role was to ensure a knowledgeable ear would continue listening to the wording of new legislation from the nonpublic school perspective. Continued creative planning within the restrictive state constitution to get students the support needed was a top priority. With the background of a nonpublic school administrator who knows special education and has read the constitution, ASE-C planned to interact on two advisory panels and co-lead the state's nonpublic workgroup actively participating in new legislation. ASE-C also intended to communicate to nonpublic school principals within the private school system through a regular federal programs newsletter and a monthly newsletter for the state CAPE. The principals of the 35 schools in this private

school system can access ASE-C for special education specific guidance, "if, then" charts that quote statutes for consultation support with the LEA, and ongoing one-to-one or small group coaching.

Another problem of practice participant ASE-A had the vision to impact was the unequal legislation impacting special education eligibility for students parentally-placed in private schools at the state level. Due to the heart-breaking struggle to get students qualified for special education with specific learning disabilities in the state, ASE-A envisions an evaluation team within the private school system that is recognized by the SEA and LEA. While the public school has the ability to use rate of improvement to find eligibility, parentally-placed students in private schools have no other option than to use the discrepancy model for eligibility according to state statutes. ASE-A frustratingly recalled from experience, "The discrepancy model kills support for so many students. At the surface level, it seems so discriminatory."

Participant ASE-B had vision to keep an eye on legislation that is changing landscape in states where member schools are located. ASE-B stated that most statutory items in the public sector will eventually be dealt with by our schools and that when those items are best practice, we really need to step up to include them in our practices. ASE-B was already acting on this vision through involvement at the state level on the board of nonpublic education and a workgroup involving research with the state secretary of education. It was a top goal to remain comparatively up to date on state to state legislation and communicate it to those who need to know across the 16 states where member schools are located. ASE-B has worked hard to create relationships at the state level so that when special education in nonpublic schools is mentioned ASE-B is invited to the meeting. One way ASE-B intended to keep administrators and special educators updated on relevant legislation was through webinars, newsletters, and article writing.

According to ASE-B, an effective use of a recent doctorate degree was paying attention to these legislative practices.

Differences in Local Policy

All participants encountered the problem of practice of varying policies from one LEA to another regarding prereferral consultation and special education equitable services. Participant ASE-C described this problem of practice across the landscape of the 35 schools. Collaborating with the LEA through consultation when students are undiagnosed was a challenge in a state with such a restrictive constitution. ASE-C envisions a change for students that meet eligibility criteria for special education but do not receive services due to the LEA choosing to not provide some or all the services the student needs. The 35 private schools were actively working to create programming to provide the services that are dropped by the LEA. Figuring out how to bridge the funding gap was an actionable vision of this director. ASE-C's philosophy was that education is a partnership of many people in support of a child. Where there were gaps, there was a specific partner to provide support. The more needs a student has, the more partners are required around the table. According to ASE-C, private schools can have access to every partner needed to support students with disabilities including the LEA. The challenges experienced in trying to get services for students in the private school buildings due to the restrictive state constitution have forced administrators to seek the consultation of those trained in special education to figure out how to instruct these children. This director has the vision to work tirelessly on the relationship between public and private school systems to educate the communities' children well.

ASE-C was even more specific about a vision for collaboration with the LEA. When LEA consultation was challenging, then ASE-C was brought in to clear up the situation. Another vision is to prevent challenging situations by offering initial guidance to administrators and special educators. Another proactive vision was to expect parents to return the prereferral packet

to their special education teams to review for accuracy and completion prior to submitting it to the LEA. That way the private school teams know as a checkpoint who is being referred by parents and can encourage them to include the private school special education team in the meeting. At the time of this interview there was not a federal mandate for the LEA to include the private school in any of those meetings.

According to ASE-A, consultation and equitable services proportionate share funding through the LEA does not cover what it takes to do the work to meet the students' educational needs. ASE-A envisioned a focus on the quality of service regardless of access to voucher funds. ASE-A intended to build strong and flexible tiered instructional services for those that do not qualify due to the discrepancy model being used in LEA and SEA eligibility practices.

Directors A and B2 envision meeting this problem of practice through training and relationships. Director A would like to train leaders to access consistent support throughout the child find process with the LEA. Director A said there are gaps in the understanding of LEA collaboration, and that with training leaders can be empowered to know what is available and what their options are. Director B2 defined this problem of practice connected to varying relationships per district and per state. Some were strong and beneficial for students. Some individual districts are not functioning well with any private schools. Some states set up districts to function with private schools better than others. His vision was to encourage and prepare leaders to reach out to build relationships with LEAs to connect face to face.

Sustainable Special Education Program Funding Leadership

Sustainable funding was the problem of practice reported as foundational by all participants. All three cases reported that rural schools and schools with enrollment under 100 have not found a fiscally sustainable way to consistently access a special educator for their students with disabilities. Participants listed avenues for funding: 1) state vouchers; 2) state

education savings accounts (ESA); 3) specified and limited federal funds; 4) endowments; 5) donors, legacy contributors, and beneficiaries; 6) tuition and special fees; and 7) scholarship granting organizations. All participants included vision for use of legislative funneling monies such as voucher and ESA for sustaining special education programs and specified or limited federal funds for beginning special education programs.

Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools (EANS) funding during COVID impacted the growth rate of special education programs in private schools by providing funding to develop new programs or improve existing programs, according to all participants. These new federal funds had administrators communicating on how to spend those funds well, according to student needs and current practice. Open communication about funding usage created more dialog about effective special education programming. ASE-A utilized the EANS funding as a supplement to voucher funding and clarified that the flat rate of voucher funding was not enough to cover the services required to meet student needs. Some students require more services, and some require less than the amount given by the state. Quality special education services and doing what is best for students was ASE-A's vision.

Voucher and education savings accounts (ESA) legislation, according to the vision of all participants, was a sustainable funding source that school administrators can be trained to utilize in states where they exist. The problem of practice was that they were location specific and dependent on legislative politics. The director participants were looking to drive awareness by school leaders for how they can improve their schools with these funds long term. ASE-C described the ESA legislation as new for schools in the state. ASE-C's vision was to create a plan of action for how to use these funds connected to meeting the needs of specific students across the 35 schools to impact the regular budget item for special education programs that already existed. ASE-C intended to stay involved and supportive of administrators in the

collaborative practice of accessing proportionate shares and ensuring accurate distribution of those funds.

The participants from Case B reported funding challenges and staffing shortages as reasons for necessary change at this time in their private school system. ASE-B noted a problem of practice connected with funding in that the special education teachers they hired and located at their partner schools became part of the fabric of the school community as hoped. While they were happy to see their special educators so well received, the challenge lay in the need to remind the school that the special educator was part of a separate organization serving these students. There were negative implications when it came to development and fundraising within the organization that provided the special educators.

Shortage of Qualified Special Educators

Another problem of practice was accessing qualified special educators, according to all participants except ASE-C. Director D2 envisioned driving qualified special educators through the accreditation process. Director A intended to grow trained special educators through higher education partnerships.

Participant ASE-B's vision was to expect fully qualified educators with a special education degree but still be willing to listen to the deeper stories of applicants to determine those who may be partially qualified, teachable, and willing to seek qualification. The first and most critical part of the vision, according to ASE-B, was to get a special education teacher in the building. ASE-B stated that when we work at the state for new legislation, government officials want to know that if they hand over money it will go to qualified educators providing quality services. ASE-B reported there are a few educators they hire that are not certified or licensed as special educators. The program directors were careful about hiring alternatives. ASE-B stated, "If I see someone is a BCBA, let's talk to them. It is worth a conversation. Maybe it does not

work out, but let's talk and see. Resumes and certifications on paper don't always tell the full story." ASE-B had also hired an educator with a reading specialist degree due to further training in an area seen as a big need. More importantly, they look for someone with a state license in special education for hire.

Participant ASE-A expected attaining educators with special education expertise to be a challenge. ASE-A held high expectations as a vision for special educators to carry expertise in primary versus middle school levels. ASE-A expects special educators to also hold a general education license and understand the urban student. ASE-A's vision included caring for staff to support life changes within the network of schools.

Consistent Data Collection and Response to Trends

All participants had targeted vision towards consistent data collection and special education specific response to trends. Participant ASE-A was working to keep up with the growth their network of schools was experiencing. One vision was to be strategic with quality and qualified staff while managing the balance between enrollment growth and hiring. Participant ASE-A reported that continued enrollment and inquiry into their special education programs added to the length of the waitlist. Another vision was to grow the special education team and resources to meet the student needs, keeping up with inquiry and enrollment growth. ASE-A stated, "It is my vision for [the network of schools] to continue serving scholars with needs and disabilities at a greater quantity, and greater level." ASE-A described the funding challenge of justifying the enrollment of one student over enrolling several other students into the program based on the resources it will take to meet one student's needs.

