

THE “ROUNABOUT” OF SPECIAL EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

MICHAEL SELTZER

CLAREMONT GRADUATE UNIVERSITY
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ABSTRACT

Special education leadership consists of the of special education faculty at institutes of higher education, district special education administration, the site principal, and the special education teacher. All four areas of special education leadership are currently experiencing challenges in supply and demand for qualified faculty, district administrators, principals, and special education teachers. Currently, the demand for qualified personnel in each area is very high, while the supply of qualified personnel in these four areas remains wanting. The lack of qualified personnel in all four areas directly influences the success of students with disabilities in standards based inclusive environments. The purpose of this paper is to illuminate how all four areas of special education leadership are interrelated in addressing the needs of students with disabilities while providing recommendations on how to address the supply and demand issues within each leadership area to ensure that all students with disabilities receive a fair and appropriate public education within the least restrictive environment.

Introduction

Special education leadership is as complex, unique, and diverse as the students it intends to serve. The roles, duties, and responsibilities of special education leaders change as swiftly as the policies, budgets, best practices, and systems of accountability that governs their ability to meet the challenges of the students under their charge. Moreover, special education leadership is a multifaceted educational enterprise that is predicated on the ideal of social justice, in that it is based on the ideals that all children can learn, all children should have access to a quality education, and all children should be included in the educational system irrespective of their respective disabilities. Special education leadership includes four distinct and intertwining categories that include higher education leadership, district leadership, site leadership, and special education teachers. Although they all have unique roles in the preparation, administration, and education of students with disabilities, they all are intertwined as academic preparation influences administration; district administration influences site administration, and site administration influences special education teacher retention, and therefore the future leaders that will seek higher education and administrative positions.

Lashley and Boscardin (2003) contend that special education administration is at a crossroads where the disciplines of special education and education administration intersect. Similarly, Crockett (2007) believes that this “intersections” resembles and “interface” whereby the disciplines of special education, general education, and education administration overlap where interactions occur among different facets of the three distinct disciplines. However, a crossroads is merely a place where two or more roads meet, a place where a decision needs to be made as far as path and direction. The idea that the disciplines of special education and education administration intersect is largely based on their position at the crossroads and contingent on whether these two disciplines merely intersect or truly interact. The “intersection” or “interface” of these disciplines much more resembles a “roundabout.”

A “roundabout” is a traffic circle where traffic enters and exits via a circular route. The roundabout is an appropriate metaphor for the current state of special education leadership where special education leaders in higher education, district special education administrators, and principals enter this traffic circle unprepared for the required intersecting of various routes, and special education faculty and teachers exit looking for new roads. Therefore, the current state of special education administration is circuitous due to the interactions of special education higher education, special education administration, site administration and how they all contribute to the attrition of future special education leaders. To make matters more complicated this “roundabout” is under construction. Therefore, there are new rules and standards for navigating the circular route. All vehicles are expected to adhere to these new rules, standards and expectations; all vehicles are expected to maintain momentum to keep traffic moving; and all vehicles are expected to work together in order to keep traffic moving.

This paper will examine the challenges of special education higher education leadership, special education district leadership, the role and preparation of principals along with the perennial attrition of special education teachers.

In addition, this paper will also elucidate that although the form of leadership is unique in its scope of their respective responsibilities, they all are interconnected in how they address the needs of students with disabilities including the concepts of a Fair and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) within the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Both FAPE and LRE serve as the bedrocks of special education policy and practice as determined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The relationship between IDEA and special education leadership and administration is paramount to addressing the needs of students with disabilities (Lashley & Boscardin, 2003). The question then arises as where do special education leaders get the requisite skills to effectively address the needs of students with disabilities. In addition, all four components are subject to the challenges of supply and demand whereby the supply of special education faculty, special education administrators, principals fluent in special education, and special education teachers is limited, the demand for their services and expertise is vital to serving the six million students receiving special education services along with addressing the needs of a special education population that does not appear to be waning (Robicheau, Haar, & Palladino, 2008).

Higher Education

Institutes of higher education are the primary source of training for aspiring special education leaders (Smith, Mortorff, West, & Chowdhuri Tyler, 2010). Therefore, if there is a dearth in the supply of qualified special education faculty, while there is an increased demand for both teachers and administrators to effectively address the needs of students with disabilities, the ability to provide these teachers and administrators will be hampered by the lack of qualified special education faculty (Smith, Pion, & Chowdhuri Tyler, 2004). For example, Elliot, Evans, and Hood (2005) found that out of 932-faculty teaching in California special education programs 75% were adjunct faculty, while only 20% were tenure line professors. Similarly 49% of the department chairs interviewed for this study articulated that the increase in adjunct faculty was due to an increase of credential candidates and a decrease in the pool of qualified professors. This translates into the majority of students who are pursuing a special education credential are being taught by part-time faculty. In addition, the question of the qualifications of these adjunct faculty members remains elusive.

Similarly, the proliferation of alternative routes to special education credentialing also raises issues about the faculty that are training the students in these alternative programs. Rosenberg and Sindelar, (2005) estimate that as of 2004 over 200,000 people had received certification through alternative routes to certification (ARC) programs. ARC programs can best be defined by how they are different from rational programs in special education certification. First, these programs provide a pathway to certification outside the traditional tracks of teacher education. These programs are unique in student population, length, and structure of program and delivery mode (Rosenberg & Sindelar, 2005). However, although these programs are outside of the traditional route to credentialing, instruction is still integral to the processes. Therefore, if traditional routes to special education are being filled by adjunct faculty, the question arises who is teaching the candidates in these alternative programs?

As a result, the role of higher education in training special education leaders such as faculty and administrators is hindered by the laws of supply and demand. As the demand for trained special education teachers and leaders has increased, the supply of those pursuing PhDs in special education has steadily declined as demonstrated through the lack of growth and production of doctorates, the proportion of new doctorates that pursue academic careers, and the constant demand for new faculty (Smith, Pion, and Tyler (2003). The lack of supply of special education teachers and leaders has a profound effect on students with disabilities as it is estimated that there are approximately 48,000 unqualified special education teachers responsible for the education of students with disabilities. This translates into 720, 000 students with disabilities being taught by teachers who are not qualified to meet the needs of these unique students (Smith, Pion, and Tyler, 2003). In their seminal study of Special Education Leadership Personnel with attention to the professoriate, Smith et al, (2001), addressed the shortage of special education faculty based on four main study questions that include (1) What have been the experiences of colleges and university in hiring special education faculty? (2) What is the available supply of new doctorates seeking and obtaining faculty positions? (3) To what extent are current doctorates interested in academic careers? And (4) what is the current capacity of doctoral training programs for producing special education faculty?

Experiences of Colleges and Universities

The experiences of colleges and universities hiring special education faculty can best be described as “wanting.” In their study of searches for special education faculty, Sindelar and Rosenberg (2003) found that committee chairs found three-fourths of applicants not qualified for special education faculty positions.

This translates into a pool of nine to ten applicants that were qualified for the position. In addition, committee chairs reported that the average list of finalists contained an average of three applicants that were brought in for interviews. The participating committee chairs reported that 73% of their searches were successful. The majority of these applicants, 49.4% had been working at another university and half of these applicants were already in tenure track positions and 36% were new doctoral graduates and an additional 3.6% were applicants about to finish their PhDs in Special Education. This is supported by the fact that the hiring of faculty from other institutions constituted the majority of new hires that constitutes a shift in demand as applicants are shifting positions from one institution to another opposed to there being a large pool of special education faculty. The ramifications of shifting demand has a profound affect on institutions of higher learning as some programs that are unable to fill positions will undermine the capacity of institutes of higher education to recruit and produce a quality workforce. The inability to recruit and produce quality special education teachers and leaders will adversely affect the FAPE and Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) of students with disabilities.

Supply of Doctoral Students

The second salient issue is the supply of recent Doctoral Graduates in special education, specifically their work experience and career aspirations. Tyler, Smith, and Pion (2003) found that 60.4% of doctoral applicants were teachers of staff in educational settings. In addition, 25% were graduate students, and 16.7% were a staff member at university and 17.4% were administrators in either direct service setting or other types of settings. The remainder of the applicants at the time of the study were unemployed at 2.3% or other at 3.4%. There were also distinct variables that determined whether these applicants were pursuing faculty positions or other positions in special education leadership. These variables include the number doctoral programs where students applied, relocation, current doctoral study, and the role of financial aide.

