ABSTRACT

Principals' Perceptions of Self-Efficacy to Administer Special Education in Relation to Regional Education Service Center Professional Learning Opportunities

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The purpose of this doctoral study was to investigate Texas principals' perceptions of self-efficacy to administer special education services. An additional focus was the degree to which principals perceived the professional learning opportunities based at their Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs) to be supportive of their efforts to administer special education services. In Texas, efforts at the state, regional, and local levels aligned with federal mandates and practices in a transition from compliance heavy systems of special education to one that balances compliance requirements with a focus on improving student outcomes (TEA, 2018b). RESCs are at the center of this shift (TEA, 2018b) and have the potential to develop professional learning opportunities strategically designed to support Texas principals in the administration of special education services.

A statewide survey of practicing principals in November 2019 from the southwest region of the United States, specifically, Texas, provided perception and demographic data utilized in this research. The Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System rubric served as the foundation for the survey instrument utilized in this study. The study's

research questions were addressed broadly using a variety of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques.

RQ1. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services? And will there be a difference in the perceived level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by gender of school administrator?

RQ2. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by campus descriptor of school administrator?

RQ3. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by perceived level of inclusivity?

RQ4. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by special education certification status of school administrator?

RQ5. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by age?

RQ6. To what degree do principals perceive the level of efficacy of their RESC-based professional learning opportunities in supporting their administration of special education services?

Principals' Perceptions of Self-Efficacy to Administer Special Education in Relation to Regional Education Service Center Professional Learning Opportunities

by

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A Dissertation

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To achieve such an accomplishment as to complete my doctorate in educational administration and leadership from Baylor University almost seems like a dream. This journey has brought many amazing people into my life, and I will forever be grateful for the individual and collective contributions they have made to my success in this program.

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DEDICATION

For Stacy, Emma, Mia, Aiden, and Addi May.

I dedicate this dissertation to each of you equally if for individual reasons uniquely. For my wife, my desires, my hopes, and my dreams. For Stacy my love I sacrifice me. My life is my Stacy because she is my Why. My wife is my purpose, my passion, my pride.

For Emma my love, I offer my hope. In knowing you are better than my best, I bestow. The best I could muster to you my free soul. I will offer it all just so you know. The love of a father I give to my daughter with prayers of acceptance as I watch you grow.

For Mia my courage, I leave as an offering. For Mia, my passion. For Mia, my longing. For Mia, my purpose, my presence, my toil. I give to you Mia my vision and voice. For Mia, my Leader goes integrity of word. To Mia go wings to my little songbird.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	Analysis of variance
ED	U.S. Department of Education
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
FAPE	Free and appropriate public education
HB	House Bill
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IDEA 2004	Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act
IEP	Individual education plan
LEA	Local education agency
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs
PBMAS	Performance based monitoring analysis system
RDA	Results driven accountability
RESC	Regional education service center
STAAR	State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness
TEA	Texas Education Agency
T-PESS	Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System
T-TESS	Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System
UDL	Universal Design for Learning

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The purpose of this doctoral study was to investigate Texas principals' perceptions of self-efficacy to administer special education services. An additional focus of the study was the degree to which principals perceived the professional learning opportunities provided at their Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs) to be supportive of their efforts to administer special education services. The study also provides perspective on the historical context in which children with disabilities receive educational opportunities in relation to the ever-changing role of the principal in consideration of complexities characterizing the coordination of services and supports provided through special education. Albert Bandura explained perceived self-efficacy to be a determining factor as to "whether coping behavior will be initiated, how much effort will be expended, and how long it will be sustained in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences." (Bandura, 1977, p. 191). RESCs are defined as "intermediate educational units that provide training, technical assistance, administrative support, and an array of other services as determined by the Legislature, the Commissioner of Education, and the needs of local school districts and charter schools" (MGT of America Inc., 2004, p. 1).

Various researchers have explored the relationship between principal leadership practices and special education (Billingsly, 2005; DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2004; Lashley, 2007). However, there appears to be a gap in the literature regarding principals' perceptions of self-efficacy to administer special

education in relation to professional learning opportunities supporting these efforts at RESCs.

Statement of Problem

There continues to be a widening achievement gap between students receiving special education services and their nondisabled peers, which is evident at the national, state, and local level (Korobkin & Meller, 2019), and unless this problem is approached differently, there will always be an achievement gap (Bays & Crockett, 2007; McLaughlin, 2009). With adequate resources and instruction, students with disabilities can gain higher levels of achievement to close that gap (McLaughlin, 2009). However, despite ongoing efforts on the part of the U.S. Department of Education (ED), there has not been a real change in approach—from a compliance focus to an achievement focus—or a closing of the achievement gap in Texas schools. According to Edwards (2012), special education services delivery is the same today as it was 40 years ago. This is a big problem.

Effective school-based leadership is an essential element of special education implementation at the campus level (Schulze & Boscardin, 2018). For this reason, principals' perceptions of self-efficacy in relation to the administration of special education was the focus of this study. Extensive research conducted by Marzano, Waters, and McNaulty (2005) suggested that campus leadership drives change at the campus level. In the presumption that campus principals are amenable to implement changes on their campuses to better address the issue of achievement among special education students, McLaughlin (2009) posited that they may be lacking in knowledge or

skills to effect such a change. Principals also may not feel a high level of urgency about addressing these issues or may feel they lack the time to attend additional training. To develop the capacity for such leadership knowledge and skills, principals need professional learning customized to their needs. This can be accomplished through practice-based learning, which focuses on the specific areas in need of improvement. In this case, that area involves principal administration of special education and the deployment and implementation of systemic changes, which necessitates managing staff effectively. For this reason, an additional focus of the study was the degree to which principals perceived their RESC-based professional learning opportunities to be supportive of their efforts to administer special education services. The collection of perception data from principals around the state of Texas, will enable RESCs to provide professional learning that meets these criteria.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this broadly nonexperimental, quantitative study was to investigate the degree to which Texas principals perceived their efficacy to administer special education services. An additional focus of the study was the degree to which principals perceived their RESC-based professional learning opportunities to be supportive of their efforts to administer special education services. In Texas, efforts at the state, regional, and local levels align with federal mandates and practices in a transition from a compliance-heavy system of special education to one that balances compliance requirements with a focus on improving student outcomes (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2018b). RESCs are at the center of this shift and have potential to

develop novel models of professional learning strategically designed to support Texas principals in the administration of special education services. The information gathered from this study will inform future RESC offerings for supporting Texas principals in the administration of special education. A November 2019 statewide survey of practicing principals from the southwest region of the United States (i.e., Texas) provided perception and demographic data utilized in this research.

Research Questions

The following six research questions framed this study:

RQ1. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services? And will there be a difference in the perceived level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by gender of school administrator?

RQ2. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by campus descriptor of school administrator?

RQ3. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by perceived level of inclusivity?

RQ4. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by special education certification status of school administrator?

RQ5. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by age?

RQ6. To what degree do principals perceive the level of efficacy of their RESC-based professional learning opportunities in supporting their administration of special education services?

Background

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that all students with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment with access to the general curriculum (Frost & Kersten, 2011). This necessitates that schools maintain a continuum of educational settings offering special education services as appropriate for each individual child with a disability. The responsibility to administer these settings and services falls under the purview of campus principals at students' home campuses and schools (Lasky & Karge, 2006). The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), a division of the ED, has consistently asserted that the principal is responsible for providing instructional leadership ensuring students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE; Heumann & Hehir, 1998). This study focused on Texas principals' perceptions of their efficacy to administer special education services as related to professional learning opportunities supporting these efforts at RESCs. The dissemination of a web-based online statewide survey through RESC principal email listservs collected perception data regarding principals' self-efficacy in the administration of special education services and perceptions of RESC-based professional learning opportunities in support of these efforts. Collection and analysis of the quantitative data from this study provided significant findings, which could be used in the development of future RESC-based professional learning opportunities for Texas principals with respect to the administration of special education. According to Maze (2009), "RESCs were reported to have the best opportunity as an intermediary to provide support for their regional schools in part because of distance from local political pressures and in part because of the relationships arising from geographic proximity" (p. 58). RESCs are in an

optimal position, organizationally and geographically, to help local education agencies (LEAs) across Texas. Many LEAs in Texas depend on RESCs to support their efforts to respond to federal and state shifts in accountability.

Shift in Accountability

According to the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (also referred to as IDEA), all states must develop a state performance plan and an annual performance report to assess the states' efforts to implement the requirements of the IDEA and a description of improvement efforts in doing so (ED, 2004). In 2014, the OSEP began implementing results driven accountability (RDA) in an attempt to modify its oversight of state and local education agencies with regard to the implementation of provisions of the IDEA to include achievement and outcomes data in addition to compliance indicators. According to Korobkin and Meller (2019), the shift to RDA was in response to longitudinal data showing that federal efforts to close achievement gaps between students with disabilities and those without have not been successful. The National Assessment of Educational Progress scores from 2009 to 2015 reflected an increase in the gap between the average mathematics scores of students without disabilities and those with disabilities from a 22-point gap in 2009 to an achievement gap of 28 points by 2015 (Korobkin & Meller, 2019). Coupled with the higher national dropout rates of students with disabilities as compared to those without, and it was evident that federal, state, and local efforts had not been successful under the compliance-heavy accountability model of years past.

The achievement gaps evident at the national level regarding the academic performance of students with disabilities are also reflected in student performance statistics in Texas schools (TEA, 2018b). There has been much attention on state accountability regarding the oversight of special education by the TEA over the past several years. This is in large part due to policies and procedures associated with the performance-based monitoring analysis system (PBMAS), which was the state monitoring system for special education between the years of 2004 and 2018. The TEA transitioned from the PBMAS to RDA in 2019 to align with federal monitoring and oversight of the implementation of the IDEA. With an emphasis on student achievement and outcomes in addition to compliance indicators, the TEA has stated that the transition to RDA offers a balanced approach to the state's responsibility to monitor the implementation of the provisions of the IDEA by the LEAs in Texas (TEA, 2018b). LEA is the term utilized by the TEA to describe the independent school districts, consolidated independent school districts, and public charter schools that comprise the public schools in Texas. As part of the shift to RDA, the TEA has restructured its department of special education and implemented a new system of monitoring and support to LEAs. The differentiated monitoring support system consists of two types of special education program monitoring: cyclical reviews and targeted reviews. The review and support division at the TEA oversaw these processes. With the adoption of RDA, implementation of a differentiated monitoring support system, and oversight from the TEA's review and support division, many LEAs are in need of assistance. In order to adapt to these changes, principals must adjust their practice as well.

The Need for Change

Due to changes in special education introduced by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the IDEA 2004, principals became increasingly responsible for ensuring that students in special education had access to the general education curriculum (McLaughlin, 2009). The more recent shift to RDA once again elevated the responsibility of principals for the achievement outcomes of students with disabilities. Despite the numerous iterations of the IDEA, the achievement of students with disabilities continues to lag behind that of their peers without disabilities in Texas (TEA, 2018). In response to an increased emphasis on student performance and the lack of progress in closing the achievement gap, Alvoid and Black (2014) theorized that principals must master new competencies that focus heavily on data dissemination, curricular expertise, and development of human capital. The redesign of the Texas principal standards in 2016 resulted in the Principal as Instructional Leader certification, which began on September 1, 2019. This required Texas principals to continue to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to be instructional leaders for all students. The dilemma faced by current and future principals is that these changing and increasing expectations do not replace other managerial concerns for which campus administrators continue to be responsible. Such conditions, when combined with limited opportunities for training and support, have left many principals feeling ill equipped to effectively meet the demands of school leadership (Zimmerman & May, 2003).