The questioning within this interview encouraged participant ASE-C to get more specific with systemwide data collection to drive continuous improvement across the private school system. Within the new position which combined administrator of special education and assistant

director of the 35 schools, ASE-C envisioned analyzing what needs exist and then getting

districts and schools access to the resources they need to do the work, addressing these needs

through a professional adult, pushing resources to the districts to push it to schools. As a high-

level administrator, one vision was to push special education out to the districts through training

in collaboration, knowledge of funding, and involvement in legislation without disrupting who

we are. The vision included plans to increase our audience through communication points and to

train our general and special educators to meet the learning differences within our student

enrollment. According to ASE-C, their school system was seeing consistent data showing 8-12%

of their student body had a diagnosed disability. If this data is higher or lower than the 10%

number, the director encourages self-study of practices to find the root causes such as over-

identifying or understaffing. ASE-C intended to guide administrators to consider classroom

caseload maximums due to a high need in certain grade levels, building capacity issues, or the

consideration of part-time special educators having too large a caseload driving the needs to

expand the FTE or hold enrollment.

The Director A, B2, and ASE-C participants have the vision to gather data more precisely

in order to respond to the needs across the private school systems. Examples include revising

national and district private school system data surveys to get more granular with special

education data collection, collecting the number of students in each disability category per school

and district, the number of students served in prereferral and special education programming

separately, and data that gets to the needs of schools and their students from the national level to

drive access to supports.

Participant ASE-B shared vision to respond to special education data collected from the

schools within the membership of the service organization. ASE-B stated that many schools

increased enrollment and now have funding to expand into special education programming.

Analyzing this data allowed them to recognize that some administrators were adding and adding to special educator caseloads, and now needed to consider adding FTE instead. At the time of the interviews, there was no data to show how many schools had special education programs or remedial programs, how many special educators were in the private school system, or how many schools had special education programs without support of the service organization.

Participant ASE-B also has a visionary eye on the growth of schools within membership compared to how many special education administrators the organization has for oversight of the special education programs. At the time of the interviews, they had the same number of administrators for 110 schools as when they supported 39 schools. The growth of additional special education administrators did not keep up with the growth in the number of programs supported. ASE-B envisions advocacy about administrative needs within the organization to continue quality services or get more specific about what tasks require the expertise of the individuals on the administrative team.

The systemwide directors all envisioned more concise data collection and analysis from a special education administrative perspective which can drive the development of all educators within the private school system. Director B2 summed up the need for more concise data collection as a need for:

> Understanding students that were in our classrooms before, we just simply thought they were not academically capable, or they were students who just could not focus, or whatever label we put on our lack of understanding; to now be aware of what really is going on and how to best educate students. As we start to encounter more theory, more understanding from psychologists, more knowledge of the education process and the learner process, all that impacted us and still does, we learn. Thankfully, we are able to better educate students. We have come light years in understanding some of these factors,

even societal matters, culture, home life, all of these impact students differently today
than what they did 30 years ago and will continue to do so. I don't think this is just
special education. This is teaching. What makes a special educator able to help a student
that has those identified learning differences and needs helps us all, and should be taught
across the board.

Lack of Inclusive Culture

With a mission statement geared toward serving private schools to advance the success of
children with learning needs, participant ASE-B's organization has a leadership vision for
educators and schools to understand inclusion and adjust their mindsets to what is possible for
every student. Now that a school has a special education program and a special educator, how
can practices be improved? ASE-B stated that research tells us that students need to be fully
included. ASE-B stated that research tells us that students need to be fully included. Part of this
vision includes professional development to help administrators and educators understand what
special educators can do to improve schools. ASE-B's vision is for everyone in the building to
understand inclusion and to overcome fear of students with special needs by learning to believe
that all students have potential and by looking at the person rather than the label. The intention is
to first bring the understanding of full special education inclusion to the private school system's
national office and then train our special educators along with the partnership schools. The next
step for continuous improvement for the 110 schools ASE-B serves is to align what they do to
the mission.

Participant ASE-B recalled, "Nowhere on here does it say memorize multiplication facts
or read at 90 words per minute." Sometimes the most important purpose for a student being in
our schools is missed, according to ASE-B. "My vision is really about inclusion, and how do we
open the door wider and better and more effectively?" Special education is not one size fits all.

Private schools have the guidance of the law and the flexibility to do more for students regardless of eligibility for special education services. ASE-B would like to drive professional development about what special education is and how understanding special education can uplift every educator's practices.

Participants ASE-B and ASE-C stated that the need for continued growth of the inclusion mindset remained an issue on their minds throughout the interview process. General educators are learning to use accommodations in the classroom; however, there is still discussion of the concern that enrolling special education students means we must water down the curriculum. Some administrators and board members want to meet the needs of who is in the school now, but do not want to expand or become the "special school." Many schools, especially high schools, still believe students with disabilities do not belong in their schools and are better served in public schools. Participant ASE-C expressed the same concern as Case B participants in this interview question. Administrators do not want to water down curriculum or lower expectations, telling ASE-C, "Graduating from this school means something." This mindset holds true within the college prep mission since it is believed that students with disabilities will not be attending college. The mindset still needs to be improved to serve all students. Innovative ideas came from teenagers in the peer mentoring program, but COVID became a barrier for the more recent ideas to be acted upon. Now it is time to innovate with these peer ideas.

According to ASE-C, it requires leadership skills to navigate barriers across private school systems. The leadership skill of relationship building was key to a mindset shift across the private school system. ASE-C told a story in the interview describing a principal that did not want to take on a certain student. The director asked the principal to do this as a favor. ASE-C knew the principal did not agree with the decision and was skeptical that it would work, but asked for trust that they would get through the situation together; or, if it did not seem to be

working, the decision could be made to put an end to it. The director has started several special

education programs on a personal favor and has been quite successful. To date, no principal has

returned to saying they regret the decision to begin a special education program. ASE-C

described how once successful inclusion is experienced, stakeholders see the richness it brings to

the educational environment,

> Once families started to see students who did not fit that private school mold being
>
> successful, being included, being a part of a community, there really was no turning back.
>
> If tomorrow, I came out and said, "I am so sorry, but we are not going to have inclusion
>
> anymore. All the special education kids are going to have to go to public school." I would
>
> face an outcry and it would not be from special needs families. It would be from the
>
> community, because people seek our schools out because they want their kids in a diverse
>
> community. They want them to be learning the very real-life lessons that are taught when
>
> you are a part of something different than yourself.

Need for Special Education Administrative Structure, Isolation, Formal Job Description

The Director B1 participant provided a mission statement which included seven mission

priorities. The priorities that directly correlated with the inclusion of students with disabilities

were: 1) perform human care; 2) enhance mission effectiveness; 3) promote and nurture spiritual,

emotional, and physical well-being of the system's workers; 4) enhance early childhood,

elementary, and secondary education programs; 5) strengthen and support families; and 6) equip

and uplift school educators, district staff, education executives, and leaders so that through them

children may be equipped. The director's vision was to be very accessible to leaders and

educators so that they can find support when they face challenges and that the mission and

philosophy of the private school system is woven through every person connected with the

schools. The director's vision was that every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Next steps for Director B1 include expanding their accreditation process protocols to more specifically address serving students with specialized learning plans. While we spoke, the director considered adding a new section to their protocols specifically for schools that have a special education program to address their strengths and weaknesses in an improvement plan. The director was committed to sharing educator resources on their school website, where their special education partner organizations can continue in their whole-system, broad approach to serving their schools. This was an opportunity to expand relationships with community partnerships to find out exactly what schools are doing as they serve students with disabilities and to serve them better. Maybe there was a way to create a coalition of these organizations to see how their unique strengths can work together to serve schools in support of one another.

Director B2 reported that there was no national structure supporting special education at the time of the interviews. Director B2 has the vision to collect more national and district level data on special education, to connect special education programs so they can support one another to operate more effectively and efficiently. Director B2 believed that it is valuable to share these best kept secrets and success stories of special education programs through professional development. Director B2 stated that we need to get the idea into principals' minds so they can bring it back and champion a special education program in their school too. Director B2 reflected, "It is good and bad that our schools are autonomous. Whatever the challenge, we will resource it at the national and district levels."

Participant ASE-B stated that while they have no immediate plans to add more directors to help serve the 110 schools in membership, they do plan to restructure the coordinator role. A goal they had was to change from being reactionary to being more proactive through the writing

of journal articles, participation in group studies, continuing dialog with professionals at the state level, and communicating this vision of inclusion of students with special needs in private schools. The director's personal mission was that private school education is accessible to anyone who wants it for their children and that when students are adults, they have the skills to live successful lives in the community. ASE-B's vision included special education administrative development, connection, and collaboration. At the time of the interview, the formal job description was out of date and needed to be updated. ASE-B saw this as an opportunity to advocate vision. As a special education director for the region of schools, special educators do not have the administrative capacity to keep track of policy and practices. ASE-B advised them to keep track of their consultation challenges and bring them to their regular meetings or immediately as needed. ASE-B envisioned working to stay ten steps ahead of the next legislation or educational swing as part of the job as an administrator of special education for the 110 membership schools, giving the ability to lead proactively rather than reactively. Another important part of the vision is to be flexible with the special education administrative model within the organization to meet the needs of their special education programs nationwide. The intention was to expend effort to organize those in the coordinator role for more effective and efficient support to the special educators and administrators in the partnership schools regionally. ASE-B reflected when asked about vision, "Special education training creates a different vision."