The majority of the students in the study (72%) applied to only one graduate school. Similarly, 79% applied to only one graduate school that was within 100 miles from their primary residence. Therefore, only 28% of aspiring doctoral students applied to more than one program 46% did not relocate. Relocation is another essential factor in the pursuit of a doctoral degree as it also corresponds to the selection of the doctoral program along with whether the student would enroll full-time or part-time. Tyler, Smith, and Pion, (2003) found that those who were willing to relocate were more likely to enroll full-time while those not willing to relocate were more likely to enroll part-time. Relocation was also a variable in the choice of a doctoral program as those who chose not to relocate chose their program precisely because they didn't have to relocate. In contrast, those who relocated were more likely to base their decisions on such variables as reputation, financial aide, and the specific concentration of the program.

Financial aide was a significant factor in choosing a program. The two primary sources of aide included university administered support that includes research assistantships, teaching salaries, and fellowships. The second source included personal savings, loans, and earnings from outside jobs and assistance from a spouse. In addition, career plans are another essential factor. The most popular intended career path was academe at 44%. In addition administration accounted for 18% while teaching accounted for 14% while 7% indicated interest in research and 7% indicated interest in another field. Although the majority of these candidates intended to pursue leadership roles in academe at 44% this still less than 50% of potential special education leaders intending to train, teach, mentor new special education leadership candidates. Similarly, this also leaves a dearth in the pool of special education leaders conducting research on issues that currently or will influence the education of students with disabilities. Furthermore, only 18% of graduates are pursuing positions in administration. This raises the question of the qualifications and expertise of those administrators responsible for special education services at the district and site levels.

Characteristics of Doctoral Students

The characteristics of doctoral applicants was also a significant part of the 2001 study. Smith, Tyler, and Pion (2003) found that 82% of the doctorates were women. 18 % were from historically underrepresented groups, 8% had disabilities, and 11% were foreign students of which 50% were Asian. In addition, 50% of the doctoral candidates were 42 or older, 66% were married or in a relationship, and 53% had dependents. However, 78% of the doctoral candidates were Caucasian that creates a very homogenous applicant pool that does not represent the current demographics of the current educational system in the United States.

According to the above demographics the majority of doctoral students were white women. Therefore, the diversification of the applicant pool and pipeline is a significant issue.

The significance of this issue is that the diversification of teachers and faculty is a goal that is inherent in IDEA as it mandates an increase in the number of professionals representing diverse cultures and backgrounds (Dooley, 2003). In order to address the lack of diversity in higher education, Dooley, 2003 recommends five strategies intended to attract and retain faculty members from diverse cultures and backgrounds that include the following:

1. The university must have a commitment to the value of diversity in order to attract and retain faculty members from ethnically and diverse groups.
2. The institution must have minority faculty mentoring and internships programs in order to provide potential faculty members with the development of teaching and research skills that are integral to succeed in the university setting.
3. The universities should implement special “start –up” packages consisting of seed money or competitive awards.
4. The Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) should implement special initiative programs to assist in the recruitment efforts to attract ethnically diverse faculty through the creation of specific tenure line positions and financial initiatives to support summer research.
5. The IHEs must maintain a diverse student body in order to attract and maintain faculty members from diverse groups.

Number of Doctoral Programs

The fourth component of the study was the current number of special education doctoral programs in the United States. Smith, Pion, Tyler, and Gilmore (2003) found that there are approximately 85 operating special education doctoral programs in the United States. This number is stabilized by the fact that some programs are emphasis programs, other programs have merged with other doctoral programs, and some programs have been discontinued. Therefore, the combination of emphasis programs and the number of merged programs has filled in the gap of discontinued programs thereby maintaining the number of programs at 85. The size of the program was a significant factor in the production of special education doctorates. The enrollment in 46% of these programs include 20 students or more, 24% had 15-19 students, while only 6% had five or fewer students enrolled. The majority of these students were part-time. The graduation rates of these programs average about 3 graduates per year (Smith et al. 2001). Therefore, extrapolating that there are 85 programs graduating three graduates per year that averages about 255 graduates per year in the entire United States. This translates into an average of 4.1 special education PhDs per state. However, according to the special Education Faculty Needs Assessment (SEFNA) (2010), the number of special education doctorates has been rising since 2004 from 216 in 2003 to 296 in 2007. Although this is a move in the right direction, it still falls short when considering the demand for special education faculty.

Another component of the capacity of our graduate programs in special education is student recruitment and selectivity. Currently, there is a short supply of doctoral candidates in the pipeline. As a result, their respective programs select many of these students. Smith, Pion, Tyler, and Gilmore (2003) contend that due to most of these students being selected, that the respective programs are not very selective of their applicants. However, the data that these applicants are not qualified is not discussed. In addition, the acceptance rates did not differ on the reputation and ranking of the doctoral program.

Recommendations

The Smith et al. (2001) study made several recommendations to increase the pipeline of students with the intent to pursue Ph.Ds in Special Education to become faculty members that include the following:

1. Increase the capacity of doctoral programs. Although the creation of new doctoral programs is not an immediate solution considering the logistics of creating a new academic program at the university level, increasing the number of students in these programs could have a profound effect on the supply of special education faculty (Smith, Pion, Chowdhuri Tyler, & Gilmore, 2003).
2. Target student recruitment. Targeting student recruitment involves recruiting those individuals that fit the profile of those students who are most likely to pursue a faculty position. This includes students who are younger, willing to relocate, and have the goal of working at IHEs (Smith, Pion, Chowder, Tyler, & Gilmore, 2003). This type of targeted recruitment has proven successful as demonstrated by research from the Special Education Faculty Needs Assessment (SEFNA) (2010) that found that the odds of becoming a faculty member increase by 90% if the student had the initial career plans for a faculty position. In addition, a one-year increase in age decreases the odds of a student becoming faculty members by about 2.6 times.

3. Increase federal investment in leadership personnel. This involves increasing the federal investment in special education doctoral programs. Increasing the capacity of doctoral programs involves expanding the number of both programs and enrolled students in the programs. SEFNA (2009) found that doctoral students supported through the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) grants exceed graduation rates compared to the national average where OSEP students 70% of the students had completed their degrees within four years. Similarly, Washburn-Moses and Therrien, (2008) found that leadership grants have proven successful in increasing the younger population of full-time students willing to relocate with the intention of pursuing a faculty career.
4. Improve faculty mentoring of doctoral students. This involves expediting the completion of current doctoral students. Unzueta, Moores-Abdool, and Donet (2010) found that Cohort Educational Models (CEMS) where students are grouped together and moved through courses and exams as a group have proven successful in the completion rates of doctoral students participating in these cohorts compared to students not participating in the cohort. In addition, this model has proved very effective in the completion rates of students from ethnically diverse backgrounds.
5. Assist colleges and universities with faculty recruitment. This primarily involves recruiting younger graduate students. In order to garner their interest an increase in salaries is of course a solid incentive that is quixotic at best. However, Hardman and West (2003) found that there may be a number of incentives that might attract potential students from generations x and y. In order to attract students from these generational groups IHEs must tailor their recruitment of potential students to address issues of belonging, learning, entrepreneurship, and security. This involves the IHE to thoroughly articulate the mission of the program, dedication to organizational justice, the creation of an academic community, professional development, and putting people first. Therefore, recruitment of students from generation x and y requires IHEs to rethink both their recruitment practices but their institutional cultures.
6. Improve the working conditions and colleges and universities. This specifically addresses the cultures of IHEs. Hardman and West, 2003 found that current students often found the university cultures as inflexible, high stress, having poor communication between graduate students and faculty, and lacking in faculty mentoring. These cultural maladies can be addressed through increased IHE socialization whereby students are socialized into the higher education culture beginning in the undergraduate or master's degree level through student mentoring, independent study, and early research opportunities with faculty.
7. Determine future demand: Determining future demand for potential special education faculty members is not so much shaped by supply and demand although both are integral in determining future demand, but is generated by the educational policy landscape. This landscape requires an insistence on validated practices, inclusive and supporting environments. And preparing general educators to address the needs of students with disabilities (Smith, Mortorff Robb, Wes, and Chowdhuri (2003).

There is no doubt that there is a dearth of qualified special education faculty. As a result, the shortage of special education faculty directly influences the FAPE and LRE of students with disabilities in that these students require both special education and general education that are trained in validated practices within an inclusive setting to address the needs of these unique students. However, it is not the purview of IHEs to ensure that these validated practices are being implemented correctly in the classroom, it not the responsibility of the IHEs to ensure that there are effective inclusive environments at school sites, nor is it the responsibility of IHEs that policy and practice are being implemented effectively throughout a school district. This is under the auspices of the special education administrator.