In light of the changes at the federal and state level regarding the addition of RDA and the Supreme Court's ruling in the case of *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District RE-1* (*Endrew F.*), schools must transform their special education programs from

a focus on compliance only to a focus that includes student achievement outcomes. This realization raises the question of whether principals in Texas are prepared to lead these efforts. Coupled with the current state of special education in Texas, it is evident that Texas principals require additional support through RESC-based professional learning opportunities to support their efforts in the administration of special education. The time has come to take an honest look at special education in Texas and the perceptions of Texas principals regarding their efficacy to administer these services at the campus level.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms were used in this study. The term *principal* represents both principals and assistant principals in this study.

Americans With Disabilities Act: The Americans With Disabilities Act is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the public. The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else (U.S. Department of Justice, 2019).

Admission, review, and dismissal committee: In Texas, a child's eligibility for special education services and most of the major decisions about a child's special education program are made by an admission, review, and dismissal committee. This group is also referred to as an individualized education program (IEP) team, which is the term used in federal law (The Legal Framework, 2017).

Adequate yearly progress: Adequate yearly progress refers to the federally mandated accountability system required by the NCLB Act of 2001 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). All public school districts, campuses, and states are evaluated annually for adequate yearly progress (TEA, 2013).

Annual performance report: States are required to create a 6-year performance plan that assesses the state's implementation of the requirements and purposes of the IDEA. This state performance plan illuminates the state's continuous improvement efforts of implementation, and contains updates through the annual performance report submitted in February of each year (TEA, 2019b).

Analysis of variance (ANOVA): ANOVA provides a statistical test of whether two or more population means are equal, and therefore generalizes the *t* test beyond two means (Gay & Airasian, 2003).

Autism: The IDEA defines autism as a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal communication, nonverbal communication, and social interaction. Other characteristics often associated with autism are: engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements; resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences (TEA, 2019a).

Differentiated monitoring and support: The differentiated monitoring and support diagnostic framework includes three programmatic pillars: implementation, student outcomes, and family engagement. These pillars are integral to the analysis of the seven critical areas of compliance within the monitoring framework. The diagnostic framework supports the TEA and LEAs in developing differentiated support activities to promote compliance and continuous improvement of outcomes for students with disabilities (TEA, 2019b).

Education for the Handicapped Act: Following the passage of the ESEA of 1965, the Education of the Handicapped Act established minimum compliance requirements of states receiving federal funds with the intention of supporting states to provide a FAPE to students with disabilities (ED, 2019).

Education for All Handicapped Children Act: The Education for all Handicapped Children Act was enacted in 1975 and required all public schools accepting federal funds to provide equal access to education and one free meal a day for children with physical and mental disabilities. In turn, schools were required to evaluate children with disabilities and create an educational plan with parent input that would emulate as closely as possible the educational experience of students without disabilities (ED, 2019).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA): The 89th U.S. Congress passed the ESEA, which was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on April 11, 1965. The act provided federal funding to primary and secondary education, with funds authorized for professional development, instructional materials, and resources to support educational programs, and parental involvement promotion. The act emphasized equal access to education, aiming to shorten the achievement gaps between students by providing federal funding to support schools with children from impoverished families (ED, 2019).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): In 2015, President Obama signed the ESSA, which reauthorized the ESEA and built on key areas of progress made possible in recent years by the efforts of educators, communities, parents, and students across the country (ED, 2019).

Free and appropriate public education (FAPE): The cornerstone of the IDEA is the entitlement of each eligible child with a disability to a FAPE that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet the child's unique needs and to prepare the child for further education, employment, and independent living (ED, 2019).

Handicapped Children's Protection Act: Integral in this iteration of federal law was the provision for increased parental input in the development of the child's IEP. It also authorized awards of attorneys' fees to families of children with disabilities who prevailed in Education for the Handicapped Act lawsuits. This law also allowed for the cumulating of available remedies under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (ED, 2019).

Highly qualified teacher: This refers to the "requirements for special education teachers teaching core academic subjects. For any public elementary or secondary school special education teacher teaching core academic subjects, the term highly qualified has the meaning given the term in section 9101 of the ESEA and 34 CFR 200.56" (OSEP Data Dictionary, p. 44).

Individualized Education Program (IEP): Each public school child who receives special education and related services must have an IEP. Each IEP must be designed for one student and must be a truly individualized document. The IEP creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel, and students (when appropriate) to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities. The IEP is the cornerstone of a quality education for each child with a disability (TEA, 2019a).

Individualized Transition Plan: An individual transition plan is a plan developed for special education students to set goals and help the student transition successfully into post-high-school life. This plan is part of an IEP (ED, 2019).

Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004): The IDEA 2004 is a law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children (ED, 2019).

Least restrictive environment: Least restrictive environment is part of the IDEA, which says that children who receive special education should learn in the least restrictive environment. This means they should spend as much time as possible with peers who do not receive special education (TEA, 2019a).

National Assessment of Educational Progress: The National Assessment of Educational Progress is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas (ED, 2019).

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB): Enacted in 2002, NCLB established that states were responsible for holding schools accountable for student achievement. The law provided a rigid framework for states and declared the universal goal that every student in every school be proficient in reading and math. The law was scheduled for revision in 2007, and over time, NCLB's prescriptive requirements became increasingly unworkable for schools and educators. NCLB was replaced by the ESSA in 2015 (ED, 2019).

Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP): OSEP administers the IDEA, which authorizes formula grants to states under Part B. The office also administers grants for the infants and families program under Part C, and discretionary grants under Part D to institutions of higher education and other nonprofit organizations to support grants for state personnel development, technical assistance, technology, personnel development, and parent training and information centers (ED, 2019).

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services: A division within the ED, which supports programs that help educate children and youth with disabilities and provides for the rehabilitation of youth and adults with disabilities. The division provides a wide array of supports to parents and individuals, school districts, and states in two main areas—special education and vocational rehabilitation—through its two main components: OSEP and RSA (ED, 2019).

Performance based monitoring analysis system (PBMAS): The PBMAS was an automated data system through which administrators could track and report the performance of school districts and charter schools in selected program areas (i.e., bilingual education and English as a second language, career and technical education, certain federal title programs, and special education). From the data contained in the PBMAS as well as certain state performance plan federally required district determination elements, PBMAS staff produced annual PBMAS district reports (TEA, 2019b).

Results driven accountability (RDA): The RDA is an LEA-level, data-driven monitoring system developed and implemented annually by the division of review and support in coordination with other departments within the TEA (TEA, 2019c).

Regional education service center (RESC): RESCs are defined as "intermediate educational units that provide training, technical assistance, administrative support, and an array of other services as determined by the Legislature, the Commissioner of Education, and the needs of local school districts and charter schools" (MGT of America Inc., 2004, p. 1).

Response to intervention: "Process used by educators to help students struggling with a skill or lesson. If a child does not respond to the initial interventions, more focused interventions are used to help the child master the skill. Response to intervention strategies address both learning and behavior" (Special Education Guide, 2019).

Section 504: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance from the ED (ED, 2019).

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR): The STAAR are a series of standardized tests used in Texas public primary and secondary schools to assess students' achievements and knowledge acquired in the grade level (TEA, 2019a).

State Board of Educator Certification: the Texas Legislature created the State Board of Educator Certification in 1995 to recognize public school educators as professionals and to grant educators the authority to govern the standards of their profession. The board oversees all aspects of the preparation, certification, and standards of conduct of public school educators (TEA, 2019a).

Texas State Board of Education: The Texas State Board of Education sets policies and standards for Texas public schools. The primary responsibilities of the board include setting curriculum standards, reviewing and adopting instructional materials, establishing graduation requirements, and overseeing the Texas Permanent School Fund in addition to others (TEA, 2019d).

State performance plan: States are required to create a 6-year performance plan that assesses the state's implementation of the requirements and purposes of the IDEA 2004. This state performance plan illuminates the state’s continuous improvement efforts of implementation and contains updates through the Annual performance report submitted in February of each year (TEA, 2019b).

Texas Education Agency (TEA): The TEA is the state agency that oversees primary and secondary public education. The commissioner of education heads the TEA. The agency works to improve outcomes for all public school students in the state by providing leadership, guidance, and support to school systems (TEA, 2019a).

TEA review and support: The division of review and support is a unit housed in the TEA Office of Special Populations. The primary responsibilities of the review and support division are: (a) to monitor LEAs related to the IDEA, special populations, and federal and state statutes using a risk assessment index and holistic student-centered practices; and (b) to provide targeted technical assistance and support for LEAs related to special education and special populations (TEA, 2019c).

Texas Education Code: The Texas Education Code includes all laws and rules passed by the state legislature. It applies to most educational institutions that are supported in whole or part by state tax funds. The code includes a searchable index of all state codes and the Texas constitution (TEA, 2019a).

Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (T-PESS): T-PESS gives principals the guidance they need to chart their own course for professional growth and

development. At the same time, it helps principal appraisers guide that growth using clear appraisal guidelines that nurture ongoing improvement, support performance, identify performance strengths and support gaps, and provide constructive feedback (Teach for Texas, 2019).

Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS): T-TESS is a system designed by educators to support teachers in their professional growth. T-TESS strives to capture the holistic nature of teaching, which is the idea that a constant feedback loop exists between teachers and students, and gauging the effectiveness of teachers requires a consistent focus on how students respond to their teachers' instructional practices (Teach for Texas, 2019).

Traumatic brain injury: Traumatic brain injury is an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. The impact of traumatic brain injury is devastating and costly. There is no cure and the effects may be lifelong (TEA, 2019a).

U.S. Department of Education (ED): The ED was created in 1980 by combining offices from several federal agencies. The ED establishes policies on federal financial aid for education, and distributes as well as monitors those funds. It also collects data on America's schools and disseminates research while focusing national attention on key educational issues, prohibiting discrimination, and ensuring equal access to education (ED, 2019).

Delimitations

According to Pyrczak and Bruce (2005), controls on scope and design of a study that are within the control of the researcher are delimitations. The imposition of delimitations by the researcher may have affected reliability, validity, and generalization of the findings in this study. In determining the methodology and instrumentation for this study, a mixed methods approach was considered. The quantitative methodology employed in this study might have been strengthened from a mixed methods approach with additional trend analysis provided from qualitative data compared with the quantitative findings derived from the survey instrument. Analysis of survey response

variances could have provided trend data from which high frequency response topics were synthesized in the development of interview question.

Additional delimitations included the following: the convenient sampling method of selecting participants, the development of survey questions using the T-TESS Rubric, and the choice of literature utilized for the literature review. The culmination of these delimitations narrowed the scope of respondents and responses from which quantitative analysis was conducted to produce the research findings.

Limitations

In all research, limitations exist. The following limitations were present in the research design of this study. The sampling method known as convenient sampling represents an important form of sampling; however, this type of sampling is limited by generalizability of findings. Although the overall participant sample of 125 practicing principals in the southwest region of the United States was robust, it was not broadly representative of principals in this region or the state of Texas. The survey method utilized in this study may also have been a limitation due to the possibility of response bias. This phenomenon occurs in quantitative research when participant responses on a survey reflect politically or socially acceptable statements rather than authentic responses.