Participant ASE-C has provided special education consultation services to administrators. Through this work ASE-C recognized the need to identify other administrators of special education at the highest level of private school systems for the opportunity to develop community for collaboration and support one another from varying perspectives. In ASE-C's view, there are a very limited number of high-level administrators in private schools with specific training and background in special education that are in a leadership role in support of

systemwide special education. ASE-C is the only one who has ever had this role in the district. ASE-C shared a vision of the role as a leader to first be a learner and be ready to be wrong. ASE-C's vision is to educate and empower other school leaders, principals, and teacher leaders to help our diverse communities come up with a plan for inclusion that fits their community. When school leaders are on information overload, the ASE position created the structure dispersing the most important information for educating students with special needs. When school leaders get into trouble, ASE-C is a life preserver sharing the amount of information they need at any given time. The vision is to assist school leaders to get through the difficulties of including students with special needs so they can tell the next principal that they can do it too.

ASE-A has the vision of a plan already set into motion for increasing special education administration supporting the special education programs across the three-school network. The plan is to meet the needs of a special education program that services 200 students. The network administration values the program and the special education leadership of the program enough to pay for a lead special educator to earn a special education administrator's license. The vision also includes special education administrators across the private school system coming together to collaborate on projects such as the allocation of $2.5 million in EANS funding through wise action. ASE-A described how many school leaders come for advice on beginning a special education program. ASE-A's guidance is that joining the state voucher grant opens the floodgates of enrollment inquiry and leaders need to be prepared for it. The vision ASE-A communicates to those looking to begin a special education program is that you must have a licensed special educator for services, meetings, paperwork, and to administrate the program. Leaders need to ensure adequate and purposeful FTE.

The last actionable vision mentioned by Director A, Director B1, Director B2, ASE-C was that more varying models of successful and strong special education programs need to be

shared so that leaders that are fearful of the unknown can have someone who has done it come alongside them and help them begin a program. Systemwide data needs to be collected with more specific attention to special education programming and staffing in mind. Director B1 intended to create a safe space to encourage and empower educators to ask for help as they serve every student. The creation of a coalition of special education specific recognized service organizations within the private school system could also create stronger structures. Director A described known problems of practice, from Figure 9, in serving students and their families in the private school system as being the catalyst for change and focus of his vision. Director A planned to build capacity across the private school system for special education programming by broadly sharing success stories to demonstrate what can be accomplished in similar settings for building special education programs. Director A envisioned sharing and replicating a broad-based concentrated federation or district model surrounding area high schools that can be sustainable together. Linking ministries, demonstrating success, and building capacity to do special education well was the vision. Director A stated,

> It is more of what organically formed somewhere else that we can now replicate here, because if this group did, probably it can be done again. That will go over better than a philosophical structure. If we can point to something that already has legs and is effective, that would be the best direction.

Consistent and Quality Special Education Practices

ASE-B noted that partner schools give special educators varying titles that can be confusing from school to school and in collaboration with the local education agency. This was a challenge reported by all participants. Some of the titles used in private schools for special educators were teacher consultants, resource room teacher, director of student support services, student support coordinator, enrich teacher, excel teacher, learning coordinator, and special

education teacher. Director A aimed to be more consistent with titles to portray with more clarity the scope of special education. ASE-B envisions continued use of varying titles by partnership schools; however, the role of the special educator under the organization's oversight will not change. ASE-B clarified that the title of director of student services within our private school structure is not equal to the special educator or building level role.

Director A intended to ensure special education is done well rather than grow too quickly. Problems of practice need to be addressed in realistic terms. Participant ASE-B was ready to engage private school special education to further program quality through research to practice initiatives. Now that access to funding is allowing private schools to bring special educators into the building to meet the needs of parentally-placed students with disabilities, what exactly are those special educators to be doing? How can they have the greatest impact? The vision was to supervise with an evaluation tool in person now that COVID restrictions have been lowered. Quality control of special education practices are a high priority into the future, making sure programs are meeting the needs of students rather than just homework help. Participant ASE-A intended to create a sensory room for calming, movement, and regulation for the many students coming in amped by their environments needing time and deep pressure for settling. ASE-B intended to monitor and guide the special educators in their practices more closely in voucher states where money exchanges hands through checks and balances. The dyslexia and reading legislation are beneficial for private school students so administrators can take on the changes and bring needed growth to private school prereferral practices, according to ASE-B. ASE-C identified this area also in a vision of change in further defining the special educator's role in prereferral or tiered assessment and instruction, with a focus on dyslexia and reading.

ASE-A envisioned dedicated support for parents who fear special education due to their experience with it during their own education. ASE-A stated that parents needed guidance to

understand the rights their children have and know how to access resources. Participants ASE-B and ASE-C stated problems of practice with enrollment practices. Parents often do not disclose a disability, which makes it difficult to serve their child well. The vision of these leaders for enrollment practices and policies included establishing clear practices that expect release of information signed by the parent during inquiry, observation in the current educational environment, and meeting as a team to write a student education plan that describes what services the private school can provide prior to enrollment. ASE-A described a challenge regarding enrollment practices within a state with specific Choice entrance requirements and voucher special education service needs within state statutes. Ethical enrollment practices were difficult in private schools where sustainable funds and access to a full continuum of services were not always possible. ASE-A envisioned a time when the lack of staffing or resources is not a hurdle to enrolling students with special needs. ASE-A planned to improve the school network to serve more students at a greater level of need.

ASE-C's experience as a high school special educator developed a specific vision at the secondary education level. ASE-C envisions the middle school to high school transition as critical to proactively set students up for success rather than wait until they fail. ASE-C also wants to bring new research on certain disability areas to high school programs. Recently, ASE-C learned that students with Down syndrome do not hit their academic stride until adolescence, which is when most supports move to modifying within the general education classroom or they are separated into functional skills classrooms. These students can benefit from academic intervention to gain skills at this critical time in their unique phase of development. The high school peer mentoring program often ignites innovative and creative ideas to improve the transition of students with disabilities into the workforce by accessing partnerships within the community for on-the-job training. ASE-C has the vision to continue acting on the peer mentor's

ideas to improve the lives of their peers with disabilities in the inclusive private school environment.

Director B1, ASE-A, ASE-B and ASE-C participants envisioned access to a full continuum of services to meet the needs of students within their private school systems. One challenge for participant ASE-A has been trying to contract in an Occupational Therapist (OT). Participant ASE-A's next steps for continuous improvement were to create a more well-rounded intervention and Title program, especially in the area of behavior intervention. At the time of the interviews, ASE-A described a problem of practice prioritized for solution. When special education students graduate from eighth grade, they must enroll in a public school or another private school system's nearby high school, due to the number of schools in the area not providing special education programs. ASE-A envisioned supporting the private school system's area high school nearest the network of schools to start a special education program allowing the students to access continued enrollment through to high school graduation. ASE-B and ASE-C described a continuum of services that flexibly supported students that qualified for special education and also provided Tier 2 and 3 intervention services for students that do not qualify for special education through the comprehensive evaluation process through the LEA. Director B1 intended to guide district and building leaders to be aware of and to collaborate with varying recognized service organizations for deliberate access to a full continuum of special education services within the private school system. Schools need to be aware of these resources. At the time of the interviews, Director B1 reported that there was no direction provided at the national or district level toward the full continuum of services available to schools.

Consistent and Quality Special Education Professional Development for Private School

General and Special Educators

ASE-A and ASE-B described a vision for consistent and quality special education professional development. ASE-A and ASE-B both envisioned requiring professional development on the differences between public and private school special education for special educators new to private school practices. ASE-B instructed new special educators to understand how their support will go beyond the offered FAPE. New special educator professional development is envisioned to target how public and private schools work together. ASE-B described how collaboration with the LEA worked well when the public school representative was knowledgeable on the process; however, some LEAs tell you what you will do rather than meet as educators of the community's shared students. ASE-B intended to oversee the professional development of special education through a regular systemwide special education conference. If ASE-B does not create and deliver the content, then the content is filtered to ensure quality and appropriateness. ASE-B intended to survey schools for professional development needs and meet those needs within the conference or through webinars. ASE-B envisioned professional development specifically designed for general educators to fully understand inclusion. ASE-B wanted to engage educators to consider, "What is one thing you could do to impact a student for the rest of their life?"