The 18%

The issues of supply and demand are not relegated to higher education. In the Smith et al. (2001) study on the faculty shortage, they reported that approximately 18% pursued administrative positions. As faculty in special education are responsible for educating a new generations of special education faculty and administrators, special education administrators are directly responsible for leading, managing, supervising the delivery of special education services directly to students with disabilities (Crockett, 2007). Currently, there are approximately 20,000 administrators whose primary responsibility is to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities are being addressed in adherence to the mandates of IDEA, whose instruction is based on researched proven practices, and who are accountable for both the compliance and educational benefit of all students with disabilities under their charge (Crockett, 2007).

However, of these 20,000 administrators it is estimated by the Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education that more than 20% are not fully certified or licensed for the complex positions they hold. In fact, COPSE estimates that less than 1% of all administration graduates at the masters or doctoral level hold degrees in special education administration. Similar to the supply issues in special education higher education, supply issues in special education administration have a direct effect on the FAPE and LRE of students with disabilities. Moreover, the issue is graver when considering that special education administrators make decisions on policy that directly influences the education of students with disabilities regarding placement, services, testing, curriculum, and pedagogical practices. Therefore, it is integral to address the preparation and licensing requirements for special education administrators.

Preparation and Licensure

Boscardin and Lashley (2003) found that when addressing the issue of special education administration the two major themes are the availability of programs and the content of these programs. In addition, they concluded that many preparation programs are linked to state certification requirements; there is confusion about preparation and certification requirements; and there are very few programs that are specifically oriented around special education administration. Boscardin and Lashley (2003) found that 27 institutions of higher education provide advanced training in special education administration. Nineteen of these programs were housed in departments of special education, six were housed in departments of education administration, and two were joint programs. The content of these programs generally requires two to four courses in special education, two to six courses in educational administration, and typically require an internship for those pursuing an advanced degree in educational administration (COPSSE, 2004).

Certification and licensure vary greatly from state to state with an increase in states granting special education administrative endorsements opposed to specific certifications and licenses in special education administration. This personifies the confusion in certification requirements as many of the credential and certification requirements are part of general education administrative credentials, while others offer separate special education administrative credentials or certificates (Lashley & Boscardin, 2003). Alternate paths to certification have also compromised certifications and licensure requirements. These alternate paths to certification generally attract more non-traditional students, have lower costs, and tend to be shorter than traditional paths to certification. These alternative paths are often sponsored by state or county departments of education (Lashley & Boscardin, 2003).

Whether the certification path is through the traditional route of IHE or an alternative route, the program will be standards-driven. The two most widely used standard frameworks for special education administrators are the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) standards and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards. Although both sets of standards provide a framework for effective leadership, only the CEC standards provide a list of 49 professional competences that the special education administrator must demonstrate. These stem from the competencies that the CEC deems special education teachers need to be effective (Voltz & Collins,). A comparison of the CEC and ISLLC standards are contained in Table 1.

Table 1

CEC and ISLLC Standards

CEC Standards	ISLLC Standards
Leaderships and Policy: Advocate for legal and ethical policy that supports high quality education for individuals with exceptional learning needs; provide leadership to create procedures that respect all individuals and positive and productive work environments.	Standard 1: A school administrator is and educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation and stewardship of a vision of learning that is share and supported by the school community.
Program development and Organization: Improve instructional programs at the school and system levels; develops procedures to improve management systems; design professional development to support the use of evidence-based practices; coordinate educational standards with the need of children with exceptionalities to access challenging curriculum standards, use understanding of the effects of cultural social, and Economic diversity and variations of individual development to help develop programs and services for individuals with exceptional needs.	Standard 2: A school administrator is and educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
Research and Inquiry: Used education research to improve instructional and intervention techniques and materials; foster and environment that supports instructional improvement; and engage in action research.	Standard 3: A school administrator is an education leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a sage, efficient, and effective learning environment.
Student Program Evaluation: Design and implement research to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional practices and program goals, apply knowledge and skill at all stages of the evaluation process for student learning of the general education curriculum and individualized IEP goals.	Standard 4: A school administrator is and educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs and mobilizing community resources.
Professional Development and ethical practice: Safeguard the legal rights of students, families, and personnel; present and evaluate professional development that focuses on effective practice; continuously broaden personal professional knowledge, including expertise to support student access to learning through effective teaching strategies, curriculum, standards, and assistive technology.	Standard 5: A school Administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity fairness, and in an ethical manner.
Collaboration: understand the importance of collaboration and foster the integration of services for individuals with exceptionalities; understand the role of collaboration of internal and external stakeholders to promote understanding, resolve conflicts, and build consensus to provide services to these students and their families; understand the interactions of language diversity, culture, and religion and use collaboration to enhance opportunities for individuals with exceptionalities.	Standard 6: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing, the larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context.

The ISLLC standards are organized by knowledge, dispositions, and performances. The knowledge components are those areas of knowledge that are specific to the standards. The disposition is what the administrator believes in, values, and conveys their commitment to the respective standard. The performances are the processes that the administrator engages and ensures (ISSLC, 2010) Although both sets of standards are very similar in they both address six essential areas to effective leadership, the CEC standards require a knowledge base that is much more specific to that required by special education administrators, while the ISLLC standards appear more generic. However, Crockett (2007) asserts that this is not a result of devaluing the expertise and skills of special education administrators nor their role in shaping practice and policy, but the result of special education becoming part of the fabric of practice and policy and integral components imbedded in educational administration and general education. However, despite their familiarity with the CEC standards many special education administrators remain wanting in the areas of technology and behavior management (Wigle & Wilcox, 2002).

In addition to the CEC and ISLLC Standards, Voltz and Collins (identified five areas where special education administrators require more training and professional development: The five areas include:

1. **Staff Recruitment and Retention:** The required the development of skills needed to recruit and retain a qualified workforce including recruiting teachers from diverse backgrounds and providing the necessary support to retain those teachers:
2. **Equity Issues:** These issues address the distribution of teaching expertise in order that specific in order that there is equity of educational experience across an educational system. In addition, this also involves mitigating the overrepresentation of minority students as being identified as requiring special education services.
3. **Collaboration:** This involves working with professionals within and outside of schools. This will require working collaboratively with general education teachers to ensure that they are aware of the pedagogical needs of students with disabilities, they foster school climates that are conducive to the success of students with disabilities, provide training to create inclusive environments, and how to access the general education curriculum for students with disabilities.
4. **Assessment:** This involves assisting general education administrators in using assessment to guide instruction through the use of data along with preparing students with disabilities to participate on high stakes state tests.
5. **Instructional Leadership:** This involves the challenges of promoting evidence-based practices in inclusive settings. As a result, special education administrators must have strong foundations in culturally responsive pedagogy; the challenges of inclusion, and the paradox of individual based instruction within the context of standards based reforms that require all students meet the same standards.

It is within this category of instructional leadership that has truly redefined the role of special education administrators. Historically, the special education administrator was primarily responsible for advocating for students with disabilities, ensuring compliance that the mandates of IDEA were being met, and implementing if the necessary instructional strategies that would benefit and address the student's academic performance in relation to the students' individual needs. However, the challenge of special education administration is in redefining their role to one that coalesces the disciplines of general education and special education to collaboratively support the use of proven evidenced based practices in order to achieve the success of students with disabilities. In fact, it is this process; this makes special education administration "special."

Special education leadership is essentially the macro systemic version of an IEP. The IEP is composed of a team of stakeholders who through their expertise are organized to collaboratively address the needs of the student through evidence-based interventions within the framework of high academic standards. In addition, the team will evaluate efficacy of the IEP in terms of compliance to IDEA and to the goals adopted by the team. Special education administration is "special" because it does exactly that. The "special" in special education administration is the systemic application of the distributive, collaborative, and problem solving approaches to find appropriate interventions in order for a student with disabilities to succeed. The foundation of the "special" in special education administration and leadership is the use of evidence based practices, those specific practices from both special education administration and general education administration that will advance students achievement within a framework that includes both process and outcomes (Boscardin, 2007).

Responsive leadership interventions and system progress monitoring are unique models to special education leadership. Both are rooted in the concept of response-to-intervention (RTI), a process that addresses the unique needs of struggling learners through various stages of interventions that include 4 steps that include (1) screening or identifying students that may be deemed "at risk." (2) Implementing classroom instruction and monitoring responsiveness to classroom instruction: (3) nonresponders receive supplementary diagnostic instruction that is monitored; and (4) Identification of learning disability and placement (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005). The entire purpose of this tiered process is to provide monitored interventions prior to labeling a student with a disability and placing the student in special education classes.