The nonexperimental research design of this study limited participant responses because there was no follow up regarding reasons for perceptions expressed in the survey instrument. Perception data is important because perceptions often become reality, but such studies as this do not measure hard data (Staumont, 2017). Participation in this

study was voluntary as were survey responses, which might also have created conditions that were nonrepresentative of the general population of principals in Texas. This focus of this study was on practicing principals in the southwest region of the United States (i.e., Texas), which may further limit the generalizability of findings. Additionally, there existed very limited scholarly research regarding the purpose and effectiveness of RESC implementation (Maze, 2009). The study of educational service agencies was still relatively unexplored with very little research found on this topic.

Research Methodology

A nonexperimental design was chosen for this research study for the flexibility it provides in gathering perceptions of large groups of respondents (Muijs, 2004). Survey responses from principals practicing in public schools in 2019 from the southwest region of the United States (i.e., Texas), served as the data used in this study. The subject population targeted for this research derived from RESC listservs. There are 20 RESCs in Texas and each maintains a listserv of school-based administrators. All but one RESC agreed to forward the survey instrument from this study to their principal email listservs. Participants received an email with a link to the survey instrument included. Taking part in this research study was voluntary. The total time to complete the online survey was approximately 25 minutes. When completing the survey, respondents self-reported their position. All data collected was secured in an account protected by single-signer login duo authentication.

The survey instrument utilized in this study was designed to answer the six research questions framing this study. The first section in the survey collected

demographic data. The questions in the second section were developed from the four domains and 16 dimensions that comprise the T-TESS Rubric and were designed to gain insight into principals' perceptions of their efficacy to administer special education services. The questions in the third section were also developed from the four domains and 16 dimensions comprising the T-TESS Rubric, however, these questions were designed to illicit responses related to principals' perceptions of professional learning opportunities at RESCs supporting their efforts to administer special education services. Insights gleaned from the quantitative data collected will inform practice in RESCs.

Analytic Techniques

This study was conducted using quantitative research techniques in the analysis of perception data collected from a survey instrument. The research questions framing this study and the resulting survey questions derived from the T-TESS Rubric. This instrument is the tool most commonly utilized by principals in Texas in evaluating and supporting teaching proficiency (Teach for Texas, 2019). The four domains and 16 dimensions that make up the T-TESS Rubric consist of evidence-based practices to assist principals with teachers in decision making for the improvement of instructional quality and student performance.

Data

The survey instrument utilized in this study was comprised of three sections. Each of these sections were developed to gather perception data from Texas principals. Section 1 of the survey instrument consisted of 15 questions designed to collect demographic data. Section 2 of the survey instrument consisted of 16 questions designed

to capture principal perception data regarding their efficacy to administer special education services. Section 3 of the survey instrument comprised 16 questions designed to capture principal perception data regarding the efficacy of RESC-based professional learning opportunities in the support of the administration of special education services.

Prior to the analysis of the six research questions, preliminary analyses were conducted. Specifically, the analyses that was conducted included: missing data, internal consistency (i.e., reliability) of participant response, and essential demographic information.

Missing data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Specifically, frequency counts and percentages were utilized for illustrative purposes. The randomness of missing data was assessed using Little's MCAR test statistic. An MCAR value of $p > .05$ was considered indicative of sufficient randomness of missing data.

Internal consistency (i.e., reliability) of participant responses to the survey instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. A Cronbach's alpha level of .80 or beyond was considered appropriate. The statistical significance of *a* was evaluated through the application of an *F* test. *F* values of $p < .05$ were considered statistically significant. Essential demographic information was analyzed broadly using primarily descriptive statistical techniques. Specifically, frequency counts and percentages were utilized for comparative and illustrative purposes.

Summary

This research study is organized into five chapters characterized as follows. Chapter One introduced the study and defined the problem of practice investigated. It also included a description of the purpose for conducting this research study and a general overview of the study.

A review of literature comprises the second chapter. Understanding the relationship between Texas principals' perceptions of their efficacy to administer special education services and RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting these efforts necessitated a review of literature on this topic. This review of literature consists of 10 sections. Research methodology is discussed in the Chapter Three. This involves description of research design, methods, procedures, and instrumentation employed in this study. Chapter Four provides an analysis of research findings in relation to the six research questions that framed this study. The information gleaned from the survey instrument utilized in this study provided quantitative data regarding the perceptions of Texas principals with respect to the following research questions.

RQ1. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services? And will there be a difference in the perceived level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by gender of school administrator?

RQ2. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by campus descriptor of school administrator?

RQ3. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by perceived level of inclusivity?

RQ4. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by special education certification status of school administrator?

RQ5. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by age?

RQ6. To what degree do principals perceive the level of efficacy of their RESC-based professional learning opportunities in supporting their administration of special education services?

Chapter Five consists of three elements: discussion, implications, and conclusions. This chapter encapsulates the most significant findings of this study and provides an exploration of the implications for consideration regarding future practice and additional research.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

This purpose of this study was to investigate Texas principals' perceptions of self-efficacy to administer special education services. An additional focus of the study was the degree to which principals perceived their RESC-based professional learning opportunities to be supportive of their efforts to administer special education services. The study also provides a perspective on the historical, national, state, and local context in which children with disabilities receive educational opportunities related to the ever-changing role of the principal in consideration of the complexities characterizing the coordination of services and supports provided through special education. The T-TESS framework provided the theoretical foundation for this study.

This review of literature consists of 10 sections. The first section is an overview of the chapter. The second section characterizes four historical phases of special education implementation, which are used to frame the evolution of special education service delivery in relation to the role principals have in the administration of implementation. The third section is an exploration of the first phase of implementation—referred to as the *paperwork phase*—in which the principal first becomes aware of special education but has little involvement in its implementation or administration. The fourth section includes a discussion of the second phase of implementation—referred to as the *efficiency phase*—in which the principal begins to

take on minimal managerial responsibilities regarding special education implementation. The fifth section addresses the third phase of implementation—referred to as the *compliance phase*—in which the principal become procedural pundits in response to the multitude of federal mandates characterizing this period. The sixth section provides an investigation of the fourth and final phase of implementation—referred to as the *effectiveness phase*—in which principals are charged with the shared responsibility of reimagining special education. The seventh section revisits the literature for additional analysis and topic saturation regarding the principal and the implementation of special education. The eighth section transitions from a national to a state context regarding significant events characterizing the Texas educational landscape. The ninth section focuses on the role of the RESCs in providing professional learning opportunities for principals to acquire and improve the knowledge and skills necessary for the administration of special education services in a time characterized by effective educational practices. The final section is a summary of the literature review in its conclusion.

Overview

In 1970, a Senate Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity said,

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

> of their ability, one can almost always point to the principal's leadership as the key to success. (United States Senate, 1970, p. 56)

Sentiments such as these regarding the importance of principal leadership with respect to a school's success catalyzed public and political efforts culminating in the introduction of federal legislation to protect the educational rights of children with disabilities in the Unites States. Over the past 5 decades, special education has continually evolved from its initial iteration. Originally designed to allow admittance of individuals with disabilities into public schools, the IDEA has advanced to focus on access, progress, and purpose. Schools are now required to provide students with access to general education settings and curriculum. The IDEA required that students with disabilities receive a FAPE in the least restrictive environment with access to and progress in the general curriculum (Frost & Kersten, 2011). This necessitated that schools maintain a continuum of educational settings offering special education services as appropriate for each individual child with a disability.

The responsibility to administer these settings and services falls under the purview of campus principals at students' home campuses and schools (Lasky & Karge, 2006). School-based administrators have been required to adapt to changing responsibilities and increasing accountability for student achievement necessitating general and special education programs to work in tandem (Mahdavi & Beebe-Frankenberger, 2009). Since the issuance of the Regular Education Initiative in 1986, the ED's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services has consistently asserted the principal's responsibility for providing instructional leadership ensuring that students with disabilities receive a FAPE (Heumann & Hehir, 1998).

Despite federal and state mandates requiring quality instruction for students with disabilities, there continues to be an opportunity gap with respect to having access to high quality instruction for many students in special education (TEA, 2019c). According to Angelle and Bilton (2009), a causal factor for this may be that many preservice programs do not adequately prepare principals to understand special education. As the instructional leader of the campus, a principal must ensure that all students, including students with disabilities, receive equitable educational opportunities and high-quality instruction (Sansosti, Noltemeyer, & Goss, 2010). Likewise, the principal must be available to support and guide the work of special educators in their provision of services to the students.

In Texas, efforts at the state, regional, and local levels align with federal mandates and practices in a transition from a compliance-heavy system of special education to one that balances compliance requirements with a focus on improving student outcomes (TEA, 2018b). RESCs are at the center of this shift (TEA, 2018b) and have the potential to develop novel models of professional learning strategically designed to support Texas principals in the administration of special education services. The information gathered from this study will inform future RESC offerings for supporting Texas principals in the administration of special education. The roles of principals are changing and the roles of RESCs are changing in their support of schools and school leaders (Maze, 2009). Understanding the relationship between Texas principals' perceptions of self-efficacy to administer special education services and RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting these efforts necessitated a review of literature on these topics.

Historical Phases of Special Education Implementation Framework

Although much has transpired since the inception of special education in 1975, Korobkin and Meller (2019) suggested

> that school districts have moved through three distinct, historical phases of special education service delivery: (1) the paperwork phase; (2) the efficiency phase; and (3) the compliance phase. RDA and the Endrew decision, among other policy shifts and internal reflection by states and districts, catalyzed a new phase: (4) the effectiveness phase. (p. 1)

Use of these historical phases to frame the following sections illuminates the changing role of the principal with respect to implementation of special education. The *paperwork phase* refers to the early years of special education in which principals – seen as building managers – attended to the managerial aspects of special education implementation (Kleinhammer-Trammill, 2003). The *efficiency phase* characterizes the years in which the roles of principals were rapidly changing, leading to the need for efficiency in the principal's office (Christensen, Williamson, Robertson, & Hunter, 2013). The *compliance phase* refers to the necessity that principals ensure procedural compliance with little attention to the learning outcomes of students with disabilities (Korobkin & Meller, 2019). Each of these phases represents a change in the way principals implemented special education as their role as a school-based administrator grew more complex (Liddell Kraft, 2017). The shift to the *effectiveness phase* brought additional changes, redefining expectations put on principals regarding the administration of effective special education programs (Korobkin & Meller, 2019). These phases are summarized as follows:

1. *The Paperwork Phase: (Focus on Forms)* time consuming; inconsistent and disjointed procedures; compliance issues; incomplete data.

2. *The Efficiency Phase: (Focus on Process)* standardized procedures; improved timelines; increased communication; streamlined processes.

3. *The Compliance Phase: (Focus on Accountability)* valid evaluations and IEPs; timeline monitoring; accurate reporting; proactive planning.

4. *The Effectiveness Phase: (Focus on Outcomes)* student outcomes & performance growth; ambitious & meaningful IEPs; continuous improvement cycle; results-driven decision; real-time progress monitoring; high quality service delivery; inclusive practice & staff collaboration; preventing disproportionality; equity & access (Korobkin & Meller, 2019).

Understanding these phases is necessary to navigate the transition from phase to phase. While it is theorized that most schools are currently in the *compliance phase*, some may be in variations of the prior two phases depending on the location and composition of the communities that comprise each.

In their analysis of the evolution of special education implementation, Korobkin and Meller (2019) also expound upon three key drivers, which when leveraged effectively, may offer a framework for schools in their efforts to successfully transition to RDA and begin closing the achievement gap of students with disabilities. For school districts to adapt to RDA, they must learn to improve outcomes while maintaining procedural compliance. Transition from prior phases of implementation to the *effectiveness phase* will require the cultivation of people, processes, and cultural mindsets.