Conclusion

Three major themes and six subthemes emerged from the data analysis of the interviews, documentation gathering, and metamemos. The first major theme aligned with the first research question: Special education administrators have a uniquely trained and focused job description. All three administrators of special education described their role and purposes for the role that included the administration of special education job description. Eight common areas of

competency emerged within the job descriptions: 1) management and supervision of human resources, 2) community partner collaboration, 3) federal and state law navigation, 4) local policy navigation, 5) special education practices, 6) curriculum and instruction supervision and evaluation, 7) professional development, and 8) coordination of services. The second major theme aligned with the second research question: Historical problems of practice have been met with decisive change. The history of inclusion according to each participant was summarized. Nine subthemes emerged in which problems of practice met with decisive change that led to administrative structure: 1) changes in federal and state law, 2) changes in local policy, 3) program funding, 4) administrators' and educators' need for special education support and professional development, 5) data trends, 6) fear of disability or inclusion, 7) need for special education administrators, 8) member needs, and 9) the state of public education. The third major theme aligned with the last research question: Current problems of practice have been and will be met with a special education administrator's vision. Nine common problems of practice emerged during data analysis of the Cycle 1 interview and the vision portion of the Cycle 2 interviews: 1) changes in federal and state law drive a need for a consistent voice for private schools; 2) differences in local policy; 3) sustainable special education program funding leadership; 4) shortage of qualified special educators; 5) consistent data collection and response to trends; 6) lack of inclusive culture; 7) need for special education administrative structure, isolation, and formal job description; 8) consistent and quality special education practices; and 9) consistent and quality special education professional development for private school general and special educators. The participants shared their vision connected with these problems of practice. I will analyze these findings in the next chapter using the theoretical frameworks of organizational theory and change theory.

CHAPTER FIVE: THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

The purpose of this multiple case study was to examine the administrative structures private school systems have built to support special education, consider how those structure came about, and how they will continue to improve into the future. The findings of this study have shed light on what special education administrative structures look like today in private school systems, historical contributions that led to these structures, and administrative visions for the future next steps for their improvement. A lengthy analysis of the data brought about three major themes with twenty-six subthemes. Three major themes emerged from data analysis. The first major theme was that special education administrators have a uniquely trained and focused job description within private school systems. The second major theme was that historical problems of practice have been met with decisive change. The third major theme was that current problems of practice have been and will be met with a special education administrator's vision. This chapter analyzes and interprets the findings using organizational theory (Blackwell & Lilly, 2022; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Hatch, 2006; Senge, 1994, 2012) and change theory (Blase et al., 2015; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Moen & Norman, 2006; Morris and Katon, 2006; Serrat, 2018).

The Role of an Administrator of Special Education and Organizational Theory

Administrator of special education participants described the current administrative structure for special education and six common competencies in their job description. All participants spoke about how their roles fit into the administrative structure of the private school system. Participants have specific qualifications to prepare them for the administration of special education. They have expertise in order to supervise human resource management, special education practices, curriculum and instruction, professional development, and the coordination of services for students with disabilities. Participants have the expertise and broad view to

interact within and help others navigate federal and state special education law and local education agency policy. The same broad view connected with special education expertise allows for the collaboration of various community partnerships, ultimately to improve outcomes of students with special needs within private schools.

Organizational theory (Blackwell & Lilly, 2022; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Hatch, 2006; Senge, 1994, 2012) was utilized in this study to evaluate current administration of special education practices. Organizational theory provides a helpful lens for the examination of special education practices within schools and whether structures are improving or impeding practices (Blackwell & Lilly, 2022). Bolman and Deal (2008) defined the major tenets of organizational theory to include: 1) structural frame (Blackwell & Lilly, 2022), 2) political frame, 3) human resources frame, and 4) symbolic frame. Below, I discuss these tenets as an evaluation of the current administration of special education within private school systems.

Structural Frame

Participants described how their roles fit into the administrative structure of the private school system. These structures varied according to the experience of the special education administrator. ASE-A was the administrator of special education across a network of three schools in a large urban location with a well-defined administrative school structure to provide administrative collaboration. ASE-B was one of three administrators of special education who oversaw coordinators and special educators within member special education programs in 110 schools nationally. They have a structure of governance above them to run the recognized service non-profit organization as they provide oversight to programs across 16 states and internationally. ASE-C was the administrator of special education in a newly expanded role providing oversight to 35 special education programs within a regional state district.

Findings connected with the special education administrative structure of all three cases showed that problems of practice met with structural vision led to solutions. Organizational theory studies have found that,

> Without a workable structure, people become unsure about what they are supposed to be doing. The result is confusion, frustration, and conflict. In an effective organization, individuals understand their responsibilities and their contribution. Policies, linkages, and lines of authority are straightforward and accepted. With the right structure, the organization can achieve its goals, and individuals can see their role in the big picture. (Bolman & Deal, 2008)

Participants who had developed structure did not report certain problems of practice and had vision to respond to problems of practice with structural action.

Human Resources Frame

Participants describe supporting special education teachers across multiple school buildings. New and experienced special educators were reported to have carefully planned and connected support with longevity in mind across all cases. All administrators of special education reported having specific qualifications to prepare them for the administration of special education. They have expertise in order to supervise human resource management, special education practices, curriculum and instruction, professional development, and the coordination of services for students with disabilities.

Human resources are the center of the school as an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Senge, 2012). When staff feel seen, heard, connected, and their needs are responded to, the organization can count on their loyalty and commitment to the mission (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The administrator of special education is qualified to understand special education practices in

order to work on behalf of the educators' needs within the work as well as the organization's needs for student outcomes (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Senge, 2012).

Political Frame

Participants have specific qualifications to prepare them for the administration of special education. Participants have the expertise and broad view to interact within and help others navigate federal and state special education law and local education agency policy. The same broad view connected with special education expertise allows for the collaboration of various community partnerships, ultimately to improve outcomes of students with special needs within private schools.

The political frame is one of seeing broadly and bringing parts together to empower the whole (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Senge, 2012). The political school leader has experience with conflict and expects to manage across constituents and stakeholders applying the use of power carefully and productively (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Senge, 2012). With the ability to see the broad picture of a group of schools or school system, the political leader will look to collaborate with a variety of specialty interest groups in an effort to support the organization as a whole (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Senge, 2012).

Symbolic Frame

Participants all described the rich history of their private school system organizations around the inception of inclusive practices and special education programming for students with disabilities. They each described passionate school leaders who influenced big steps toward change in how students with disabilities were educated within private school systems. Each of the participants described their own visions for meeting problems of practice currently and proactively toward those they foresee in the future.

The symbolic frame is about painting a vivid and inspiring picture of the future for stakeholders to move forward with clear purpose (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Senge, 2012). It is a sense of direction that leads to comfortable alignment and cohesiveness of mission (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Senge, 2012). Symbolic leaders consider the history of stakeholders and the place at which each member currently stands in order to lead toward a valuable vision together (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Senge, 2012).

Historical and Future Change and Improvement Science

Participants in the roles of director of the private school system and administrator of special education shared their perceived understanding of problems of practice that created the administrative structure of special education they experience right now for special education practices. They also shared their vision for the next steps of change for special education practices in response to current problems of practice. For the purpose of this portion of the study, I analyzed the cycle of change multiple times through the participants' perceived and envisioned change through the lens of change theory, more specifically, through the framework of improvement science (Blase et al., 2015; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Moen & Norman, 2006; Morris and Katon, 2006; Serrat, 2018).

Evaluate Practices

In the first cycle of interviews with the participants, I asked them each to define their current administration of special education practices. Each of them gave a clear picture of these practices. The administrative structure was clarified. Qualifications and job descriptions of the administrators of special education were detailed through the interview process. Taking the time to evaluate current practices and experiences of stakeholders is an important part of a leader developing vision that is appropriate for the organization (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020).

Connections between this study's evaluation of current practices and organizational theory can be found in Figure 10.

Figure 10

Evaluation of Current Practices Connected with Organizational Theory

Structural	**Human Resources**
• role structures & definitions • ASE job descriptions • community partnerships • special education practices • curriculum and instruction • supervision and evaluation • coordination of services	• management and supervision of human resources • curriculum and instruction • supervision and evaluation • professional development
Political	**Symbolic**
• role structures • federal and state law navigation • local policy navigation • program inception influence	• special education program reputations • history of inclusion • mission & vision

Problems of Practice

During Cycle 1 and the second half of Cycle 2 of the interviews, problems of practice were shared organically or requested purposefully. Problems of practice are the most pervasive theme of this survey, especially when connected with each participants' leadership vision. When coding the data, 84 problems of practice were mentioned during Cycle 1 and sorted into the nine categories. Eighty problems of practice were mentioned when requested purposefully during the second half of Cycle 2 and then sorted into the nine categories of current problems of practice.

Kegan and Lahey (2009) began to define the problem of practice through understanding optimal conflict. Stakeholders will feel the limits of a current way of knowing in an arena they care deeply about. In order to persist through the challenge of change to improve practice they must be sufficiently supported and held in the moments of felt conflict as they take on new practices (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). It is important to define the problem in detail to know what needs to be accomplished (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). Kegan and Lahey (2009) reminded leaders, "all improvement requires change, but all change is not an improvement." Change must be chosen with knowledge of what needs to be improved and how best to make that improvement (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020).