Boscardin (2007) has taken the concepts of RTI and applied them to administrative practices that includes (a) the concept of multiple stages of administrative interventions to improve teaching that will translate into greater student achievement; (b) the implementation of different administrative approaches; (c) leadership is provided by staff other than designated personnel; (d) the duration and frequency of the interventions are varied; (e) decisions are based on both traditional and non-traditional administrative processes; (f) situation conditions are part of the decision process; (g) urgency of administrative decisions is paramount; (h) standard protocols are used to for determining specific administrative interventions and approaches.

Inherent in the RTI process is the concept of progress monitoring whereby interventions are used to respond to struggling students and to separate students who have responded to the interventions from those that require further interventions (Fuchs, 2003). The administrative equivalent to student progress monitoring is system progress monitoring that uses leadership interventions to respond rapidly to system needs, and to distinguish between programs that effective from those that are ineffective. The use of system progress monitoring represents a shift from special education practices that focus solely on student progress, to on the focus on system progress monitoring whereby implementation of and monitoring of leadership practices would provide continuous progress monitoring of program evaluation activities and ascertaining the necessary data to validate policy, program and leadership decisions. (Boscardin, 2007).

In addition, leadership practices that support problem solving should also be used in the administrative process. Problem solving involves a team approach to address the respective issues and relies on data for decision making (Boscardin, 2007). The problem solving model consists of (a) identifying the problem; (b) determine why the problem is occurring; (c) addressing what can be done to solve the problem; (d) evaluating if the interventions worked Ervin, Peacock, & Merrell, 2010). Similarly, this model can be implemented on an administrative level in that (a) identifying the administrative issue; (b) exploring possible leadership intervention strategies (c) implementing those strategies; (d) evaluating the outcomes of those strategies (Boscardin, 2007).

In addition, Canter (2004) purports that problem-solving models have a direct impact in realigning personnel who are knowledgeable about the applications and research of the given problem as the roles of the participating parties are enhanced. In addition, when combined with RTI, problem-solving models have the benefit of emphasizing scientifically instructional methods, the early identification and remediation of achievement difficulties, more measurement of student progress, along with a decrease in the overrepresentation of from diverse backgrounds in special education, and increased group performance on standardized tests.

Collaborative leadership models are integral in conjoining the disciplines of special education and general education into a unified education paradigm. Moreover, collaboration is essential to cultivating a democratic approach to leadership where all parties are included in a process where a shared vision for the success of students with disabilities is achieved (Boscardin, 2007).

Similarly, Green (2008) identified four components of effective collaboration that include the following:

1. Goal Relationships. Special education administrators must ensure that that special education administrators and staff have a common knowledge of district, state, and national goals, and how these goals are interrelated.
2. Communication. Special education administrators and staff must review and created at the district's and schools communication plans that include shared decision making, the commitment to exchange information, and creating an environment conducive to collaboration.
3. Perception. This area involves and special education administrators, principals, and staff perceive each other whereby preconceived notions are not hindering communication.
4. Capacity Building. This involves the creation of certain structures and conditions that facilitate collaboration over a sustained period of time.

Distributive leadership is another model that warrants discussion as an evidence based practice for special education leadership. A distributed perspective involves the enactment of leadership tasks performed by multiple individuals with the purpose of improving student or systemic performance (Spillane, 2004). The two main properties of distributive leadership are interdependence and coordination (Gronn, 2002). Interdependence refers to when organization member's responsibilities overlap. Due to mutual needs for information, although there is often role overlap, this redundancy is mitigated by the reduction of errors because two or more parties are involved (Gronn, 2002).

In addition, coordination encompasses the allocation, oversight, and monitoring of the performance of a student or system. Coordination can be explicit based on directives from managers or implicit in that role definitions do not accurately identify nor anticipate and nature and scope of work that often appears routine (Gronn, 2002) For example, an explicit directive of testing a student for special education services may come directly from the principal. However, this testing requires the distribution of duties from the special education teacher and special education aide in testing the student, compiling materials, and the nurse conducting a review of the students health history.

Recommendations

There are a plethora of standards and evidence based practices that provide the framework for special education leadership. In order to make effective decisions on special education issues, Crockett, (2007) created the star model for Special Education Planning. This model is based on five historical themes in the history of special education that are grounded in FAPE, LRE, and best practices. The five principles of the Star Model include the following:

1. **Ethical Practice:** Ensuring universal educational access and accountability. This principal develops moral leader who are capable of analyzing complexities, respecting others, and advocating for child benefit, justice, and full education opportunity for every learner.
2. **Individual Consideration:** This principle develops leaders who are attentive to the relationship between the unique learning and behavioral needs of students with disabilities and the specialize instruction to address their educational progress.
3. **Equity under the law:** This principle develops leader who are committed to the informed implementation of disability law, financial options, and public polices that support individual educational benefit.
4. **Effective Programming:** This principle develops leaders who are skilled at supervising and evaluating educational program in general and individualized programming in particular, and who foster high expectations, support research-based strategies, and target positive results for learners with disabilities.
5. **Establishing productive relationships.** This principle develops leaders who are effective in communicating negotiating, and collaborating with others on behalf of students with disabilities and their families.

The Star Model provides both an interactive framework to decision making as all of the five principles interact within the process. This model synthesizes many of the standards of both the CEC and ISLLC Standards. In addition, it also contains many of the evidence based leadership practices such as collaboration, responsiveness to interventions, along with distributive leadership while maintaining the moral and ethical foundations of the discipline of special education. In addition to the Star Model of decision making, Crockett, (2007) recommends using the Star Model to organize curricula according to the five domains for higher education. These include the following: (1)Moral Leadership involving the ethical analysis of disability-related issues; (2) instructional leadership that addresses student centered learning beyond compliance (3) organizational leadership that supports effective program development; (3) management, and evaluation to students with disabilities; and (4) collaborative leadership that promotes partnerships for instruction along training in integrated service delivery.

Similarly, Crockett and Yell, (2008) also suggest that special education teacher and administrators need to be trained in the use of data to guarantee a free and appropriate education. In order to effectively use data they recommend three guiding principals that include: (1) Ensure that special education teachers and administrators understand the IEP requirements of the IDEA as amended in 1997 and 2004;(2) Ensure that special education teacher and administrators understand and use research-based procedures;(3) Ensure that special education teachers know hoe to collect and use formative data and monitor student progress.On a larger scale, Boscardin (2004) recommends that special education administration should be addressed by both legislation and research. Addressing special education leadership through legislation involves acknowledging the role of administrator in school reform in providing the assurance of equity, and excellence for students through the use of evidence based practices. This would involve identifying program content that would prepare special education administrators through national and state policies that address the unique needs of students that embedded in preparation programs that are facilitated by state standards that are based on evidence-based practices.

In addition, Boscardin (2004) recommends that a Research Agenda for Special education administration should be developed to include the following: (a) the preparation of highly qualified beginning administrators;(b) the induction and ongoing support of special education administrators;(c) the effects of leadership on educational outcomes; (d) the distribution of special education leaderships; and (e) the relationship among national, state, and local polices in addressing special education leadership. Special education leadership is a complex enterprise rooted in both compliance and accountability. It involves compliance to IDEA and is accountable to the students served through the use of evidenced -based practices. Also, it involves collaboration, distribution, and evaluation of district policy, programs, and goals for student progress done through problem solving through applying the appropriate interventions. It is through this systemic IEP that all stakeholders are involved in the process to achieve district and administrative goals and benchmarks that directly benefits students with disabilities.

However, the party directly responsible for disseminating policy information, guidelines, and responsible for both the compliance and accountability of a students' IEP is the Principal.

The Principal

The role of the principal has changed drastically within the past thirty years from building manager and school disciplinarian to instructional leader (DiPaola & Thomas, 2003). A significant impetus to this role is the federal mandates of NCLB and IDEA along with rigorous state standards that direct instruction toward the academic success of all students, including students with disabilities (DiPaola & Thomas, 2003). The complexity of this role has been further exacerbated by the principal as instructional leader. Although the term “instructional leader” is both ubiquitous and multi-faceted, it is based on the premise that the principal is instrumental in the creation, management, and evaluation of programs that promote research to practice (Bays, 2004). Similarly, it is the responsibility of the school leader to be apprised of current research about academic and behavioral interventions that will translate into academic success. This is pivotal considering the weight annual assessment scores have publicly on schools and the requirement that students with disabilities participate and are successful on these annual assessments (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, and Walter Thomas, 2004).