The Principal Becomes Aware of Special Education (Paperwork Phase)

The Origins of Special Education

The origins of special education trace back to 1960 when President John F. Kennedy convened the President's Panel on Mental Retardation, which recommended

providing federal aid to states (Trent, 1994). However, educational historians have pointed to the 1954 Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education* as being the catalyst for school integration of students with disabilities (Jacobs-Bell, 2014). Although this case did not specifically address the rights of individuals with disabilities, it did provide the impetus for integrating previously ostracized children into public education (O'Neil & Kiracofe, 2009). When Lyndon B. Johnson signed the ESEA in 1965, funding for primary education served to expand access to public education for children with disabilities. An idea became an ideal in 1970 with the passage of the Education of the Handicapped Act, which established minimum compliance requirements of states receiving federal funds with the intention of supporting states to provide a FAPE to students with disabilities (McEllistrem, Roth, D'Agostino, & Brown, 2009). This marked the beginning of special education in public schools across the country. By signing this act into law, the federal government began federal oversight with legislated requirements for all states accepting federal dollars.

In 1973, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act became the first disability civil rights law passed in the United States and was the catalyst for the Americans With Disabilities Act, which became law in 1990. This law prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in programs that receive federal funding. Two years later on November 29, 1975, President Gerald Ford's signing of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act amended the Education for the Handicapped Act. This law, often referred to as the *bill of rights* for children with disabilities and their families, introduced "many of the most important legal protections of the legislation known as IDEA" (McEllistrem et al., 2009, p. 2). Compliance with these laws was mandatory for

all public school systems in every state across the country. The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, also referred to as Public Law 94-142,

- assured that the rights of children with disabilities and their parents . . . are protected,
- assisted states and localities to provide for the education of all children with disabilities,
- assessed and assured the effectiveness of efforts to educate all children with disabilities. (Education for all Handicapped Children Act, 1975)

In response to requirements of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, special education implementation began as a separate educational approach in which students with disabilities received special education in separate classrooms or separate campuses designed to meet their needs (Kleinhammer-Trammill, 2003). During the implementation of the *paperwork phase* of special education, principals were still seen as building managers who had little or no interaction with special education students, staff, or paperwork. Such responsibilities rested on the shoulders of special education administrators with little attention paid to the instructional needs of students with disabilities (Goor & Schwenn, 1997). During this phase, principals were neither required nor expected to understand the specifics of educating children with disabilities because of their perceived inexperience in doing so (Liddell Kraft, 2017).

Sociocultural biases and perceptions of inadequacy regarding the education of students with disabilities influenced the attitudes of many general education teachers during the *paperwork phase* (Crockett, 2002; Goor & Schwenn, 1997). This resulted in children with disabilities receiving a separate education in separate classrooms and campuses, which kept them separate from children without disabilities and general

education classrooms (Kleinhammer-Trammill, 2003). During this time, special education teachers trained to adapt instruction to the specific needs of children may or may not have loosely connected their lessons to the curriculum received by age equivalent peers without disabilities. Additional paperwork documenting the individual nature of instruction provided for students with disabilities required that special education teachers also be competent in special education law (Liddell Kraft, 2017). This allowed principals to be hands-off in the administration of special education unless problems occurred at which time special education administrators assumed much responsibility for remedies and solutions (Crockett, Becker, & Quinn, 2009).

During this period, school districts went to great lengths and often spent large amounts of money to build special education spaces envisioned as separate special locations for the students they would house. Because many principals felt ill-equipped to manage special education, school districts invested in the construction of special education campuses, which separated students into special centers away from their public schools (Crockett, 2002; Goor & Schwenn, 1997; Kleinhammer-Tramill, 2003). Other school districts elected to build or designate separate classrooms, hallways, and buildings for special education. Such decisions resulted in additional administrative paperwork, which often became the responsibility of principals. Considered a separate educational specialty, many general educators believed that special education should take place in a location separated from their classrooms, which led to separate management from special education administrators (Goor & Schwenn, 1997).

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act was amended on October 8, 1976 with the passage of Public Law 99–457. This amendment placed further

requirements on states by mandating that provision of services to families of children born with disabilities begin at the time of birth. Prior to this amendment, a child was not eligible to receive services until the age of three. The ways in which these amendments were implemented across the country were determined by each individual state as with other federal education policies.

Regular Education Initiative

The 1980s brought significant changes regarding the implementation of special education and the role principals played in administering these efforts. President Ronald Reagan further extended the rights of parents of children with disabilities with the passage of the Handicapped Children's Protection Act on August 6, 1986. Integral in this iteration of federal law was the provision for increased parental input in the development of the child's IEP. It also authorized awards of attorneys' fees to families of children with disabilities who prevailed in Education for the Handicapped Act lawsuits. This law also allowed for the cumulating of available remedies under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

In 1986, the ED's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services issued the Regular Education Initiative in coordination with the Handicapped Children's Protection Act, "which sought to establish a cohesive partnership between regular education and special education programming in order to provide inclusive services for all students including those with disabilities" (Stainback, Stainback, & Forest, 1989, p. 11). With the goal of creating inclusive classroom environments, recommendations from the Regular Education Initiative involved principals managing general education and

special education to foster teacher collaboration (Will, 1986). Additional recommendations from the Regular Education Initiative included strategies for teacher collaboration, instructional leadership approaches for principals, and suggestions for including students with more severe disabilities in general education classrooms and campuses (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). This was a significant shift for principals, bringing with it the need for additional knowledge.

Prior to 1986, special education rules, regulations, and responsibilities resided in the central office of school districts, specifically with special education administrators; however, this changed when the Regular Education Initiative pushed against exclusionary models of special education, which had become the norm at that time (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). According to Will (1986), the authors of the Regular Education Initiative recommended that school-based administrators (i.e., principals) become competent in special education and oversee the implementation of special education services on their campuses (Will, 1986). In research conducted in response to the recommendations of the Regular Education Initiative, Fuchs and Fuchs (1994) emphasized that special education administrators should work alongside principals and teachers to "abolish special education and focus on social competence" (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2010, p. 301).

The Principal Manages Special Education (Efficiency Phase)

The Birth of an IDEA

As special education grew more complex during the late 1980s and into the 1990s, principals became increasingly responsible for the instructional outcomes of students with disabilities. In order to serve as instructional leaders for the students and

staff on their campuses, principals were required to know more about special education (Nardone, 1999; Robertson, 1996; Valesky & Hirth, 1992). During this period referred to as the *efficiency phase*, principals recognized the need for efficiency in operations because of the growing demands on their time. When the Education for All Handicapped Children Act officially became the IDEA in 1990, it called for additional changes. As part of these changes, traumatic brain injury and autism were included as new disability category eligibilities, and social work and rehabilitation services were included as related services provisions. The requirement for schools to develop individual transition plans as part of a student's IEP led to more specialization with special education. Special education requirements that led to the increased specialization of educators was referred to as the medicalization of special education (Mooney, 2019).

Despite efforts to become efficient school-based leaders, the complexities of special education combined with the competing demands placed on principals inhibited many from focusing attention on the learning outcomes of students with disabilities. According to Minor (1992), principals during this period reportedly spent approximately 15% of their time attending to parents of students with disabilities and attending IEP meetings, while spending very little time supervising or evaluating special education teachers. According to research conducted by Fullan in 2014, 75% percent of principals believed their jobs had already become excessively complicated and 50% reported feelings of increased stress related to their jobs. Adding to these complexities was the perception by many principals that time was a fading commodity (Fullan, 2014; McLaughlin, 2009; Wakeman, 2005).

The Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 amended the IDEA with the inclusion of language that permitted interim placements of up to 45 days for students with disabilities who brought a gun to school. The IEP team was required to make this placement, and in the event a parent invoked the right to a due process hearing, the student remained in the placement during the pending IDEA preceding unless otherwise agreed upon by the parents and LEA. This further complicated the administration of special education by creating additional procedural requirements regarding the removal of a student with a disability to a more restrictive setting (McEllistrem et al., 2009).

IDEA 1997

Confusion regarding who was responsible for the administration of special education programs and the achievement of special education students exacerbated by Public Law 105–17, also referred to as the IDEA 1997, created additional uncertainty among principals during the *efficiency phase*. Because the increasing expectations of principals included the supervision of special education programs and the provision of special education services, many principals experienced tension between being responsible for the best interests of all students in addition to managing the individual needs of each student with disabilities (McLaughlin, 2010). Goor and Schwenn (1997) found that when principals perceived special education to be expensive and complicated, they were more likely to argue for students with disabilities to be educated in separate settings, which led to the reduction of their instructional leadership responsibilities for those students. Administrative approaches such as these led to increasing litigation, as

they ran counter to special education requirements defined by the IDEA 1997 described as follows.

- Students with disabilities exhibiting less severe violations of school conduct could receive disciplinary actions similar to their peers without disabilities. This included change in placement given that the misconduct in question was not a manifestation of the student's disability.

- Students with disabilities were required to have access to and make progress in the general education curriculum as noted in the IEP.

- At age 14, transition planning would begin for all students with disabilities.

- General education teachers were required to become part of the IEP team.

- Emphasis was placed on benchmarks and measurable annual goals.

- Assisted technology became a required consideration of the IEP team.

- Orientation and mobility services were added to the list of related services.

- Dispute resolution by states was required to include mediation services.

- Variation of assessment instruments and strategies were required in gathering relevant functional and developmental information.

- Statewide and districtwide assessment programs were required to include students with disabilities. Alternative assessments meeting the unique needs of students were also included (IDEA, 1997).

Defined by the increasingly litigious nature of education and special education in particular, principals during this period found themselves in frequent legal battles over the appropriate placement of children with disabilities and began to understand the need for programs in their schools (McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004). As schools lost high-dollar lawsuits for failure to implement IEPs, often because principals were unaware of a student's IEP, the argument that school-based administrators become more knowledgeable about special education gained momentum (Farley, 2002; Fuchs & Fuchs,

1994). In response to this realization, schools experienced a shift in implementation of special education referred to as the *inclusion movement*, in which students with disabilities mainstreamed into general education classrooms where regular education teachers were mandated to support their needs and principals were to become instructional leaders for all students (DiPaola et al., 2004).

The need for principals to receive training in special education instruction, policies, and procedures during this era was glaringly evident (Goor & Schwenn, 1997; Nardone, 1999; President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002; Quigney, 1997). Additional research suggested that lack of special education training could negatively influence the leadership capacity of school-based administrators (Davidson & Algozzine, 2002; Short, 2004). Absent from principal preparation programs of this time was content regarding special education regulations and practices (Goor & Schwenn, 1997; Quigney, 1997; Robertson, 1996). According to Praisner (2003), preservice programs that failed to effectively prepare principals led to growing inequities for students with disabilities. When principals lacked effective preservice training regarding the purpose of inclusion and the implementation of special education, they were ill-equipped to manage and administer special education programs on their campuses to the detriment of their students and staff (Praisner, 2003).

The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002) substantiated the importance of the principal's role in the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Inclusion as a model would not be successful in the absence of the principal's knowledge of and support for inclusion. According to the President's Commission (2002), this was because many teachers and

principals had come to prefer a segregated learning environment. Additionally, principals where encouraged to facilitate change with respect to the creation of collaborative teaching at a time when teaching norms characterized individual efforts. Goor and Schwenn (1997) found that principals with a positive attitude toward special education were more involved with guiding instructional programs that met the needs of diverse populations. Although professional organizations were developing guidelines for principals with respect to special education leadership, standards for college certification programs failed to include training in special education for principals (Cooner, Tochterman, & Garrison-Wade, 2005). This sent a mixed message, which undermined the inclusion movement. Just as principals were becoming involved in the administration of special education, the impetus to become efficient instructional leaders for special education teachers and students shifted in response to compliance-focused federal mandates.