Decisive Change

Participants shared the need to be careful and particular about change. All the administrators of special education were passionate about the importance of changing mindsets within the schools they support toward the inclusive education of students with disabilities. The act of developing improvement initiatives must come after very careful definition of current practices and the problems of practice within an organization (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). Improvement science describes carefully prescribed and applied change to make meaningful change for students as a value (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). What we used to call "best practice" is now "evidence-based practice" due to the level of research and evidence of positive outcome for students (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). The gap between research and practice is the reason improvements in education lag to this day (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). It is important to choose change that will lead to improve a large range of factors rather than a single initiative, transcending the limitations of current practices (Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

Change is difficult and creates anxiety and fear for stakeholders, therefore change leaders must target mindsets and behaviors of stakeholders for transformative improvement of the

system with constant reminders that fear of change can be overcome with positive outcomes for educators and the students they serve (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). It is important to know that all humans have the capacity to grow intellectually as they age, which also includes the leader's capacity to learn how to lead through cycles of change in solution of problems of practice (Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

Repeat the Cycle

The participants shared two full cycles of change within the cycles of interviews. They shared their experience and knowledge of the history of inclusion within their private school systems and the problems of practice that led to the current practices of the administration of special education. The participants also described their current practices, problems of practice they face today, and their vision of change in response to those challenges.

The efficacy of change should be tested along the way through another cycle of change. Evaluate current practices. Define new problems of practice. Choose the change that will best rectify the problems (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). Testing and learning the cycles of research to practice lead to improvement for an organization (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020).

Discussion

Participants shared the current administration of special education practices within private school systems in an evaluation of current practices. Participants reported problems of practice they knew led to the current administration of special education practices. They also reported, both organically and when asked purposefully, the problems of practice they are facing right now in their current leadership role. Participants shared their vision for the improvement of special education practices.

Prior research supported the conclusion of this study about the importance of putting to practice the theory of change to meet the values educators have for positive student outcomes.

My study confirmed that special education trained administrators develop a focused vision (Blackwell & Lilly, 2022; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Hatch, 2006; Senge, 1994, 2012). My study confirmed that successful inclusion requires special education trained and focused administrators to guide the progress of prereferral and cycles of change in special education practices within private school systems (Blase et al., 2015; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Moen & Norman, 2006). My study confirms that special education trained and focused administrators lead proactively for the success of students with special needs through being actively involved in legislative activity nationally and at the state level. They can assist private schools in the navigation of those laws. They can support special education practices widely across consultation prereferral practices through collaborative child find processes. They can guide the quality of special education practices within cycles of change (Blase et al., 2015; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Moen & Norman, 2006). My study confirms that due to problems of practice, successes of programs, and resilience of those who can hold the tension from problem to solution, administrators of special education are making evidence-based practices the inclusive initiative to educate all students within private school systems (Blackwell & Lilly, 2022; Blase et al., 2015; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Hatch, 2006; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Moen & Norman, 2006; Senge, 1994, 2012).

Conclusion

Participants' descriptions of how private school systems have built administrative structures supporting the special education of students with disabilities and their evaluation of what the administrative structure of special education looks like today within private school systems match the first part of the cycle of change within the tenets of change theory (Blase et al., 2015; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Moen & Norman, 2006) and the structural frame, political frame, and human resources frame of organizational theory (Blackwell

& Lilly, 2022; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Hatch, 2006; Senge, 1994, 2012). All participants

described the historical problems of practice and decisive change leaders implemented to create

the administrative structure supporting special education they experience today, consisting of a

historical cycle of change (Blase et al., 2015; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Kegan & Lahey, 2009;

Moen & Norman, 2006). All participants shared current problems of practice connected with

change theory (Blase et al., 2015; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Moen &

Norman, 2006) and their vision for the future structuring of special education connected with

organizational theory (Blackwell & Lilly, 2022; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Hatch, 2006; Senge,

1994, 2012) to meet those problems with decisive change in the future, which will be the next

cycle of change theory (Blase et al., 2015; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Kegan & Lahey, 2009;

Moen & Norman, 2006). Relationships between findings and theories are found in Figure 11.

Figure 11

Relationships Between Findings and Theories
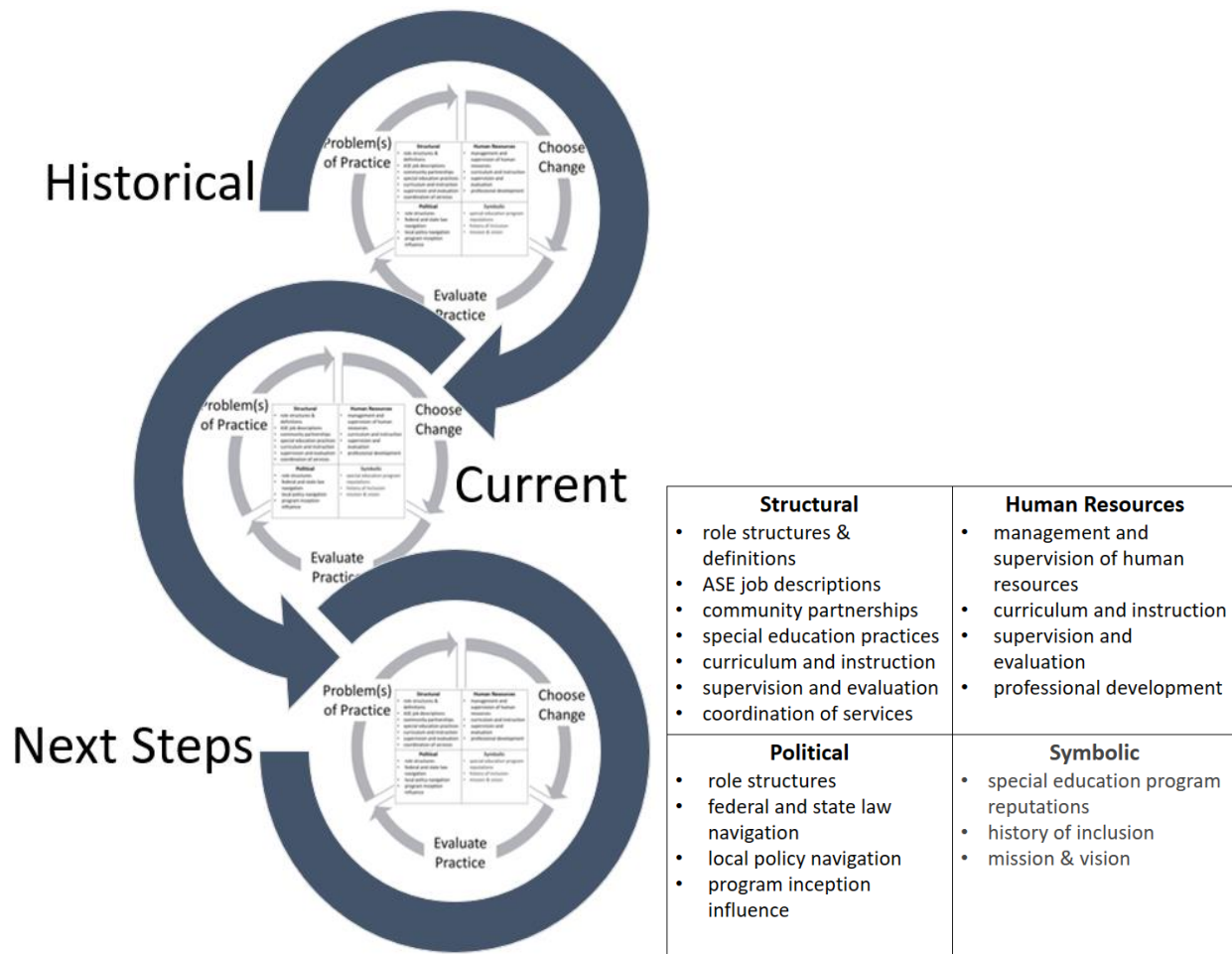
Note: The first research question allows for an organizational evaluation of practices. The second research questions look back to the historical change process. The third research question looks forward to future change process.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

My study was designed to examine how administrative structure supports special education practices in private school systems today. I used epistemology to conduct a qualitative multiple case study through semi-structured interviews, the gathering of supportive documents, and my research metamemos. The directors of private school systems and administrators of special education shared their current administrative structures that include special education, the historical beginnings of those structural supports, and next steps to improve those structures. This chapter provides a summary, discussion of implications, recommendations, and conclusion of this study.

Study Summary

A particular concern is the lack of administration of special education in private schools, which can have a significantly negative impact on administrators, educators, families, and students with disabilities trying to navigate cross-sector collaboration of special education, which varies from state to state and district to district across the nation (Lane, 2017; McKittrick et al., 2019). Although there is an increasing desire to include students with disabilities and increase the enrollment of students with disabilities in private schools, at this time there are no studies describing in detail what it takes at the organizational and leadership levels to coordinate special education services in private schools (Lane, 2017). Not much progress has been made within private schools since early special education laws were put in place for public schools (Enser, 2012). This multiple case study research was completed in hopes to significantly impact the field and influence how private school leadership organizes to support students with disabilities as well as their families and teachers. As a professor of special education preparing pre-service special educators for a role in private schools, research describing how these educators will be supported in the field is an ethical concern of mine as the primary researcher.