The role of the principal becomes even more complex and overwhelming when considering that instructional leadership is inextricably tied to the performance of students with disabilities (DiPaola & Thomas, 2003). This new role becomes even more involved when considering most principals are not fluent on issues that pertain to students with disabilities (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Thomas, 2004). As a result, the role of the principal as it relates to special education is a paradox as the principal is responsible for the oversight of special education programs that he or she is not professionally prepared to supervise compounded by his or her role is integral in the success of students whose unique learning styles and challenges the principal does not completely understand. Therefore, this section will address those components of instructional leaderships that are essential to the success of students with disabilities; the requisite training principals require addressing the needs of students with disabilities, and recommendations for the preparation of principals in order to effectively address the needs of these unique students.

Principal Preparation

As the principals role has changed to one of instructional leader the question arises is if the principal is prepared for this new role as it involves students with disabilities? Patterson, Marshall, and Bowling, (2000) found that principal preparation programs need to address the leadership requirements necessary to address the myriad of issues surrounding students with disabilities. They found that there is little if no preparation in principle preparation programs for special education. Robicheau, Haar, & Palladino (2008) found that out of eight programs only one required a course in special education and that was a special education law class. In addition, they found through group interviews that the most salient special education issues include intervention tools, collaborative planning, professional development, early interventions, and referrals to special education.

Similarly, Lasky, and Karge (2006) found that out of 205-surveyed principles, 145 had little if no experience with special education during their administration credential course work. In addition, 179 of the surveyed principles believed that formal special education preparation was moderately to very important. The same study demarcated the number of hours per week principles spent on special education issues that is indicated in Table 2.

Table 2 Hours Spent on Special Education Issues

Special Education Issue	Time Spent
Student Study Team meetings	2.5 hours per week
Initial Referrals	2 hours per week
Attending IEP Meetings	5 hours per week
Talking to parents of children with disabilities	4 hours per week
Disciplining students with special needs	3 hours per week
Reading special education legal updates and literature	2 hours per week
Staff development in the area of special education	1 hour per week
Total Time	19.5 hours

The hours spent on special education issues is striking in the disconnect between special education administration preparation and the number of hours spent on special education issues. As stated earlier, the majority of those surveyed had little if no special education during their administration preparation programs, yet they spend a significant amount of time on special education issues. Similarly, Praisner (2003) found a correlation between formal special education preparation courses and attitudes toward inclusion.

The more formal special education course work and in-service training hours the more favorable the principles were toward inclusion of students with disabilities. The attitudes of principles about inclusion influenced placement based on disability category. Therefore, the more formal training the principal had in special education the better the principal was prepared to make appropriate placement decisions. Similarly, Garrison-Wade, Sobel, & Fulmer (2007) found that practicing and future administrators believed that more training was needed in order to be an inclusive leader. These areas of training include special education law, strategies for organizing special education and general education teachers to collaborate, concrete strategies and resources about addressing diversity; and managing discipline issues with students with disabilities.

In addition to coursework and targeted professional development Berstrand, Robers, & Dalton (2009) acknowledging the lack of formal preparation through coursework recommend that principles self educate themselves by (a) reviewing the state plan for implementing IDEA; (b) reviewing district policies for implementing IDEA; (c) review building level practices through special education handbooks;(d) meet with the director of special education regarding policy; (e) review site IEPs; (f) analyze testing data; (g) review the site budget in order to assess special education fiscal requirements; and meet with special education staff members and parents in order to best understand the special education issues at their site.

The task of being an effective principal with the task of effectively educating students is a daunting task when considering that involves knowledge of evidence-based practices that are used to address content standards while integrating the necessary accommodations and modifications to the general education curriculum. Furthermore, the ability of the principal to provide instructional leadership is influenced by both macro-and micro influences that include teacher and student demographics, instructional setting, leadership responsibility, along with the impact of legislation and policy (Bays & Crockett, 2007). According to DiPaola; Tschannen-Moran; and Thomas (2004), the principal's role in providing effective special education programs involves the following five tasks that include:

1. Promoting and inclusive school culture
2. Providing instructional leadership
3. Modeling Collaborative Leadership
4. Managing and administering organizational processes
5. Building and maintaining effective working relationships

An inclusive school culture is essential to addressing the needs of students with disabilities along with meeting both the spirit and practice of the mandates set forth by IDEA and NCLB. Promoting an inclusive school culture is a complex and arduous task as the principal is responsible for shaping school culture on norms that are founded on the mission that all students can succeed academically (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomsas, 2004). This involves changing cultural norms, ideas, and perspectives that do not address the unique needs of students with disabilities.

School climate is an essential component to an inclusive culture. Therefore, the principal is responsible for creating a school climate that conducive to the success of students with disabilities. This involves, addressing attitudes towards students with disabilities, addressing behaviors toward students with disabilities, and acknowledging how student outcomes are related to negative attitudes and behaviors (Milson, 2006). In order to address these components of school culture, Milson (2006) suggests that targeted professional development can increase awareness regarding students with disabilities. In addition, intervening with students through cooperative peer relationships can also address attitudes and behavior toward students with disabilities Finally, cooperatively examining the current school culture including pedagogy, discipline, and diversity are integral in changing school culture.

Instructional leadership

In order to be an effective instructional leader for students with disabilities it is essential that the principal understand the intricacies of special education students and policy. First, instructional leaders must understand the characteristics and needs of students with disabilities. This requires the instructional leader to understand the varied instructional approaches to address these needs along the varied academic strengths and weaknesses of these students. Without this understanding, the principal may employ generic supervisory practices that are not based on research-based practices intended to address the needs of students with disabilities (Bays, 2004). Similarly, the instructional leader should have an appreciation of special education instruction.

This involves the ability of the instructional leader to recognize those strategies that are being employed in inclusive settings to address the needs of students with disabilities. This involves the instructional leader to recognize and support one-to-one instruction, small group instruction, assessment, planning and instructional intervention that matches student needs. Therefore, the instructional leader needs to appreciate the expertise of special education teachers and collaborate on balancing individualized education and access to the general education curriculum (Bays, 2004). Bays and Crockett (2007) found that an effective instructional leader must negotiate competing priorities along with contextual factors in order to achieve the role of instructional leader for students with disabilities. The negotiation of competing priorities involves the following:

Roles Assignment: The principal are designated by school board policy as the instructional supervisors at their school sites. Therefore, the principal is the primary supervisor for special education teachers and ensures the delivery of special education services at their respective schools. The Principal negotiates management, administrative, and supervisory duties: These duties include the overall management of the school facility, as well as serving as instructional supervisors charged with ensuring positive learning outcomes.

The principal Negotiates Legal Compliance and Instructional Quality. This requires the principal to be aware of the highly regulated area of special education (Potter & Apicella, 2001). Therefore, the principal has knowledge about the Individual Education Program content and process that involves the following:

- The IEP planning process
- Referral and evaluation
- The IEP meeting
- The IEP Document
- Placement Decisions
- Review and Revision

Fluency in the IEP process translates into a document that is both legally correct and educationally appropriate. This is essential considering the highly litigious nature of special education (Yell, Katsiyannis, & Bradley, 2003). Therefore, the principal must also be apprised of legal issues and decisions in special education including discipline, residential placements, parental rights, along with FAPE and compensatory education. The principal's knowledge of these salient issues in special education litigation will ensure that decisions at the IEP are both legally compliant and appropriate (Wagner & Katsiyannis, 2010).

The principal negotiates the evaluation of teachers and the supervision of instruction. This involves the principal role in evaluating teachers and supporting instruction. Observing special education teachers can prove daunting to principals. Bugaj and Milchick (2003) recommend that there should be three stages to an observation to special education teachers. The first stage is a pre-observation conference where the principal determines the type of instruction delivered based on the disabilities of students in the class. The second stage is the classroom observation where the principal is going to examine the lesson to see if the instruction corresponds to the IEPs of the students and if appropriate accommodations and modifications are being implemented. The third stage is the post-observation used to determine how the teacher evaluated the lesson, cover and observed discrepancies, and provide suggestions, and return to the classroom to ensure the suggestions are being employed.

Modeling Collaborative Leadership

It is not enough for the instructional leader to merely tout the ideals of collaboration. It is essential that the instructional leader models collaborative leadership. Collaborative leadership requires instructional leaders to collaborate with all stakeholders to develop, implement, and evaluate instructional programs for students with disabilities. Collaborative leadership is a complex enterprise as it involves many of the stakeholders to redefine their roles to create more effective learning communities. Therefore, instructional leaders must have the requisite knowledge and interpersonal skills in order to bring all parties into an effective collaborative working relationship (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2004). For example, Ring and Ritz (2003) recommend that principals collaborate in developing grading policies in conjunction with general and special education teachers that recognizes and rewards effort and achievement.