The Principal Complies With Special Education (Compliance Phase)

NCLB—The Death of an Ideal

With the passage of the NCLB on January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law what has been described by proponents of the law as a sweeping overhaul of federal efforts to support elementary and secondary education ("The New Rules," 2002.) However, despite Congress's overwhelming bipartisan support of this bill in 2001, Ravitch declared this law to be the "the 'Death Star' of American education," and "a law that inflicts damage on students, teachers, schools, and communities" (Ravitch, 2012, p. 1). In its reauthorization of the ESEA, the NCLB emphasized accountability for

results, research-based best practices, expanded parental options, and local control and flexibility (West, 2005). The overarching goal of NCLB, a law plagued by a tsunami of bad ideas according to Ravitch, was that all American students reach math and reading proficiency at grade level by 2014, a goal that many educators believed to be unattainable.

Designed to emphasize performance improvements in reading and math, NCLB focused on subpopulations of students who had historically performed poorly on state assessments, including students with disabilities. In doing so, NCLB mandated that all students meet annual assessment benchmarks, regardless of a student's demographics. NCLB also tied principal evaluations to student achievement and standardized testing scores. These scores included the scores of students with disabilities, a population that historically scored significantly lower on standardized assessments than their peers without disabilities (McLaughlin, 2009). NCLB only allowed for the exclusion of 1–3% of a state's students with the most severe disabilities from counting toward its school ratings. With required punitive actions placed on principals and schools demonstrating consecutive years of low performance, NCLB increased the threat level felt by many school-based administrators. Kim and Sunderman (2005) suggested that by using adequate yearly progress as the central mechanism for improving school performance, an unattainable goal negatively influenced educational trajectories across the country. Indeed, NCLB had a significant impact on education and the profession of teaching.

> NCLB changed the nature of public schooling across the nation by making standardized test scores the primary measure of school quality. Because test scores were the ultimate judge of a school's success or failure, they became more than a measure; they became the purpose of education. Federal law made the rise or fall of test scores in reading and mathematics the critical variable in judging

> students, teachers, principals, and schools. Missing from NCLB was any mention of what students should learn; this was left to each state to determine. How did testing and accountability become the levers of school reform? How did our elected officials become convinced that measurement and data would fix the schools? Somehow, our nation got off track in its efforts to improve education. What once was an effort to improve the quality of education turned into an accounting strategy: measure, then punish or reward. No education experience was needed to administer such a program. Anyone who loved data could do it. (Ravitch, 2010, p. 17)

As Ravitch (2010) explained, NCLB changed the educational trajectories of schools across the nation leading to increased standardization and procedural compliance. NCLB also served as the catalyst for an intensifying debate regarding the connection between student achievement outcomes and the availability of sufficient funding to meet increasing achievement standards (Cuban, 2001). Cuban posited that education for all is a fundamental tenet of a free, self-governing society. According to Rove (2010), "Bush said education was the civil rights struggle of our time," and "the absence of an accountability system in our schools meant black, brown, poor, and rural children were getting left behind" (p. 6-7). Nonetheless, the quantification of reasonable costs associated with the qualification of appropriate levels of student achievement required by NCLB eluded state and federal agencies. This resulted in states, such as Texas, refusing full participation with specific mandates of NCLB until funding and alignment issues with respect to state accountability models resolved (Neeley, 2006). According to Neeley (2006), the ED withheld funds from Texas in response to these violations in compliance with NCLB.

Ravitch (2010) argued that by prioritizing achievement on standardized assessments over the educational needs of children, federal policies shifted towards data-driven decisions and away from child-focused practices. In the attempt to improve the

standardized test scores of disadvantaged students across the nation, NCLB implemented its regulatory oversight with the requirement that all students regardless of mitigating factors (e.g., race, economic disadvantage, or disability) must reach proficiency in reading and mathematics within 12 years. Research conducted by Zellmer, Frontier, and Phiefer, (2006) found that these increased testing demands for students with disabilities resulted in a loss of 6.3 to 8.5 instructional days, which may have also factored into Texas choosing not to comply with NCLB requirements.

As schools struggled to meet the student achievement and procedural requirements of NCLB (Wilcox & Sexton, 2004), the inadequacy of a century's old system to meet new accountability standards became glaringly evident (Glass & Franceschini, 2007). Stilwell (2004) postulated that NCLB called attention to educational inequities regarding the learning of all students. In their analysis of the accountability requirements imposed by NCLB, Kim and Sunderman (2005) contended that this act placed some schools at a disadvantage because of factors such as racial diversity and economic disparity. The authors explained that because the method in which achievement was measured relied on mean proficiency scores and required all subgroups to meet the same goals for accountability, this inadvertently stacked the odds against schools defined as being high poverty and racially diverse.

The compliance-heavy mandates comprising NCLB had several unintended consequences. Ravitch (2014) argued some of these unintended consequences narrowed the curriculum, reducing emphasis on science, the arts, and other subjects; produced a fixation on test prep and testing; and resulted in the plummeting of morale among teachers. Although NCLB purportedly set out to be the mechanism by which to close the

achievement gap between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers, Ravitch argued that it led to a system of educational inequity in which teachers, campuses, and school districts were being evaluated unfairly. Although all children go through developmental stages during which optimal conditions for learning occurs, individual capacity varies greatly in the outcomes of children as they move through such stages of development. This concept was not novel among pediatricians, psychologists, and sociologists; however, it did seem to elude policy makers. With acts such as NCLB, there seemed to be an assumption that all children should and could learn the same things, in the same way, at the same pace regardless of learning propensities, intellectual capacities, developmental differences, disabilities, or socioeconomic disadvantages. The next section addresses the IDEA 2004 in relation to NCLB.

The Improvement of an IDEA

The IDEA of 2004 reauthorized the IDEA to be consistent with the NCLB (McEllistrem et al., 2009). In concert with NCLB, IDEA 2004 significantly raised special education teacher standards. With the reauthorization, the incorporation of the definition of highly qualified teachers with the addition of language specific to special education raised the standard for special education teachers while linking them more closely with their general education counterparts. Highly qualified teacher provisions applied to teachers working with students who received instruction based on state-developed alternate achievement standards and special education teachers concentrating on several subject areas applicable to students with disabilities. With teacher shortages in special education already a problem, an unintended consequence of the highly qualified

teacher provision was the exacerbation of a staffing challenge already experienced by many principals (McLaughlin, 2009). Also included in this reauthorization of the IDEA was a requirement for early intervention for students and protections against disproportionate representation, which involved the over identification of students from minority groups in special education for reasons other than disability. IDEA 2004 also introduced response to intervention, discipline requirements for students with disabilities, additional disability codes, and restriction of other disability codes (IDEA, 2004).

According to McLaughlin (2009), NCLB and the IDEA 2004 both increased the expectation that students in special education had access to the general education curriculum. Such shifts in federal policy during the *compliance phase* made principals increasingly accountable for the academic achievement of students with disabilities. This required that they gain new skills with respect to special education practices. If principals were to adequately provide instructional leadership and be procedurally compliant with regards to special education, they would need to understand mandates within NCLB and IDEA 2004 (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). This was difficult because, at this time, education certification programs still did not contain content necessary to prepare them for increased responsibilities in special education (Powell, 2009).

Perhaps the most significantly felt initiative of IDEA 2004 was the intensified pressure for principals to create inclusive settings. Prior to this amendment, schools were encouraged, even expected, to become increasingly inclusive entities, but now they were mandated to do so. The IDEA 2004 required states to develop a state performance plan and annual performance report to assess their efforts to implement the requirements of

the IDEA 2004 and a description of improvement efforts in doing so. The instructional arrangement code of students with disabilities became a compliance indicator tracked by the type of classroom students with disabilities attended. Class identification codes defined the general education classroom as the mainstream setting. Being good stewards of the system, principals across the country realized that if students were mainstreamed, their schools and campuses would appear to be more inclusive. An interesting trend developed during this period in which educators began using the term *mainstream* synonymously with the term *inclusion*. The following sentences are reflective of this trend: We schedule inclusion second period, and Inclusion is not the most appropriate placement for all students with disabilities.

The push to mainstream students with mild disabilities into general education classrooms actually began in the 1970s and accelerated in the 1980s (Causton & Tracy-Bronson, 2015). In the 1990s, this push continued with key words shifting from handicapped to disabled and from mainstreaming to inclusion. Van Horn (2018) elaborated on his interpretation of the historical implications and evolution of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in his discussion of the transition from mainstreaming students with disabilities to the practice of including them in the general education classroom. Van Horn (2018) explained that when students were mainstreamed, they continued to be part of a "separate special education system but visit general education classrooms," and inclusion by definition would mean that "all children are members of one educational environment, meaning there are no more general education and special education systems" (p. 2).

The federal education policies of NCLB and the IDEA 2004 firmly anchored the educational topography of this period – the *compliance phase* – in procedural compliance and calculated inclusion. Ironically, laws designed to ensure that no child was left behind and that schools became increasingly inclusive actually led to procedural compliance at the detriment of many students with disabilities. As principals struggled to honor the regulatory responsibilities of NCLB in tandem with those of IDEA 2004, the synonymous use of the terms mainstreaming and inclusion led to many students with disabilities being placed in general education classrooms while receiving little to no support. A generation of students would enter and exit public schools across the country before changing federal regulations and judicial rulings required the next round of educational reforms ushering in the effectiveness phase. The next section addresses the transition to the *effectiveness phase* brought about by the shift to RDA, the *Endrew F.* case, and the ESSA, during which time, there was a storm brewing in the southwest region of the United States (i.e., Texas).

The Principal Reimagines Special Education (Effectiveness Phase)

Shift to Results Driven Accountability

In 2016, Mandlawitz described RDA as a change in federal accountability, which emphasized the shift from ensuring legal compliance to improving outcomes for students. Just as response to intervention had implications for students with disabilities in the general education setting, RDA refocused these efforts by ensuring that students with disabilities progress in general education classrooms and curriculums as required in the IDEA. A shift in language occurring in response to this was felt at the local level when

special education staff began replacing the term *access to general curriculum* with the term *progress in general curriculum*. Mandlawitz (2016) justified the purpose of this shift as follows:

> Compliance with IDEA has been synonymous with meeting all procedural requirements; yet, the law specifically calls for states to monitor school districts on "improving educational results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities" (20 U.S.C. § 1416[a][2]). School districts spend significant staff time and resources on documenting compliance points rather than on student achievement. This focus has not translated to better academic outcomes for children with disabilities. (p. 3)

According to the "2018 Determination Letters on State Implementation of IDEA," (ED, 2018) many states struggled to implement the requirements and purposes of the IDEA. The IDEIA 2004 required states to develop a state performance plan and annual performance report, the latter of which assesses the states' efforts to implement the requirements of the IDEA and a description of improvement efforts in doing so. In response, the U.S. secretary of education was required to provide states with annual determinations as to progress in meeting these requirements. The IDEIA 2004 outlined four categories of performance defining these determinations. A state's determination may be:

- meets the requirements and purposes of the IDEA,
- needs assistance in implementing the requirements of the IDEA,
- needs intervention in implementing the requirements of the IDEA, or
- needs substantial intervention in implementing the requirements of the IDEA.