Due to this need, I designed this qualitative study to take a closer look at how private school systems are supporting special education through administrative structure. I used an epistemological approach to evaluate the current practices of administrators of special education within private school systems (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). I used a pilot study to ensure ahead of time that the interview protocol would elicit data that would speak to my research questions (Bazeley, 2013) and began collecting interview, supportive documentation, and metamemo data after receiving the appropriate approval from the University of St. Thomas' Institutional Review Board (IRB). I used purposeful, convenience sampling to recruit the participants able to best answer the research questions according to their viewpoint and the scope of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The participants were two men (n=2) and four women (n=4), systemwide directors or administrators of special education within private school systems in the United States of America between 2022 and 2023. The six participants completed two cycles of audio-recorded interviews and provided supportive documentation. I collected data from interviews, documentation provided, websites, handbooks, spreadsheets, job descriptions, prepared presentations of systemwide data, and newsletters. I transcribed the audio-recordings of the interviews and verified the accuracy of the transcriptions by listening to the audio-recording as I read them. I triangulated the data using multiple sources of data (documentation provided, commonly accessed information, and researcher metamemos).

I used metamemos within printed copies of the interview transcriptions and NVivo to code the data. I narrowed the codes multiple times which led to the emergent themes. The themes were analyzed through theoretical frameworks into findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used my personal metamemos to connect my professional expertise to make sense of the data as it emerged into themes and eventually findings (Saldaña, 2021; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). I took a close look at the organizational or administrative structure of special education leadership in

private schools from multiple perspectives in a natural context (Stake, 2006; Creswell, 2018).

Finally, I have presented the findings through separate, single case presentations and then

through a cross-case analysis (Yin, 2009). Member checking was used to ensure themes

accurately reflected the participants' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Three major themes with six subthemes were supported within the data analysis. Theme

number one was the current administrative structure of special education described through role

structure, definition, and job description. The second theme was the historical change factors that

led to administrative structure for special education. The final theme was the administrators'

vision for special education and change factors that will impact next steps.

Within the first theme, participants described administrative structure supporting special

education practices within the private school systems, with subthemes of the current role

structure for each case and nine common competencies found in the administrator of special

education job descriptions. Within the second theme, participants described the historical

problems of practice that led to current administrative structure, with subthemes of historical

inclusion stories from each case and historical problems of practice met with decisive change.

Within the third theme, participants described their visions of change to meet current and future

problems of practice, with subthemes of current problems of practice and vision for next steps to

improve administrative structure supporting special education practices within their private

school systems.

I used organizational theory and change theory as theoretical frameworks to analyze the

findings. Organizational theory consolidates differing organizational schools of thought into four

frames: 1) structural, 2) human resources, 3) political, and 4) symbolic (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

The participants described their job descriptions in ways that can be understood within each of

these frames. The findings connected to change theory as presented within improvement science

has three tenets: 1) define the problem of practice, 2) decide what change to introduce and why, and 3) how to know if the change was an improvement (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). I was able to study the cycles of change through the tenets of change theory found in the specifics of improvement science. The findings connected to organizational theory include: 1) administrators of special education provide a structural frame for the private school system through special education-specific role structures, job description, the additional structure of community partner collaboration, the definition of special education practices, curriculum and instruction supervision and evaluation, and coordination of services; 2) administrators of special education provide a human resources frame for the private school system through management and supervision of human resources, curriculum and instruction supervision and evaluation, and professional development; and 3) administrators of special education provide a focused symbolic frame for the private school system through special education program reputation, history of inclusion, and mission and vision. The findings connected to change theory include: 1) administrators of special education look back upon the historical inception of their current special education practices and pinpoint the problems of practice met with decisive change, and 2) administrators of special education are leaders who recognize the current problems of practice as opportunities to act upon their vision for the future with specific focus that improves general and special education practices in private school systems. Prior research supported the conclusion of this study about the importance of putting to practice the theory of change to meet the values educators have for positive student outcomes. My study confirmed that administrators that are trained in special education develop a focused vision (Blackwell & Lilly, 2022; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Hatch, 2006; Senge, 1994, 2012). My study confirmed that successful inclusion requires special education trained and focused administrators to guide the progress of prereferral and cycles of change in special education practices within private school systems (Blase et al.,

2015; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Moen & Norman, 2006). My study confirms that special education trained and focused administrators lead proactively for the success of students with special needs through being actively involved in legislative activity nationally and at the state level. They can assist private school in the navigation of those laws. They can support special education practices widely across consultation prereferral practices through collaborative child find processes so students with disabilities are identified as soon as possible and their needs are met. They can guide the quality of special education practices in cycles of change (Blase et al., 2015; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Moen & Norman, 2006). My study confirms that due to problems of practice, successes of programs, and resilience of those who can hold the tension from problem to solution, administrators of special education are making evidence-based practices the inclusive initiative to educate all students within private school systems (Blackwell & Lilly, 2022; Blase et al., 2015; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Hatch, 2006; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Moen & Norman, 2006; Senge, 1994, 2012).

Limitations

The small number of study participants and private school systems is a limitation. I worried that there might not be enough data to contribute to the field. Another comparative limitation is that all three cases were very different in data, structure, and scope of role. While I was concerned about this being a limitation since I had hoped to compare more equalized systems, I believe what was found in the data is even more helpful to the field of private school special education. The data showed that despite different demographics in size or location, administrative structures exist and are successful. Maybe researchers will find that one of these cases is similar to their experiences and can improve their structures from this study.

In November 2022, Director B retired and was willing to complete the member checking portion of the research study but did not have access to the documentation records required to triangulate the data. I was able to connect with the new director and accomplish both cycles of interviews, collect common documents, and finalize themes through member checking. Both the former and new directors' data have been included for Case B. Another limitation was that the director for Case C was found to have special education training and was in the administrator of special education role during the interview. I was assured that this leader had both the systemwide view as assistant superintendent and the administrator of special education scope of role. This leader served to provide data in both roles for the purpose of this research study. Lastly, each of the private school systems were quite different one from another as reported in the demographics and other findings. It was difficult to generalize findings due to the wide system differences.

<div align="center">**Implications**</div>

Several implications of this study rise to the surface. First, private schools that are considering the addition of a special education program need to consider how that program will be designed to impact positive outcome across the whole school or group of schools. Special education administrative structure is essential to a strong program, as is a special education trained administrator guiding through the process of change theory, according to the findings of this study (Barton, 2000; Blackwell & Lilly, 2022; Blase et al., 2015; Bolman & Deal, 2008; Hatch, 2006; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Moen & Norman, 2006; Senge, 1994, 2012). This study supports and adds to the findings from other studies that special education administrative structure is a needed positive influence on the private school system when it comes to serving students with special needs (Lane, 2017; McKittrick et al., 2019). This study found that change can be unsettling for administrators, educators, students, and their

families. Special education administrators with focus on the nine areas of competency in support of all stakeholders can ease and empower a system to make it through change to a new version of existence, one that is fully inclusive of students with special needs within their private school communities and according to their specific mission (Blase et al., 2015; Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Moen & Norman, 2006).

Recommendations

The outcomes of this study offer an opportunity for more learning about the topic of special education in private school systems and schools. This study can serve as the first step in the next change cycle that leads to the continuous improvement of private schools in America. My recommendations are as follows.

Recommendations for Directors of Private School Systems, District Executives, and Building Administrators

Due to the outcomes of this study, I recommend for directors of private school systems to collect special education specific data such as: 1) number of schools providing special education programs, 2) number of students served within those programs through prereferral versus special education services, 3) number of students per disability eligible designation, 4) staffing details per special education program, 5) how schools or groups of schools are working to provide special education services, and 6) how specific community partners or resources are used to support special education programs. This will allow for a thorough evaluation of current practices in order to accurately define problems of practice for a careful application of change (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

Each of the cases had a different version of organizational structure for special education. Case A was structured as a small network of three schools within one city. Case C was structured within a small geographical area of 35 schools with a strong structural support. Case B was

structured across the nation and internationally to support special education in 110 schools. One of the problems of practice noted by all participants was that of special education collaboration at the leadership level. I recommend for private school leaders to consider standing these structures upon each other to allow for connection and support at every level across a greater expanse. This kind of structure could allow for more systemwide inception of special education practices without the isolation of random practice and with increasing sustainability, even for the smaller rural school through a cascading effect (Blase et al., 2015).

Recommendations for Administrators of Special Education

This study learned from participants in the role of administrator of special education. It is my recommendation for leaders doing similar work to be connected, know of each other, have an opportunity to meet regularly, and collaborate at the administrative level. This level of collaboration across a system and across multiple private school systems could allow for more effective and efficient special education program inception and improvement (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020; Senge, 2012).

Recommendations for Private School Administrators and Educators

When improvement science through the cycle of change is applied to the educational setting and the "complex problems of practice, particularly those that address the needs of traditionally marginalized students" (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020, p. 2), strong outcomes for the entire system can occur toward proactive empowerment of students rather than constantly reacting to negative situations. It is my recommendation for private school leaders to step forward with commitment to high-quality inclusive practices as visionaries, create collaborative faculty and staff cultures to rise with the emerging research within a proactive tiered data and instructional system of support for all learners. Rather than reactively trying to support struggling learners, provide high-quality instruction and intervention for all learners (Smith et al., 2020, p.

69). Move these practices into handbook policy with the intention of continuous evaluation and improvement.