Managing and Administering Organizational Processes

The role of an effective school manager involves identifying needs, finding appropriate resources, and meeting critical needs when resources are limited.

For example, Condeman and Pederson (2005) discuss how principals address the needs of secondary special education by providing resources that prepare students for employment, teach them functional life skills, and learn strategies that foster independence in order to prepare them for life outside of the school environment. It is here, that contextual factors in instructional leadership are pivotal in ensuring positive educational outcomes for students with disabilities. These contextual factors includes Personal factors, dispersing responsibly to directors of special education, and dispersing responsibility to teachers (Bays & Crockett, 2007) The dispersement of responsibility between the principal special education was done through collaboration and consultation with the principal. This was done regarding organizing professional development for special education teachers, planning educational services and provident both personnel and resources in the effective delivery of special education services. (Bays & Crockett, 2007) The principals also dispersed responsibility to teachers as they relied on their special education teachers in instructional matters. The principal often encouraged education and collaboration among special education teachers in order to address special education instructional issues. This was demonstrated as some special education teachers served as team leaders, consultants, and coordinators to assist the overall special education program. In addition, teachers are instrumental in providing mentoring to new and special education teachers and are integral in their instructional development (Bays & Crockett, 2007).

Building and Maintaining Effective Working Relationships

Interpersonal skills in collaboration, problem solving, and cultivating trust through both formal and informal relationships are required to maintain effective working relationships. (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2004). However, effective communication and interpersonal skills are not enough to instill the necessary confidence of stakeholders to actively interact with the principal. Bays and Crockett (2007) found that teachers felt most comfortable discussing student learning with principles with a background in reading instruction, special education, and gifted education. Therefore, educational background in education is a factor in the ability for special education teachers and principles to effectively communicate and collaborate.

Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is essentially the foundation for inclusive school cultures, instructional leadership, collaborative leadership, managing and administering organizations processes and building effective working relationships. Leadership that is not ethical is leadership that is not credible. Therefore, a principle that lacks both ethics and credibility cannot be an effective instructional leader. Lashley (2007) created a framework of ethical leadership based on the framework for theoretical reasoning in educational leadership developed by Shapiro & Stefkovich (2005). This framework is used to guide decision making for principles when facing complex situations. This framework includes the following:

1. The ethic of justice considers issues related to individual rights and laws
2. The theory of critique pertains to the inequities in education including class, race gender, and disabilities.
3. The ethic of care focuses on issues such as values, trust, caring, concern, and the consequences of decisions.
4. The ethic of profession considers the moral aspects of the profession of educational leader.

This framework is organized around the above ethical categories and corresponding questions that apply to each respective category. Lashley, 2007 has applied both the ethical categories and the corresponding questions to create a framework for special education decision-making in Table 3.

Table 3 Lashley’s Ethical Framework for Decision Making

Ethic	Essential Question	Application
The Ethic of Justice	“Is there a law, right or policy that relates to a particular case?” (Shapiro & Stfkovich, 2005 P. 13)	IDEA is very specific about the legal requirements and mandates that pertain to special education.
The Ethic of Critique	“Who benefits from the law, rule. Or policy?”(Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005p. 16)	Under IDEA the purpose of the IEP is to directly benefit the student.
The Ethic of Care	“What are the long-term effects of a decision I make today?” (Shapiro & Stfkovich, 2005 p. 18)	The decision made during an IEP such as placement can have long term consequences such as whether a student will be on a diploma track or not.
Ethic of Profession	“ What should I do based on the best interests of the students who may be diverse in the composition and needs?” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005 p. 26)	IEP decisions should solely be based on what is on the best interest of the student such participation in high stakes testing and additional personnel as one-on-one aides.

This ethical framework is essential for principles making decisions about placement and participation in high stakes testing as more students with disabilities are required to participate and these tests are used as measures of accountability pertaining to the progress of students with disabilities. Therefore, principles need to be aware of the variety of high stakes assessments that include alternative assessments, minimum competency exams, mandatory exit exams, as well as the accommodations and modifications used in order for students with disabilities to effectively participate in these assessments (Katsiyannis, Zhang, Ryan, and Jones, 2007). The issue of testing becomes more salient as the temptation to manipulate testing participation becomes more pronounced considering that principles, teachers, and schools are evaluated based on test scores (Sorrentino & Perry, 2004)

Recommendations

The primary recommendation is to increase special education coursework in administrative programs (Lashly & Karge, 2006; Paisner, 2003; Robicheau, Haar, & Palladino, and Garrison-Wade, Sobel, & Fulmer 2007). However, it is not just the quantity of coursework that needs to be expanded, but also the focus of the course work that needs to be incorporated. Patterson, Marshall, and Bowling (2000) recommend that in order for principals be effective instructional leaders for students with disabilities that principals should have knowledge of the following:

- Principals must have a basic understanding of special education services, law, and regulation, court cases, and funding.
- Principals must understand district policies and their implications for the entries school
- Principals must understand direct norms regarding support/guidance of policy implementation
- Principals must participate in ongoing education regarding changes and trends in the field of special education.
- Principals must participate in ongoing education regarding leadership philosophy and strategies the facilitate inclusive practices
- Special education administrators through direct communication and dissemination of information must support principals.

Therefore, certification boards and schools of education should consider what coursework and certification requirements are needed in order for principals to become instructional leaders of students with disabilities. This has been demonstrated by faculty reviewing assignments, coursework, and mentoring conditions in order to be aligned with the special education needs of aspiring principals. (Garrison-wade, Sobel, & Fulmer, 2007)

However, the incorporation of additional special education classes into administrative programs is problematic given the paucity of special education faculty. This is where the shortage of special education faculty and qualified special education administrators meet at the principal's door. This is further compounded by the fact that principals often rely on special education administrators who are also unprepared to address the complexities of special education instruction. This is further exacerbated by a number of alternative administration programs, along with recruiting people outside of the field of education to become principals (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). Therefore, the question arises of how do many of these unprepared principals support their special education staff, and what effects does that have on teacher attrition, retention, and the development of future leaders in special educating?

Special Education Teachers

The phenomenon of special education teacher attrition has been well documented and researched. Foremost, special education teacher attrition directly affects the education of students with disabilities by denying them consistent effective academic instruction. The issue of special education attrition within this paper is inextricably tied to the support or lack there of necessary to retain special education teachers. Special education teachers are the product of schools of higher education that face shortages of qualified instructors; they are recipients of directives from many unqualified directors of special education; and they are required to seek support and guidance, along with being evaluated by principals unprepared to do either.

This translates into rates of attrition up to 9.3% while another 7.4% move to general education annually. This translates into and attrition rate of 16.7% of new special education teachers per year. (Thornton, Peltier, & Medina, 2007) Billingsley (2004) conducted a literature review of the research on special education teacher attrition. There are four themes in the research on special education teacher attrition that include teacher characteristics and personal factors, teacher qualifications, work environments, and affective responses to work.

Teacher Characteristics and Personal Factors

Billingsley, (2004) found that age is a factor in attrition as younger teachers are more likely to leave the professions. Also, experience is a factor in that the less experience a teacher has the more likely they are to leave the profession. Personal factors such as family and financial obligations also influence the attrition of special education teachers. However, factors such as race and gender have proved inconsistent as influencing teacher attrition.

Teacher Qualifications

Billingsley (2004) found that teacher certification is linked to attrition, as certified teachers are less likely to leave than uncertified teachers. In addition, teachers with higher academic ability are more likely to leave the field. Also, perceived preparedness is another variable in special education teacher attrition as better-prepared special education teachers are more likely to stay in the profession.