The crafters of NCLB intensified the mindfulness of the achievement gap for students with disabilities, but they also leveraged heavy handed compliance measures to mandate the inclusion and success of students with disabilities (Ravitch, 2010); however

a changing paradigm was ruminating in 2012 when the OSEP began shifting its monitoring from procedural oversights of state implementation of the provisions of the IDEA. With the shift to RDA, compliance indicators became partially responsible for a state's determination status with academic and outcome data also to be considered for the remainder of these determinations. In 2014, the ED began evaluating state and local education agencies using both compliance and results data, giving each equal weight in state determination findings. The eventual impact on state and local education agencies being that students in the mainstream with access to the curriculum who were not making progress would negatively impact the overall performance determinations of those agencies.

RDA began requiring all states to construct a multiyear state systemic improvement plan to define improvement efforts regarding outcomes for children with disabilities. States must coordinate and align these plans with their general education improvement efforts. Prior to 2014, compliance indicators included in state performance plans served as the sole factor in these determinations. In the initial implementation of RDA, 30 states chose to focus their efforts on reading or language, 12 states elected to focus on improving graduation rates for students with disabilities, and the remaining states divided their statewide efforts among improving math proficiency, early childhood outcomes, and post-high-school outcomes (Mandlawitz, 2016). Through technical assistance and support to states, the OSEP intended to foster improved outcomes for students with disabilities while also continuing to monitor state performance with respect to IDEA compliance.

As evidenced in the “Determination Letters,” (ED, 2018) many states are struggling to adapt to RDA in their efforts to implement the requirements and ideals of the IDEA. As reported, only 22 states received an IDEA Part B determination of meets requirements, with 29 states and nine U.S. territories receiving IDEA Part B determinations of needs assistance or needs intervention. These statistics offered a snapshot of the national picture regarding individual states’ implementation of the IDEA with consideration of the achievement outcomes of students in special education. The reauthorization of the IDEA in 2004, recently amended through the ESSA, stated that having a disability does not diminish an individual's ability to engage and add value to society. Although the OSEP’s new accountability framework (i.e., RDA) focused on educational results and functional outcomes for children with disabilities in addition to compliance requirements of the IDEA, the achievement gap of students in special education continues to increase (Korobkin & Meller, 2019).

According to research findings from Marzano et al. (2005), the principal is the single most influential person in a school. At the campus level, principals cast a vision for the success for all students; create warm campus climates; develop and distribute leadership in others; and manage processes for policies, procedures, and practices along with people (Wallace Foundation, 2013). With such influence, it is crucial that principals possess the knowledge needed to ensure that students with disabilities receive a FAPE in the least restrictive environment appropriate. Therefore, principals must continue in their adaptation with respect to overseeing effective special education programs, which emphasize both procedural compliance and student outcomes. As principals continue to rise to the expectation that they be instructional leaders, additional training and support

will be required to help them effectively navigate this role in the supervision of special education teachers and staff. The following excerpt from the "2018 Determination Letters" provides impetus for them do to so.

> Protecting the rights of children with disabilities and their families is a key responsibility of State educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs) for Part B, but it is not sufficient if children are not attaining the knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish the ideals of IDEA: equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. (ED, 2018, p. 2)

The ideals implicit within IDEA regarding educational outcomes of students with disabilities coupled with procedural requirements as explicitly defined in statute have become the measure by which SEAs and LEAs are evaluated. TEA's alignment with this variation in federal oversight and monitoring required LEAs to adapt administration and implementation of special education. In the following section, the 2017 Supreme Court's ruling in *Endrew F.*, which revisited the FAPE standard of the IDEA for the first time since the case of *Rowley v. Hendrick Hudson School District* (*Rowley*), is explored.

Rowley *and* Endrew F.

Rowley was the first case heard by the U.S. Supreme Court regarding special education. This was significant because *Rowley* presented the Supreme Court its first opportunity to interpret the FAPE mandate at the core of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act that would become the IDEA. In their decision, the Court ruled the purpose of FAPE was simply to provide students with disabilities with a platform for accessing specialized instruction and related services. In this defining moment, the Court determined the standard, referred to as the *Rowley* standard, by which future cases regarding FAPE would compare. The *Rowley* standard safeguarded the

provision of FAPE according to the IDEA. The *Rowley* standard consisted of two parts. According to *Rowley*, the courts were required to first determine if the school in question had complied with the procedures of the IDEA. Secondly, courts had to decide in accordance with the *Rowley* standard if the IEP developed in compliance with the IDEA enabled the child to receive educational benefits as calculated. For many years, principals referred to the *Rowley* standard to gauge the efficacy of their special education programs (Board of Education v. Rowley, 1982). Although the ruling from the *Rowley* case is still pertinent in determining FAPE, the Supreme Court revisited this standard in the 2017 when they decided on *Endrew F.*

The Supreme Court's 2017 ruling in *Endrew F.* emphasized the importance of establishing ambitious and challenging IEP goals (ED, 2017). According to the Court's findings, the IDEA demands that a child with a disability who requires special education and related services should be afforded an appropriately ambitious educational program that is "reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances" (ED, 2017, p. 1). In the Court's interpretation of the IDEA's FAPE requirements, the Court also determined that "every child should have the chance to meet challenging objectives" (ED, 2017, p. 1). According to the ED (2017), The *Endrew F.* decision aligned with efforts in the ED to improve academic outcomes for children with disabilities. The *Endrew F.* case illuminated a substantive standard for evaluating if a child's IEP adequately provides educational benefit. This led to additional discernment on the part of principals in the evaluation of their special education programs with respect to the addition of the substantive standard. No longer is simply having access to general curriculum enough to be upheld with respect to FAPE. After *Endrew*

F., a school must show that a child's IEP contains challenging objectives that will convey educational benefit.

ESSA and IDEA

President Obama signed into law the ESSA on December 10, 2015. In its reauthorization of the ESEA, replacement of NCLB, and amendment to the IDEA, the ESSA stated that having a disability does not diminish an individual's ability to engage and add value to society. Although the ESSA still requires states to hold schools responsible for student achievement, its framework provides additional flexibility in that states may set individual goals for student achievement as long as they are within federal parameters. Additionally, the ESSA provided funds for seven states to pilot innovative tests, which aligned with personalized learning and competency-based education. According the ESSA, accommodations must be available on all annual state tests for students with disabilities as defined by the IDEA and Section 504, and states may elect to use other nationally recognized tests according to the ESSA guidance. Although NCLB did not limit the percentage of students who could participate in an alternative version of a state's annual test, the ESSA limits this participation rate at 1%. According to the TEA (2019), the state rate for Texas is currently 1.4%, which has required the TEA to develop a waiver for the ED because the state rate exceeds the 1% threshold as set by federal regulations in the ESSA. States and districts have also been encouraged to eliminate unnecessary testing with funding provided to audit their current testing available through the ESSA (2015). According to the ED (2019), the ESSA includes the following provisions said to be for the benefit of students and schools:

- achieve advanced equity by upholding critical protections for America's disadvantaged and high-need students;
- teach all students in America to high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers;
- ensure that vital information is provided to educators, families, students, and communities through annual statewide assessments that measure students' progress toward those high standards;
- help to support and grow local innovations including evidence-based and place-based interventions developed by local leaders and educators;
- sustain and expand this administration's historic investments in increasing access to high-quality preschool;
- maintain the expectation of accountability and action to effect positive change in the lowest performing schools, where groups of students are not making progress and where graduation rates are low over extended periods.

Policy changes such as these at the federal level require adjustments in implementation at the state and local levels (Mitchell, Shipps, & Crowson (2018). The ESSA is the most current federal law to reauthorize the ESEA and amend the IDEA. The ESSA, like NCLB before it, resulted from high ideals, the implementation of which will no doubt fall on the shoulders of school-based administrators across the country. The components that apply to special education are far encompassing, and will require significant learning on their part. Realizing such high ideals will also require school systems to support adaptation of people, processes, and mindsets. With respect to a framework for achieving these efforts, ESSA endorses universal design for learning (UDL), defined in the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 as follows:

> Universal Design for Learning (UDL) means a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that—(A) provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and (B) reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and

> maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient. (p. 12)

By reducing barriers to learning and increasing accessibility to educational settings and curriculum, UDL supports high expectations and instructional variations leading to improved student achievement and outcomes. ESSA also encourages states to explore and expand personalized learning opportunities for students and ESSA calls for a national center emphasizing improvement in literacy and reading for children with disabilities

If LEAs are to realize improved outcomes of students with disabilities while maintaining procedural compliance, strategic actions must focus on the cultivation of people, processes, and cultural mindsets (Korobkin & Meller, 2019). At the campus level, this will require the commitment and influence of principals. For change to be positive and lasting, school leaders must be primary catalysts for the desired change (Fullan, 2014; Hargreaves, 2011; Marzano & Waters, 2009). For LEAs to transition successfully into the effectiveness phase of IDEA implementation, global processes in which interdepartmental collaboration defined by inclusiveness must replace siloed solutions in which principals leverage key drivers such as people, processes, and mindsets.

According to Keenoy (2012), principals defined as instructional leaders were of paramount importance to special education in several ways. Principals as instructional leaders facilitated collaboration between general and special education teachers and also ensured students accessed educationally less restrictive environments. Although principals are expected to administer effective special education programs through actions such as these, they are often ill-equipped to do so (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas,

2003). This often leads to ineffective management, supervision, and oversight of special education programs at the campus level. Principals will continue to struggle in these areas without a comprehensive knowledge of special education (Caustin-Theoharis & Kasa, 2012). For principals to successfully adapt to the effectiveness phase of implementation, they will need to acquire special education knowledge in order to supervise special education procedures and practices on their campuses. This will involve providing relevant professional learning opportunities to their teachers and staff with respect to current and effective instructional strategies for students with disabilities (Caustin-Theoharis & Kasa, 2012). Additional consideration regarding theoretical and conceptual perspectives provide a saturation of the literature with respect to this topic.

Theoretical Consideration Regarding Special Education Implementation

Various conceptual and theoretical studies provided additional insight into the role of the school principal and the complex responsibility of administering special education programs effectively. In hopes of saturating this topic, contextual information from both published and unpublished sources was sought. The following narrative provides analysis of the following topics: the impact of Taylorism on current educational systems, the separation of special education and general education, the deficit and constructivist interpretations of special education, the impact of high stakes testing on special education, principals' attitudes and perceptions of inclusion, ethical and moral perspectives on special education implementation, the creation of inclusive school cultures, the principal's mindset, and potential solutions relevant to effective implementation of special education.

Special Education—Then and Now

The origins of the current educational system in the United States date back to the Taylorist vision of education, also referred to as the educational factory model (Mooney, 2019; Rose 2016). According to Rose (2016): "By 1920, most American schools were organized according to the Taylorist vision of education, treating each student as an average student and aiming to provide each one with the same standardized education, regardless of their background, abilities, or interests" (p. 51). In support of the Taylorist version of education, Edward Thorndike retrofitted these ideas in order to sort superior students from inferior ones (Rose, 2016). Thorndike's conceptualization of standardization led to the concepts of gifted students, honors students, special needs students, and educational tracks. Thorndike believed schools should serve as human sorting institutions in which students with superior brains received superior educational opportunities and those deemed to have inferior brains should be discarded from the school house as quickly as possible. According to Mooney (2019), the standardization of all things education and the characterization of humans as either normal or abnormal, led to an American model of education, which for many years excluded millions of children from attending school.