Recommendations for Future Research

During the study, the participants recommended other private school systems, individual schools, and leaders as possible participants for this study. The time constraints of this study completion did not allow for the addition of more participants. It is my recommendation that future researchers study more private school systems, groups of private schools, individual schools, and leaders who are working to create special education programs and improve the special education programs that exist.

This study involved participants from private school systems of various sizes, locations, and administrative organization. I recommend future studies examine private school special education programs across a smaller subsection or district of several private school systems. Given a year or two, directors of private schools could possibly have more special education specific data to decipher. A mixed-methods study would give a more detailed understanding of similar programming and administrative efforts to serve students with disabilities in private schools.

<div align="center">Closing Thoughts</div>

With this study, I closely examined three private school systems that chose to actively support students with special needs within sectors of their system, rather than exclude them. I wanted to know what data and beliefs influenced their decision to implement change, what administrative structures specifically looked like at this time in history, and how they intend to meet current problems of practice with the careful application of change to influence the next steps for continuous improvement. Directors of private school systems and administrators of special education participants describe how private school systems have built administrative

structures supporting the special education of students with disabilities. They also describe what the administrative structure of special education looks like today within private school systems. These descriptions match the first part of the cycle of change within the tenets of change theory, and describe the structural frame, political frame, and human resources frame of organizational theory. All participants described a historical cycle of change, including the historical problems of practice and the decisive change leaders implemented to create the administrative structure supporting special education they experience today. All participants shared current problems of practice within the change theory improvement cycle and their vision for the future of their organizations met and will meet those problems with decisive change to begin the next cycle of improvement.

The data and theoretical analysis led to the following conclusions: Special education trained administrators develop a focused vision. Successful inclusion requires special education trained and focused administrators to guide the progress of prereferral and cycles of change in special education practices within private school systems. Special education trained and focused administrators lead proactively for the success of students with special needs through being actively involved in legislative activity nationally and at the state level. They can assist private schools in the navigation of those laws. They can support special education practices widely across consultation prereferral practices through collaborative child find processes. They can guide the quality of special education practices in cycles of change. Due to problems of practice, successes of programs, and resilience of those who can hold the tension from problem to solution, administrators of special education are making evidence-based practices the inclusive initiative to educate all students within private school systems.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the relatively small amount of research in the field of special education in private schools, especially in the area of the administration of special

education in private school systems. The number of students with disabilities in the United States of America continues to increase while more and more families are choosing private school systems for the education of their children. This study sheds light on the certainty that private school systems are in fact organizing to better serve parentally-place students with disabilities in their schools. My hope is to contribute to the field of research for private schools to learn best practices from each other for continuous improvement in how they serve students with disabilities.

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APPENDIX A: CITI PROGRAM TRAINING CERTIFICATE

CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 06-Mar-2021
Expiration Date 05-Mar-2025
Record ID 40802960

This is to certify that:

Kelli Green

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Human Subjects Research (HSR)
(Curriculum Group)
Human Subjects Research Training: Social-Behavioral-Educational Researchers
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

University of St. Thomas - Minnesota

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w38ca9025-ab4a-4309-bc96-4c18d0f99e0d-40802960

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Dear [Name of Director or Special Education Director] (Potential Participant, Director of Private School Special Education):

Private schools across the nation are working to improve their services to students with disabilities and you are leading the way. My name is Kelli L. Green. I am inviting you to participate in a research study to gather and analyze information about how private school systems are organizing to serve students with disabilities. The title of this study is ***Governance Coordinating Special Education Services in Private School Systems: A Multiple Case Study***. If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

- **Interview Cycle 1:** Participate in the Cycle 1 (1 hour & 30 minutes) audio-recorded individual interview between Mid-Summer 2022.
- **Interview Cycle 2:** Participate in the Cycle 2 (1 hour & 30 minutes) audio-recorded individual interview between Mid-Summer 2022.
- **Reserved Cycle 3:** A third interview will be reserved in case follow up is required in Late Summer 2022.
- **Documentation Request:** of various kinds will be requested as supportive evidence. Please be as thorough as you are able to benefit the field. Remember all documents will be neutralized and made anonymous to your CASE. Please email or share these documents within 7 days of the request.
- **Member checking:** verification of emerging themes prior to the finalization of data summary.

I would be happy to answer any questions you have now and at any time during or after the research procedures. Please RSVP upon receipt, no later than seven days from now, with your interest in taking part in this very timely research on special education in private schools. I look forward to hearing from you. I will follow up your positive response with the Informed Consent document and to schedule our interviews.

Sincerely,
Kelli Green
Doctoral Student | University of St. Thomas - St. Paul, MN
(612)454-9158 | kelli.lea@icloud.com

Dr. Shelley Neilsen-Gatti
Research Advisor | Department of Special Education, School of Education
(651)962-4396 | slneilsengat@stthomas.edu

APPENDIX C: GENERAL CONSENT FORM FOR ADULTS

Research Participation Key Information

[1878387-1] Governance Coordinating Special Education Services in Private School Systems: A Multiple Case Study

What you will be asked to do? We ask participants to:

- **Interview Cycles 1 & 2:** Participate in two 1.5-hour audio-recorded individual interviews between Late Summer & Early Fall 2022.

  Referral: Refer & Connect the interviewer with a director of student services/special education that serves your school system to participate in the Interview Cycles also.

- **Reserved Cycle 3:** A third interview will be reserved in case follow up is required in Late Summer 2022.

- **Documentation Request:** of various kinds will be requested as supportive evidence.

- **Member Checking:** You will be welcome to provide corrections or additions prior to data finalization.

Participating in this study has risks:

Loss of Confidentiality: A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality or privacy. The study team plans to make every effort to keep your information private.

Time: You can expect each interview to last no longer than an hour and a half, at a date and time convenient to you. You can discontinue participation in the study at any point.

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

You are invited to participate in a research study about how private school systems have organized to serve students with disabilities. The title of this study is [1878387-1] Governance Coordinating Special Education Services in Private School Systems: A Multiple Case Study.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are the director of a private school system in the United States at the time of this study. The following information is provided to help you make an informed decision whether you would like to participate or not.

What will you be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

- **Interview Cycles 1 & 2:** participate in two 1.5-hour audio-recorded individual interviews between late summer 2022.
- **Referral:** refer & connect the interviewer with a director of student services/special education that serves your school system to participate in the interview cycles also.
- **Reserved Cycle 3:** a third interview will be reserved in case follow up is required in early fall 2022.
- **Documentation Request:** of various kinds will be requested as supportive evidence, such as: organizational and administrative models, job descriptions, policy that oversees program, credentials for hiring, professional development, training, among others that come to light during the interviews
- **Member Checking:** you will be welcome to provide corrections or additions prior to data finalization.

The investigator will schedule the interview at a time convenient to you. The interview will occur remotely using Zoom Pro.

What	When	How Long	Topic of Interview & Requests
Director Interview Cycle 1	Late Summer 2022	1.5 hours	● What does the private school system's administrative organizational structure for special education and the coordination of special education look like? ● Request for Supporting Documentation
Director Interview Cycle 2	Late Summer 2022	1.5 hours	● Why did private school systems choose to implement change within their system to create organizational structure and coordination of special education? ● What are next steps for continuous improvement of administrative organization of special education and coordination of special education services? ● Request for Supporting Documentation
Director Interview Cycle 3	Early Fall 2022	Reserved	Follow up

What are the risks of being in the study?

The study has risks:

- **Loss of Confidentiality:** A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality or privacy. Loss of privacy means having your personal information

shared with someone who is not on the study team and was not supposed to see or know about your information. The study team plans to protect your privacy. Their plans for keeping your information private are described in the Privacy section of this consent form.

● **Time:** The reasons you might not want to participate in this study are largely related to time. You can expect each interview to last no longer than an hour, at a date and time convenient to you. You can decline a follow-up interview, if you have granted us permission to contact you. You can discontinue participation in the study at any point.

Here is more information about why we are doing this study:

This study is being conducted by:

Kelli Green, Primary Investigator

Department of Educational Leadership | School of Education | University of St. Thomas

Dr. Shelley Neilsen-Gatti, Research Advisor

Department of Special Education | School of Education | University of St. Thomas

This study was reviewed for risks and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of St. Thomas.

The purpose of this study is to help the researcher investigate how private schools have organized to serve students with disabilities. We will use the information we collect by presenting data in a dissertation final report. Quotes may be used to illustrate ideas but will only name the generic role category. Findings will be reported through conferences, dissertations, published articles, or other projects.

There are no direct benefits for participating in this study. You will not receive any payment or other compensation for taking part in this study. The anticipated benefit of your participation in this study is contributing to the field of research on special education in private school systems.

While we can never guarantee complete confidentiality in research, we believe your privacy and confidentiality are important. Here is how we will do our best to protect your personal information:

Your privacy will be protected while you participate in this study. **You will have control over the date and time of the study, the location, and what you choose to share.** Due to the nature of the study procedures, privacy cannot be guaranteed while you participate in this study.