Work Environments

Work environment have proved integral to special education teacher attrition and retention (Billingsley, 2004). Work environment factors that influence special education teacher attrition include the following:

- Salary: This variable is instrumental in retaining teachers and a factor in teacher attrition where higher paid special education teachers were more likely to stay in the profession.
- School Climate: This variable is tied to special education teacher retention in that special education teachers who viewed the school climate positively were more likely to stay in the profession.
- Administrative Support: This variable is instrumental in special education teacher attrition as teachers are more likely to leave in the absence of administrative support especially regarding site administrative support. Similarly, the Study of Personnel Needs In Special Education (SPENSE) (2000) found that the administrators' role is instrumental in ensuring that teachers have the requisite knowledge, skills, and positive working conditions to fulfill their roles.
- Colleague Support: This variable is associated with attrition due to low levels of colleague support are correlated with attrition.
- Central Office Administrative Support: This variable influenced attrition through the lack of professional development opportunities, stress related to role design, along with policies and student placement.
- Support through Induction and training: This variable is significant as it is within the first few years of teaching that attrition takes place. The more support a teacher receives the less likely they are to leave the profession. Whitaker (2003) found that beginning special education teachers require support in the areas of district policies, paperwork, procedures, guidelines, and expectations. In addition, beginning special education teachers also reported that they need additional emotional support, knowledge school procedures along with resources and materials. Also, White & Mason, 2006 found that administrative support was rated "very important" in effective mentoring programs. In addition, Washburn-Moses, (2005) recommends that principals handpick mentors in order to introduce and support the new teachers to policy and practices at both the district and site level.
- Professional development: This variable is associated with special educator's opportunities to learn and grow that influences attrition. Billingsley,(2004) contends that professional development is critical for both teacher and student growth and can influence a teacher's intent to stay or leave.
- Role Problems: This variable involves role overload, role conflict, role ambiguity, and role dissonance that all have an effect on attrition. Similarly, Embich, (2001) found that role problems contributes to professional burnout that includes emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. This is often associated to the changing roles of special education teachers in response to inclusive education.
- Paperwork: This variable is a major contributor to attrition due to the voluminous nature of special education paperwork. For example, SPENSE found that on average 5 hours on paperwork compared to 2 hours for their general education colleagues.
- Caseloads: This involves the number and types of students on teacher's caseloads. For example, teachers of students with specific learning disabilities were less likely to leave than teachers who taught students with emotional disturbance.

It is evident that work environments have a profound effect on special education teacher attrition.

In fact administrative support is a common variable in a number of the working conditions that contribute to special education teacher attrition. In fact, out of the 10 work environment variables, administrative support is involved in 7 with the exception of salary, central administrative support, and paperwork. Although, central office administrative support and the amount of paperwork could be influenced by the site administrator.

Affective Responses to Work

Billingsley (2004) found that the literature concludes there are a number of variables that contribute the work problems associated with affective reactions that include (a) stress is a powerful predictor of special educators attrition and intent to leave; (b) Job satisfaction is strongly linked with attrition that often tied to working conditions; and (c) Commitment suggests that those teachers with lower levels of commitment as identified through believes, desire, and values in an organizations mission are less likely to stay.

Recommendations

There are a number of things principals can do to retain special education teachers. Carpenter and Dyal (2001) recommend ten components to retain special education teachers that include:

1. Develop an Inclusive Mission statement: This mission statement should reflect a statement that reflects diversity, excellence, and a commitment to an inclusive environment
2. Establish Clear communication: This involves clear lines of communication between special educators, general educators, and school leaders.
3. Define roles and responsibilities: This involves the principal communicating the role of each school professional in the special education process, thereby eliminating ambiguity and conflict in respective roles.
4. Establish collaborative teams: This involves the principal creating an environment conducive to collaboration by eliminating the isolation felt by special educators, dedicating time for collaboration thereby creating the context for co-planning, conferencing, team meeting and collaborative problem solving.
5. Create flexible schedules: This involves the principal providing creative scheduling the ensure that the special educator can be effective by providing planning time with general educators and other special educators in order to share strategies, plan lessons and design behavioral interventions.
6. Insure manageable caseloads: The administer can determine a manageable caseload by considering, the learning needs of the students, the roles of the special educator, the levels of support needed by the students by disability, the age of the student, the paperwork involved, and the role of the pare-educator.
7. Understand special education law: The principal should understand the framework of special education law in order to support special education teachers. One strategy if for the special educator to proved professional development to the administrative team and general educators.
8. Provide clerical assistance: The principal can allocate additional clerical support to alleviate the often-overwhelming paperwork requirements of special education.
9. Support meaningful professional development: The principal should provide targeted special education professional development that is based focused roles and responsibilities, related to the teachers' dally responsibilities, connected to students outcomes, and linked with the general education curriculum and standards.
10. Provide appropriate material and resources: The principal should provide materials that correspond to both student needs and teachers roles. This includes intervention materials that will support access to the general education curriculum along with materials that will support the special education teacher's particular role as either an SDC teacher or a resource specialist.

In addition, Thornton, Pettier, & Medina (2007) suggest additional strategies to retain special education teachers that include growing special education teachers and developing a proactive marketing strategy. Growing special education teachers involves cultivating a collaborative relationship between the school district and IHEs with the goal to "grow" special education teachers through financial incentives. In addition, developing a proactive marketing strategy involves creating relationship with the placement offices of universities and become actively involved in job fairs targeting special education personnel along with recruitment materials that reflect the quality of the district. The one factor that is paramount in all of these retention strategies is the principal. It is basically the principal's responsibility to retain special education teachers through multiple supports where significant knowledge pertaining to special education pedagogy, student disabilities, law, resources that are necessary to adequately support beginning special education teachers. Without this requisite knowledge, the attrition of special education teachers will continue, and the pipeline of future special education professors and administrators will continue to diminish.

Conclusion

The “roundabout” of special education leadership is a thoroughfare that is fed by four distinct roadways that include higher education, special education administration, the principal, and the special education teacher. All four of these roads lead to the “roundabout” that is special education leadership. The road to special education leadership in higher education is one that is relatively light on traffic. The flow of traffic involves the supply and demand where the demand for special education faculty exceeds the supply necessary to provide special education teachers; general education teacher, special education administrators, and general education administrators with the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively address the needs of students with disabilities within a standards driven inclusive environment.

The road to special education administration is one that is light on traffic and vague in direction. It is also, a road where the demand for special education administrators exceeds the supply of qualified candidates. It is a road where the licensing requirements are in disarray and the standards of the road are either generic or do not provide the requisite knowledge to move forward as special education administrators lack the necessary training and skill to implement balanced policy based on both compliance and accountability needed to create policy based on evidence-based administrative practices to move the students with disabilities within their respective districts forward. The road of the principal is even more complex as it is paradoxical in nature. This road involves little preparation of what lies ahead, it involves grave responsibility for what is not clearly understood; and the new roles and expectations are often undermined by the lack of knowledge and corresponding skills to address the unique needs of students with disabilities and to effectively support beginning special education teachers.

The road of the special education teacher is one where the signs that provide direction change continuously. It is a road that is difficult to navigate alone; it is a road that is often stressful; and it is a road that often leads to other roads other than education. This is truly unfortunate due to the special education teacher is most likely to travel the roads of higher education, special education administration, and principal if provided directions, guidance, and support. The “roundabout” of special education leadership is under construction. There are many recommendations as to how it will be shaped, many ideas as to new rules that will govern the road; new licensing requirements to drive on it; and the imperative that it is fixed quickly in order to move students with disabilities forward.

References

- Bays, D, Crockett, J. B. (2007) Investigating Instructional Leadership for Special Education. *Exceptionality*, 15(3), 143-161
- Bays, D.A. (2004): Science in the Schoolhouse: The Critical Role of the School Leader. *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 37(3) 256-261
- Billingsley, B. S. (2004). Promoting Teacher Quality and Retention in Special Education. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 37 (5), 370-6
- Billingsley, B.S. (2004). Special Education Teacher Retention and Attrition: A Critical Analysis of the Research Literature. *The Journal of Special Education*, 387 (1), 39-55
- Boscardin, M.L. (2004). Transforming Administration to Support Science in the Schoolhouse. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 37(3), 262-9
- Boscardin, M.L. (2005). The administrative Role in Transforming Secondary Schools to Inclusive-Evidence-Based Practices. *American Secondary Education*, 33 (3) 21-32
- Boscardin, M.L. (2007). What is Special About Special Education Administration? Considerations for School Leadership. *Exceptionality*, 15(3), 189-200
- Bertrand, L, Roberts R.A., & Dalton, M. (2009). Surviving the first Years: A Principals Guide For Implementing a Quality special education Program. *Academic Leadership*
- Bowden-Carpenter, L, & Dyal, A. (2001). Retaining Quality Special Educators: A Prescription for School Principals in the 21st Century. *Catalyst for Change*, 30(3) 5-7
- Bugaj, S.J., & Milchick, S. (2003). Learning & Observing. *Principal Leadership*, 4 (2) *Leadership*, 7 (1) 1-251-54
- Canter, A. (2004). A Problem-Solving Model for Improving Student achievement. *Principal Leadership Magazine*, 5 (4)
- Center for Personnel Studies in Special Education. (2004). Special Education Administrators: What Should Districts Know About Their Candidates. Gainesville, FL: Author