The controversial path leading to many of society's current assumptions with respect to the valuing and devaluing of specific human abilities provided additional context for consideration. As asserted by Gould (1981), early attempts to test intelligence were flawed with bad science, imposed political influence and racist interpretations, and led to erroneous assumptions that Northern European people were intellectually superior to non-Caucasians. Gardner (1984) also expressed contempt for intelligence testing due

to the limited nature of IQ tests, which only test verbal/language skills and math/problem-solving skills. His assertion being that results from these tests represented only one part of a complex, multidimensional framework that is the human intellect. People come in all shapes, sizes, colors, and creeds. Each is a unique combination of genetic propensity and environmental conditioning. The degree to which nature and nurture coalesce from person to person cannot be qualified in absolute terms, nor quantified by normative statistics. Although some believe that the intellects of individuals are fixed traits that cannot be changed by external conditions, others prefer a less deterministic perspective, as did Howard Gardner in his theory of multiple intelligences.

Gardner postulated that people do not simply have an intellectual capacity, they have multiple capacities in a variety of other areas such as musical, interpersonal, spatial–visual, and linguistic intelligences. Gardner's theoretical views, which should not be confused with the learning styles movement—analyzed as being too broad and lacking in supportive empirical research by some—gained much attention as an alternative to a one size fits all system of education hastened along by the psychometric movement. Gardner developed his theory of intelligence while at Harvard University in the 1980s. Another prolific movement was also born in the courtyards of Harvard a decade later when Anne Meyer and David Rose first laid out the principles of UDL.

One might imagine the likes of Gardner, Meyer, and Rose crossing paths in Harvard Square and swapping theoretical perspectives within earshot of Todd Rose, the upcoming researcher from Harvard and author of *The End of Average: How We Succeed in a World That Values Sameness*. In Todd Rose's (2016) estimation, the standardization of society, which he argued currently defines society, began centuries ago, but does not

have to define one's potential. Rose asserted that three principles of individuality reveal the uniqueness in humans. According to Rose's (2016) three key principles, the potential within each person is uniquely individual and attainable. The following are the three principles defined by Rose (2016):

1. the jaggedness principle (i.e., talent is never one dimensional),
2. the context principle (i.e., personality traits do not exist),
3. the pathways principle (i.e., we all walk the road less traveled).

In response to educational and professional environments designed to marginalize and standardized the value of human capital, Rose's (2016) principles push back on the assumption that human value should be determined by weighing individuals against the average. Assumptions are often at the core of societal beliefs and expectations regarding individuals with disabilities.

The term referred to as the *least dangerous assumption* involves having an awareness of such biases with respect to perceptions of intelligence. According to Jorgensen (2005), an educator's least dangerous assumption should be to presume competence with respect to individuals with disabilities. Listed below are her five reasons for this belief.

1. Human intelligence is a multifaceted construct rather than a one-dimensional characteristic and measuring it with a test is invalid and leads to mistaken conclusions about a person's capacity to learn.

2. Assessments of students' IQs are seriously flawed when they have difficulty communicating and movement challenges.

3. Research shows that a growing number of children and adults labeled retarded have demonstrated they are more capable when they have a means to communicate and are provided with high quality instruction.

4. To presume incompetence could result in harm to students if the presumption is wrong.

5. Even if assumptions of a student's competence prove wrong, the consequences of that mistake to the student are not as dangerous as the alternative.

With respect to educational pedagogy and policy, the least dangerous assumption is an inclusive approach, through which theorists have posited that, "in the absence of conclusive data educational decisions should be based on assumptions which, if incorrect, will have the least dangerous effect on the student" (Donnellan, 1984).

The Tale of Two Educational Systems

"Special education is undergirded by assumptions of normality—and abnormality" (Dudley-Marling & Burns, 2014, p. 18), which lead to implementation efforts defined by deficit or medical modalities dominating educational opportunities for children with disabilities (Mooney, 2019). Although the Education for All Handicapped Children Act positively influenced the lives of millions of children with disabilities across the country, Van Horn (2018) posited that "P. L. 94–142 did not create special education, it created general education" (p. 1). Van Horn's (2018) assertion was that this law was born from the assumption that a new system was needed to allow students with disabilities access to public education in a system called special education and the current system would continue to serve students and be named general education. Thus, the creation of general education for students included in public education (i.e., students without disabilities) and the creation of special education for students excluded from public education (i.e., students with disabilities) resulted in two parallel educational systems.

Prior to the enactment of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, only one in five students with disabilities in the U.S. were educated in public schools (Dudley-Marling & Burns, 2014), which could explain the impetus to develop a parallel system allowing for students with disabilities to have access to public education as asserted by Van Horn (2018). According to Dudley-Marling and Burns (2014), "the history of education for students with disabilities in the United States has, until relatively recently, been marked by exclusion, not inclusion" (p. 14). Before 1975, children excluded from U.S. public schools because of their educational needs were estimated at 1 million and children with disabilities not receiving the educational assistance needed to succeed in school were estimated at 4 million (Bergert & Burnett, 2001; Pulliam & Van Patten, 2007). Mandlawitz (2016) explained:

> Prior to 1975, some children with disabilities were denied access to the school building. Many who made it inside received an inferior education, and students with a wide range of intellectual and physical disabilities were often warehoused in one special education classroom. (p. 1)

Despite the continued efforts of the ED to bring these two systems of education into alignment, a divide remains between general and special education. If the legislative intent of special education was initially to create a system of education through which children with disabilities could receive a public education, the system continues to accomplish that which it was designed to achieve—a separate educational system.

Dueling Educational Systems

Dudley Marling and Burns (2014) discussed the dichotomous perspective known as the deficit–constructivist theory of inclusion. According to the deficit–constructivist theory of special education, the perceptions of educators can influence variables such as

fidelity of implementation, adult mindsets, special education processes, and purpose for services. Anastasiou and Kauffman (2011) asserted that technical solutions through scientific research and an emphasis on best practices are associated with the deficit stance of inclusion. In the deficit perspective the responsibility of school failures is assigned to students presumed to be deficient in regards to the skills and abilities associated with school success. Miller explained: "The philosophy of deficiency takes the view that those whose performance deviates from the majority lack some critical attribute, ability, or potential" (Miller, 1993, p. 59). When approaching special education from a deficit perspective, efforts focus on providing children with skills needed to function as close to normal as possible with the assumption of a normal environment being the general education classroom (Bartolome, 1994).

Three approaches dominate implementation efforts by special educators to achieve the goal of normalizing students with disabilities. These approaches include remediation, compensatory skill training, and accommodation of environment and curriculum. Remediation involves identifying specific skill deficits in a student and intervening with instruction and methodology appropriate for the deficit. Compensatory skill training involves teaching students specific strategies for overcoming their identified deficiencies. Accommodation involves providing alternative ways of accessing buildings (e.g., ramps for wheel chairs) and curricula (e.g., extra time on tests). While supporting students with disabilities in the current educational systems, Dudley-Marling and Burns (2014) argued that the underlying assumption in each of these approaches was that the student was the problem and the interventions must be specialized. Mooney (2019) expounded on the work of Michel Foucault in his description of the normalizing society,

which seeks to remediate and pathologize human differences. The assumption that it takes specially trained professionals to attend to the special needs of students with disabilities characterizes the medical perspective of special education also synonymous with the deficit stance on inclusion.

The meaning of the term inclusion in the deficit special education perspective is defined by legal requirements that students with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environment. According to this interpretation of inclusion, the regular classroom is the least restrictive environment for all children but not necessarily the most appropriate placement for each child (Hyatt & Filler, 2011). Scanlon and Baker (2012) stated that the regular classroom is determined to be the appropriate placement for students with disabilities when they function with little support and need minimal alteration to the setting or curriculum to be successful. For students requiring more intensive supports and services, the regular classroom is not always the most appropriate setting, hence the assertion that inclusion is not always the best placement for students. Many schools have equated inclusion with mainstreaming by operationally defining it as "a student with an identified disability, spending greater than 80% of his or her school day in a general education classroom in proximity to nondisabled peers" (Baglieri, Bejoian, Broderick, Connor, & Valle, 2011, p. 2126). When inclusion is associated with a service delivery model, which emphasizes the specialized implementation of a set of research-based practices, a deficit–medical model of special education is the outcome (Baglieri et al., 2011; Ferguson & Nusbaum, 2012). Historical efforts of the ED to align general education with special education seem to reflect the deficit perspective on

inclusion with an emphasis on scientific research, best practices, and accommodation efforts as described in the medical model of special education.

In contrast, the social constructivist perspective on inclusion emphasized the need for systemic reform as opposed to individual remediation. According to Sapon-Shevin (2003): "Inclusion is not about disability, nor is it only about schools. Inclusion is about social justice" (p. 26). Social constructivists argued inclusion is about the rights of children with disabilities to receive equitable educational opportunities in regular education settings alongside peers without disabilities (Liasidou, 2012).

> Inclusive education reflects values and principles and is concerned with challenging the ways in which educational systems reproduce and perpetuate social inequalities with regard to marginalized and excluded groups of students across a range of abilities, characteristics, developmental trajectories, and socioeconomic circumstances. Hence, inclusion is inexorably linked with the principles of equality and social justice in both educational and social domains. (p. 168)

Proponents of this stance argued the regular education classroom should be the default setting for all students and exclusion of a student from this setting must be justified in that it would be an anomaly to the status quo (Brantlinger, 1997). Contrary to an assimilationist perspective of inclusion, in which theorists institute a hierarchy between those being assimilated (i.e., special education students) and members of the in-group (i.e., normal students), constructivists emphasize that every child can learn and contribute to every classroom and in all aspects of society (Beratan, 2006). Educators practicing from a social constructivist stance have argued for diversity and inclusivity. Inclusion necessitates equity in educational opportunities and settings in which students are not all treated the same, and differences are celebrated rather than ignored (Morrier & Gallagher, 2011).

Moral and Ethical Interpretations of Implementation

Starratt (1994) discussed leadership responsibility with respect to special education implementation from an ethical perspective, explaining that the ethic of justice focuses on democratic principles and civil liberties. Basic human rights—regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or age—such as individual rights, due process, freedom, equality, and responsibility for the common good are included in this ethical principle. In applying the ethic of justice to school-based leadership, it is essential that principals know the laws and rules that apply to students with disabilities so they might interpret them accordingly when needed. Principals must also understand the difference between equality and equity to ensure that their actions are consistent and fair, yet not rigid with regard to the individual needs of students with disabilities on their campuses.

In the ethic of care, the moral imperative to approach everyone with unconditional positive regard is emphasized. In this ethic, humanity, integrity, compassion, and empathy are of paramount importance. Knowing that everyone is worthy of love and respect enables the principal to employ the ethic of care when advocating for inclusion and celebrating the differences that make each student exceptional.

The ethic of critique involves balancing one's responsibilities and roles within a system with the need to challenge rules and requirements that do not positively affect the system or the people within it. This ethic is alive in our schools when a teacher attends to curricular requirements but also makes time for individual children in the classroom who need a little extra time or support to reach their academic goals. When principals embody the ethic of critique, they are willing to challenge written and unwritten procedures and practices that are not in the best interest of the students.

At times, principals experience conflict when responding to these ethical responsibilities, which emphasizes the importance of the ethic of profession. In the ethic of profession, a counterbalance is called for when making ethical decisions by grounding them in the professional standards within the profession (Frick, Faircloth, & Little, 2012). Principals adopt the ethic of profession when they connect all ethics in a comprehensive framework through which to conceptualize moral, ethical, and legal decision making.