Interviews & Documents: Every effort will be made to keep your personal information confidential. Participants will have control over the date and time of the interview and what they choose to share. The interviewee can choose to answer or not answer any question during the interview. Interview and documentation identifiable information from each private school system will be anonymously coded as Case A, Case B, Case C, Case D, and Case E. Audio recordings

with the voice of the interviewee will be saved directly to the principal researcher's University of St. Thomas OneDrive password protected account. Once the audio recordings have been transcribed and analyzed, they will be deleted. All information will be kept on UST OneDrive under my login credentials. While not being directly worked on, handwritten notes and printed documentation will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the principal researcher's office.

The records of this study will be kept as confidential as possible. We save your information in the most secure online location available to us at the University. We cannot guarantee confidentiality because data security incidents and breaches may occur. In any reports I publish, I will not include information that will make it easy to identify you. The types of records I will create include:

- All documentation, audio-recordings, transcripts, summaries will be given codes and stored separately from any names or other direct identification of participants.

We will keep information about you for future research about special education in private schools. We will only use aggregate information and will not use any identifiers in future research. There is no limit to the length of time we will store de-identified information, but if you choose to withdraw from the study your information will not be stored for future use.

All signed consent forms will be kept for a minimum of three years once the study is completed. Institutional Review Board officials at the University of St. Thomas have the right to inspect all research records for researcher compliance purposes.

This study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the research with no penalties of any kind.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether to participate or not will not affect your current or future relations with the Council for American Private Education (CAPE) or the University of St. Thomas. There are no penalties or consequences if you choose not to participate. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected about you will be destroyed unless it is already de-identified or published and I can no longer delete your data. You can withdraw by emailing the primary investigator of your wishes. You are also free to skip any questions I may ask.

Who you should contact if you have a question:

My name is Kelli L. Green. You may ask any questions you have now and at any time during or after the research procedures. If you have questions before or after we meet, you may contact me at kelli.lea@icloud.com or (612)454-9158. I am a doctoral student at University of St. Thomas – St. Paul, MN. My advisor is Dr. Shelley Neilsen-Gatti. You may reach her at (651)962-4396 and slneilsengat@stthomas.edu. Information about study participant rights is available online at https://www.stthomas.edu/irb/. You may also contact Sarah Muenster-Blakley with the University

of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-6035 or muen0526@stthomas.edu with any questions or concerns (reference project number [1878387-1]).

STATEMENT OF CONSENT:

I have had a conversation with the researcher about this study and have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I consent to participate in the study. I am at least 18 years of age. **I give permission to be audio recorded during this study.**

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

_____

Signature of Study Participant   Date

_____

Print Name of Study Participant

_____

Signature of Researcher   Date

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date:
Time:
Place:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:
Position of Interviewee:
Event:

Interview Protocol

Cycle 1 Director & SPED Director Interview

Documentation Request: There will be a documentation request in support of our conversation topic today including such as organizational and administrative models, job descriptions, policy that oversees program, credentials for hiring, professional development, training, among others that come to light during the interviews.

Thank you for meeting me today.

Demographic Information:
1. How are schools divided into sectors or districts across the country?
2. What leadership exists per sector or district? Specific to special education?
3. What data do you collect specific to special education? Number of schools, number of students, disability areas, qualified teachers, paid employees, rural vs. urban, grade levels, race, etc.?

Focus Question: What does the CASE A private school system's administrative organizational structure for special education and the coordination of special education look like?

System Leadership Model:
4. Tell me about your **leadership model**.
5. Describe the governance and coordination of education and where special education fits into it.

Special Education Leadership Role:
6. Title
    a. What title(s) are used for special education leadership?
    b. Describe each role category.
7. Professional Development
    c. How do you define a qualified teacher?
    d. How do you define a qualified special education teacher? Paraprofessional, educational assistant, aid? Paid or unpaid? Others who work with students with disabilities?
    e. How are new special education teachers supported? (new teacher induction)
    f. What professional development specific to special education is required yearly? Upon request?
8. Coordination
    g. What guidance and oversight do special education teachers have?
    h. Prereferral Practices? Intervention & Data Practices?
    i. Curriculum & Instruction?
    j. Monitoring & Compliance?
9. Legal Updates
    k. Who keeps track of federal and state law history and updates? How is this information shared with educators and parents?
10. Financial
    l. Who oversees School Choice, Voucher, and funding management specific to special education?
    m. What are the areas of funding oversight?

      n. Are there tuition differences for services?

      o. How is third-party billing engaged for therapeutic services?

          i. Speech Language Pathology?

          ii. Occupational Therapy?

          iii. Physical Therapy?

          iv. Other?

      p. Where do you find sustainable funding?

11. Policy & Law

      q. Who keeps track of changes in policy & practices in the nearest local education agency (LEA)? How is this information shared with educators and parents?

      r. How have leaders involved in legislative practices?

      s. What specific policies for special education do you have?

      t. What are your prereferral practices? Are these defined in policy?

      u. What role do your leaders take in special education legislation for private schools?

      v. Have you had legal issues specific to special education?

12. Collaboration with the Local Education Agency (LEA)

      w. New enrollment transition into school?

      x. What special education meetings are expected?

      y. Child Study Team, prereferral?

      z. Pre-Assessment Meeting?

      aa. Evaluation Results Meeting? Initial? Re-Evaluation?

      bb. Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meeting? Initial? Yearly?

      cc. Individualized Education Program (IEP) to Individual Service Plan (ISP)?

Is there any other information you would like to add or clarify today?

(For systemwide directors only) A Recommendation is Needed: In order to learn from a Special Education-specific Administrator, who would you recommend for me to interview to understand how the questions we talked through today are carried out? (A trained administrator of special education, Overseeing the coordination of services for the largest # of schools in your school system)

In closing, I would like to thank you very much for your time and thoughtfulness. A complete list of documents requested will be emailed to you. Please share any document you believe will benefit the study regarding our topic of conversation today. Be assured any identifying information will be redacted from the transcription of this audio recording and the documentation you share and listed as a CASE. Once the interview data has been analyzed, I will email you a copy of emerging themes giving you the opportunity to member check to assure accuracy. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Do you have any questions? Please, enjoy your day.

Cycle 2 Director & SPED Director Interview
Cycle 1 Follow Up:
Focus Question: Why did private school systems choose to implement change within their system to create organizational structure and coordination of special education?
Historical Background:

13. Describe a time that your schools did not serve students with disabilities knowingly?

14. At what point in time did your system change the way they were serving students with disabilities?

15. How long have you served students with disabilities?

16. Describe when students with disabilities were purposefully integrated into your student body.

17. Describe how your schools are inclusive of students with disabilities. How many? Which ones? Where are they located?

      dd. How have changes in state or local legislation or policies impacted inclusion?

      ee. What legislation or policies have changed the way you serve students with disabilities?

Leadership Mission:

18. What is the mission statement of your system?

19. Share the mission statement of your system. How does this statement include students with disabilities purposefully?

Leadership Vision:

20. Describe the history of leadership vision that has contributed to progress toward serving students with disabilities?

Change Factors:

21. What changes in data have led to additions in leadership, governance, and coordination efforts for serving students with disabilities?
    a. What data?
    b. What change have principals advocated for?
    c. What change have educators advocated for?
    d. What change have parents and families advocated for?
    e. What were the most contributing factors that have led to the development of your leadership model?

Focus Question: What are next steps for continuous improvement of administrative organization of special education and coordination of special education services? How might you redesign? How might you improve these structures next?

22. How would you redesign the model if you could?
23. What do you think will be the next improvements or changes in the way your system serves students with disabilities?
    ff. What data is leading you toward the next improvements?
    gg. What federal or state legislation is leading you toward the next improvements?
    hh. What local policies are leading you toward the next improvements?
24. What administrative or personnel improvements are you planning?

Leadership Vision:

25. Describe the leadership vision that contributes to progress toward serving students with disabilities?
26. What do you envision as the best leadership model for serving students with disabilities in your school system?
27. What will be the next steps you take toward that vision? Why?

Is there any other information you would like to add or clarify today?

In closing, I would like to thank you very much for your time and thoughtfulness. A complete list of documents requested will be emailed to you. Please share any document you believe will benefit the study regarding our topic of conversation today. Be assured any identifying information will be redacted from the transcription of this audio recording and the documentation you share and listed as a CASE. Once the interview data has been analyzed, I will email you a copy of emerging themes giving you the opportunity to member check to assure accuracy. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Do you have any questions? Please, enjoy your day.

Cycle 3 Director Interview

Cycle 2 Follow Up:

APPENDIX E: LIST OF DOCUMENTS REQUESTED

1. Leadership model flow chart or other documentation (administrative structure from the top down through the special education department)

2. Job descriptions (your job description as special education director, coordinators, special education teacher, etc.)

3. Funding chart, if available

4. FTE special education specific calculations for # of directors/administrators and coordinators to schools/special educators to student caseload #

5. Coordinators: # for segments of geographic location or district, administrative structure to the field (supervisors and coordinators)

6. Policy that oversees program or administrative/MTSS/special education handbook of policy

7. School or system mission statement and vision documentation

8. Credentials for hiring supervisors, coordinators, special education teachers, etc.

9. Professional development: New teacher and special educator planned foundational training and documentation

10. Other (to benefit the field)