- Conderman, G., & Pedersen, T. (2005). Promoting Positive special Education Practices. *NASSP Bulletin*, 89, 90-98
- Council of Chief State School Officers. (2008). Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards. Washington D.C. Author
- Council For Exceptional Children. (2010) New Standards for Advanced Roles in Special Education. Arlington, VA: Author
- Crockett, J. B. (2002). Special Education's Role in Preparing Responsive Leaders for Inclusive Schools. *Remedial and Special education*, 23 (3), 157-168
- Crockett, J. B., & Yell, M.L. (2008). Without Data All We Have Are Assumptions: Revisiting the Meaning of a Free Appropriate Public education. *Journal of Law & Education*, 37 (3) 381-92
- Crockett, J. B. (2007). The Changing Landscape of Special Education Administration. *Exceptionality*, 15 (3), 139-142
- DiPaola, M., & Walther-Thomas, C. (2003). Principals and Special Education: The Critical Role of the School Leaders. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida, Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education
- DiPaola, M., Tschannen-Moran, M., & Walther-Thomas, C. (2004). School Principals and Special Education: Creating the Context for Academic Success. Focus on *Exceptional Children*, 37 (1) 1-10
- Dooley, A. E. (2003). Increasing the Number of Ethnically Diverse Faculty in Special Education Programs: Issues and Initiatives. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 26 (4), 264-7
- Elliot, M., Evans, S., & Hood, J. (2005). Assessing the Special Education Faculty Shortage: The Crisis in California-A Statewide Study of the Professoriate. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 32 (4), 7-21.
- Embich, J.L. (2001). The relationship of Secondary Special Education teachers' Roles and Factors That Lead to Professional Burnout. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 24 (1), 58-69
- Ervin, R.A., Peacock, G.G., & Merrell, K.W. (2010) The School Psychologist as Problem Solver in the 21st Century. *Practical Handbook of School Psychology: Effective Practices for the 21st Century* By G. G. Peacock, R. A. Ervin, E. J. Daly III, & K. W. Merrell (Eds.) 2010, Guilford Fuchs, D., Mock, D., Morgan, P.L., & Young, C.L. (2003). Responsiveness-to-Intervention: Definitions, Evidence, and Implications for the Learning Disabilities Construct. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 18 (3), 157-171
- Fuchs, D., & Fuchs, L.S. (2005). Responsiveness-To-Intervention: A Blueprint for Practitioners, Policymakers, and Parents. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 38 (1), 57-61
- Garrison-Wade, D., Sobel, D., & Fulmer, L. C. (2007). Inclusive Leadership: Preparing Principals for the Role that Awaits Them. *Educational Leadership and Administration*, 19, 117-132
- Green, J. A. (2008). Collaborating with Special Education Administrators. *Principal*, 88 (2), 12-15
- Gronn, P. (2002). Distributed Leadership as a Unit of Analysis. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13, 423-451
- Hardman, M.L., & West, J. (2003). Increasing the Number of Special Education Faculty: Policy Implications and Future Directions. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 26 (3), 206-21457-6
- Katsiyannis, A., Zhang, D., Ryan, J. & Jones, J. (2007). High-Stakes Testing and Students With Disabilities. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies* 18 (3) 160-7
- Lashley, C. (2007). Principal Leadership for Special education: An Ethical Framework. *Exceptionality*, 15(3) 177-187
- Lashley, C.L., & Boscardin, M. (2003). Special Education Administration at a Crossroad. *Journal of Special Education Leadership*, 16, 63-75
- Lasky, B., & Karge, B.D. (2006). Meeting the Needs of Students With Disabilities: Experience and Confidence of Principals. *NASSP Bulletin* 90 (1), 19-36
- Milson, A. (2006). Creating Positive School experiences for Students with Disabilities. *School counseling*, 10 (1) 66-72
- Patterson, J., Marshall, C., & Bowling, D. (2000). Are Principals Prepared to Manage Special Education Dilemmas? *NASSP Bulletin*, 84 (613), 9-20
- Potter, L., & Apically, V. (2001). A Proactive Approach to Special Education. *Principal*, 81 (2)
- Prisoner, C.L. (2003). Attitudes of Elementary School Principals Toward the Inclusion of Students with Disabilities. *Council for Exceptional Children*, 69 (2), 135-145
- Ring, M. & Retz, L. (2003). Meeting the Needs of Students with LD in the Middle Grades. *Principal*, 83 (1), 69
- Robicheau, J., Haar, J., & Palladino, J. (2008) Preparation and Leadership in Special Education. *International Journal of Education Leadership*. Retrieved from <http://www.expressacadademic.org>

- Rosenberg, M. S., & Sindelar, P.T. (2005). The Proliferation of Alternative Routes to Certification in special Education: A Critical Review of the Literature. *The Journal of Special Education, 39* (2), 117-127
- Shapiro, J. P., & Stefkovich, J. A. (2005) Ethical Leadership and Decision Making in Education. *Applying Theoretical Perspectives to Complex Dilemmas* (2nd Ed). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum
- Sindelar, P.T., & Rosenberg, M.S. (2003). The Demand for Faculty in special Education: A Study of Searches Conducted in 1997-1998. *Teacher education and special education, 26* (3), 165-171
- Serpentine, A., & Zirke, P.A. (2004). Is NCLB Leaving Special Education Students Behind? *Principal, 83* (5) 26-9
- Smith, D.D., Pion, G., Tyler, N.C., Sindelar, P. T. & Rosenberg, M. (2001). Final report: The Study of Special Education Leadership Personnel with Particular Attention to the Professoriate (OSEP Project Number H920T970006-00A). Nashville: Vanderbilt University.
- Smith, D., Pion, G.M. Chowdhuri Tyler, N., & Gilmore, R. (2003). Doctoral Programs in Special Education: The Nations' Supplier. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 26* (3), 172-181
- Smith, D. D., Pion, G. M., & Tyler, N. C. (2004). Leadership Personnel in Special Education: Can persistent shortages be resolved? In A.M. Sorells, R.J., Rieth and P. T. Sindelar (Eds.), *Critical Issues in Special Education* (pp. 258-276). Boston: Alan & Bacon.
- Smith, D.D, Mortorff Robb, S., West, J., & Chowdhuri Tyler, N. (2010). The Changing Education Landscape: How Special Education Leadership Preparation Can Make a Difference for Teachers and Their Students with Disabilities. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 33* (1), 25-43
- Special Education Faculty Needs Assessment. (2010). Improvements in the Supply of Special education Faculty. Claremont, CA: Author
- Special Education Faculty Needs Assessment. (2009). Follow-up of Doctoral Students Supported by OSEP Funded Leadership Preparation Projects Initiated in Fiscal Years 2000 and 2001. Claremont, CA: Author
- Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education (2002) Paperwork in Special Education. Gainesville, FL: Author
- Study of Personnel Needs in Special Education (2003). Local Administrators 'Role in Promoting Teacher Quality. Gainesville, FL: Author
- Spillane, J.P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2004). Towards a Theory of Leadership: A distributed Perspective. *J. Curriculum Studies, 36* (1) 3-34
- Thornton, B., Peltier, G., & Medina, R. (2007). Reducing the Special Education Teacher Shortage. *The Clearing House, 80* (5) 233-8
- Tyler, N. C., Smith, D., & Pion, G. M. (2003). Doctoral Student in Special education: Characteristics and Career Aspirations. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 26* (3), 194-205
- Unzueta, C. H., Moores-Abdool, W., Vazquez Donet, D. (2010). Perceptions of Special Education Professors and Culturally Linguistically Diverse Doctoral Students on Cohorts. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 33* (2), 169-182
- Volz, D. L., & Collins, L. (2010). Preparing Special Education administrators for Inclusion in Diverse, Standards-Based Contexts: Beyond the Council for Exceptional Children and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 33* (1) 70-82
- Wagner, J., & Katsiyannis, A. (2010). Special education Litigation Update: Implications for School Administrators. *NASSP Bulletin, 94* (1) 40-52
- Washburn-Moses, L. (2005). How to Keep Your Special Education Teachers. *Principal Leadership, 5* (5), 35-8
- Washburn-Moses, L., & Therrien, W. J. (2008). The impact of Leadership Personnel Preparation Grants on the doctoral Student Population in Special Education. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 31* (2), 65-76
- Whitaker, S.D. (2003). Needs of Beginning Special Education Teachers: Implications for Teacher Education. *Teacher Education and special Education, 26* (2), 106-117
- White, M., & Mason, C, Y. (2006). Components of a Successful Mentoring Program for Beginning Special Education Teachers: Perspective from New Teachers and Mentors. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 29* (3) 191-201
- Wigle, S. E., & Wilcox, D. J. (2002). Special Education Directors and Their Competencies on CEC –Identified Skills. *Education, 132* (2), 276-288
- Yell, M.L., Katsiyannis, A., & Bradley, R. (2003). A Special Role. *Principal Leadership.4*(2), 22-28.