In their study, Frick et al. (2012) explored how elementary principals perceived their "experience of leadership decision making as a moral activity in relation to the ethic of the profession and its model for student best interests" (p. 208). Frick et al. (2012) analyzed how elementary principals understand their leadership decision-making process as a moral action in relation to an ethical decision-making framework. In their analysis, evidence of moral reasoning by participants when recalling dilemmas from the past determined the extent to which particular aspects of ethical decision making were experienced. Findings reflected conflict experienced by principals when balancing their responsibility to the best interests of students with disabilities and the collective best interests of all students within the general education environment. Shapiro and Stefkovitch (2011) stated that educational leaders have a legal and moral imperative to serve the best interests of students by promoting the success of all students, which can only be accomplished by focusing on the needs of children.

Special Education and High Stakes Testing

In many ways contrary to ethical and moral reasoning and decision making is the topic of high stakes standardized testing in relation to special education. According to

Johnson (2010), the measure of educational quality has become the sum of student achievement on standardized assessments. Keddie (2015) cautioned against taking such a narrow focus as the sole measure of success as to educational quality in defense of the perspective that education has multiple purposes. High-stakes standardized testing has become synonymous with accountability in regards to student performance, teacher performance, principal performance, superintendent performance, campus performance, district performance, state performance, and federal performance (Ravitch, 2010).

Those in governance at the federal, state, and local levels of education often have contradictory views of the relevance and impact of standardized assessments. In expounding on his research into relationships between the superintendent and the school board, Crabill's depiction of Lone Star Governance—the TEA governance process—suggested it aligns with the standardized assessment movement. Critics of Lone Star Governance argued a constraint model of governance such as this that focuses solely on student achievement as the measure for superintendent effectiveness, would infiltrate and indoctrinate unknowing school boards to do the bidding of the federal and state agencies who are fierce proponents of standardization of public education. Such an approach will lead to the erosion of many areas of public education deemed unworthy of evaluation. In a world of competition, constraints, and school closures, that which is not measured erodes.

In an interview response directed to President Obama referencing today's educational climate of high-stakes testing, Ravitch (2016) opined rhetorically in stating:

> I wish you had never put forth Race to the Top. I wish you understood the damage that standardized testing does to children, especially children of color. Standardized tests are normed on a bell curve. Bell curves never close. There is

> always a top half and a bottom half, and the most advantaged kids always cluster at the top. What if we awarded drivers' licenses on a bell curve? Half the people in this country would never qualify to drive. You know, we just celebrated the life of Muhammad Ali, and one of the articles said he wasn't very successful in school, but he loved physical education and art. Think of another Muhammad Ali today. He would be told he was a failure starting in third grade. He would be labeled a failure again and again until he stopped believing in himself. People have all kinds of talents and potential that is not measured in a standardized test, yet your administration has made them the measure of all children. (Strauss, 2016, p. 10–11)

The standardization of all things education as described by Ravitch (2016) contradicts provisions within IDEA requiring individualization through specially designed instruction. The educational system in which special education was first imagined allowed for individualization within its foundational premise; however, these allowances for individuality were more difficult to accommodate as the standardization movement intensified. Standardized test scores designed to show curricular implementation on a large scale should not be the driving mechanism for evaluating individual student progress from grade to grade, instructional quality from teacher to teacher, or campus and district prosperity or longevity (Weiss, 2012). When considering global–contextual matters such as curricular integrity and general diffusion of knowledge, standardized assessments are a useful source of data; however, formative assessments in the classroom, which guide decision making regarding teaching and learning in our schools, improve instructional practices and student achievement (Morgan, 2016). The analysis of student-generated data is an essential part of evaluating specially designed instruction in education. According to Ravitch (2014), schools have struggled to keep up with mandates and requirements that all students perform adequately on standardized assessments.

According to Weiss (2012), the standardized tests utilized by the state of Texas lacked validity in determining to what degree students actually made progress in tested subject areas. Weiss asserts that Walter Way, senior vice president of the testing company, Pearson, disagreed with this assessment, but agreed that adequacy for testing content for such tests was approximately 30%, which seems to support the perspective that standardized tests are, at least sometimes, utilized for measurement of variables not intended in their design. Weiss (2012) explained that many other variables affect a student's score on a standardized assessment in addition to content knowledge, teaching skills, and differences in curriculum design, which only account for a third. Many have questioned the degree to which federal and state policies regarding standardized assessments affect students with disabilities.

Szabo and Sinclair (2012) analyzed the current state assessment administered in Texas (i.e., STAAR), to ascertain the kinds of questions used and the readability levels of the passages on the test using release tests on the TEA's website. According to Szabo and Sinclair (2012), readability analysis involves looking at the degree to which passages within the test are written using appropriate grade-level reading. In their findings, they said:

> It was found that both 4th grade and 7th grade reading passages had the most on-your-own questions and that all the reading passages, except for 8th grade were written at least two grade levels above grade level. As the reading levels of these passages are so high, it is believed that the majority of students will most likely fail to pass the new STAAR. (Szabo & Sinclair, 2012, p. 1)

Szabo and Sinclair (2012) also suggested specific phrases had been used in describing the STAAR such as "more rigorous," "more accountability," "results added to GPA," and "timed test" (p. 1). Although the STAAR questions reportedly focused on fewer skills

from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, its questions were designed in a way that students would need a more in-depth understanding of the material to understand the content. The authors noted that variables such as development, social economic status, IQ, attitudes, interests, and values were not considered in the design of this test. That children, teachers, principals, and schools are blamed when students do not do well on such tests was not lost on the authors; however, it appears to have been lost on those in charge of designing the STAAR. Principals in Texas no doubt took note at the release of this study as the TEA justified the STAAR's validity and reliability to the public.

The Principals' Mindset—Influential Variables

In today's public schools, the principal is responsible for improving the achievement outcomes of all students (Billingsly, 2005), and yet, many variables influence a principal's mindset regarding the implementation of effective special education programs. Students are impacted by the actions and approaches of principals even if indirectly (Leithwood, 2004; Pepper, 2010). By creating opportunities for collaboration among teachers, principals foster improved instruction, student performance, and teacher satisfaction (Korkmaz, 2007; Leithwood, 2004). To support principals with respect to the changing world of special education administration, professional learning opportunities must become more responsive to their needs. Nonetheless, there was minimal research on principals as leaders of special education as the majority of literature focused on principals and inclusive schools (McLeskey, Waldron, & Redd, 2014; Pierson & Howell, 2013). Principal certification programs provide little training in the area of special education leadership for principals (Powell,

2009). Nonetheless, at the national, state, and local levels of education, principals are expected to step into the space between equity and equality in their leadership of special education reform efforts with or without the necessary experience.

Many studies in the literature focused on the specific knowledge principals should possess regarding special education (Valesky & Hirth, 1992; Wakeman, Browder, Flowers, & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2006), but Shultz and Boscardin (2018) explored whether or not principals' perceptions regarding leadership attributes varied due to their background in special education or lack thereof. Findings from this study "indicated prior special education experience was not a predictor of subsequent leadership perceptions" (p. 1). According to Stevenson (2002), principals reported that special education certification influenced their perspectives in the following ways: they said inclusion and teacher collaboration were their two most essential special education leadership priorities, and when they lacked special education certification, they reported special education legal procedures as the main special education priority. Washington (2010) found that school administrators reported increased positivity with respect to administering special education services when they possessed a special education certification. Although experience and knowledge are essential elements, a principal's mindset is equally important during times of change and transformation. Praisner (2000) established that attitudes of principals regarding inclusion for students with disabilities in elementary settings are influenced by their knowledge of special education practices and concepts in addition to years of experience as administrators. Adding to these findings, Ramirez (2006) reported correlation between increases in the positive attitude of school principals towards inclusion with increased understanding of special education law.

Real and Perceived Barriers Experienced by Principals

If creating inclusive classrooms, campuses, and cultures was easy, everyone would have already done it. If educational experiences in which all children feel safe, secure, whole, perfect, strong, powerful, loved, and harmonious were easily attainable, there would be no students—or teachers for that matter—feeling excluded from education. Unfortunately, this is not the case. What prevents educators from creating these types of educational destinations for the students they so long to positively influence? The answer to that question can be summed up in one word: barriers. Either real or perceived, barriers interfere with a principal's ability to work effectively. In this section, several of the barriers represented in the research are explored.

In searching for the most recommended leadership practices of principals, support for collaboration between special education teachers, general education teachers, and parents was the hands-down winner (Bateman & Bateman, 2014; Cobb, 2015; Duncan, 2010; Lynch, 2012b; McGinley, 2008; McLaughlin & Nolet, 2004; Reynolds, 2008; Waldron, McLeskey, & Redd, 2011). For the purpose of this study, this leadership practice included support for inclusion and creating inclusive classrooms, cultures, and campuses. Copeland (2003) discussed the struggle to achieve the type of school culture in which "principals are accountable to teachers in the same way that teachers are accountable to students . . . (And) where teachers have professional learning opportunities provided and expected in their schools" (p. 379). According to Fullan (2001), building practice-oriented communities through cyclical inquiry can foster school cultures that exhibit characteristics such as collaboration, trust, professional learning, and reciprocal accountability. In many ways, the need for sustainable change regarding the

implementation of special education parallels that of the changing responsibilities of principals. Sustainable change in schools is only achievable when it is accepted, embodied, and implemented by teachers in collaboration with school administrators (Fullan, 2006). Fullan (2001) explained that systems-change occurs and is sustained when leadership emphasizes collective involvement, capacity building, and cultural shifts in behavior.

What prevents teachers from collaborating? Insights from the following research suggested that special education teachers perceived time constraints as a barrier to working with their general education peers, and general education teachers often reported having negative feelings about students with special needs placed in their classrooms (Daane, Beirne-Smith, & Latham, 2000). According to Jacobson (2007), perceived constraints also included a lack of planning time, nonproductive meetings, and extensive amounts of paperwork. Research also suggested that general education and special education teachers lacked the coteaching training essential to instruct students with special needs collaboratively (Daane et al., 2000). Additional factors contributing to collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers may include a lack of understanding with respect to one another's roles and responsibilities (Shoho, Katims, & Meza, 1998). Feelings of isolation from the school community expressed by special education teachers often perpetuated misunderstandings or misguided expectations of principals and general education teachers (Shoho et al., 1998). Ineffective administrative practices such as assigning less effective teachers to students who struggled the most—special education students—further exacerbated these paradigms. Each of these examples of real and perceived barriers can negatively

influence a principal's ability to create an inclusive culture. How can principals prevent such barriers from defining implementation efforts of special education? Insights from research conducted by Clark (2014) offered possible control measures that principals could employ.

According to Clark (2014), the importance of managing the processes and people of an organization is essential to the overall health of a system, specifically during times of change. As described by Clark (2014), culture and climate impact personnel, while policies, practices, and procedures support the system; both are necessary to create the impetus for sustainable alignment within a system. Clark (2014) explained that to ensure quality control of tight curriculum alignment as described in English's (2000) curriculum alignment model, school leaders must develop a foundation steeped in leadership and followship. School leaders are responsible for this process and must be explicit in their efforts to build capacity, knowledge, ability, confidence, willingness, and motivation of their followers for a strong foundation to sustain. Sustainable change relies on an organization's capacity to tolerate disruption to the system as it adapts to new beliefs and practices. Clark (2014) posited that individuals within a school system must understand the importance of giving up some of their autonomy so that the system actions and outcomes align. In the absence of sound followship, random variation creeps into the system when teachers choose to stray from the approved curriculum leading to inequitable outcomes and misalignments within the system. This is also evident when principles are not sound in their followship and fail to ensure tight alignment on their campuses.

Potential Solutions as Reflected in the Research

After 44 years implementing provisions of the IDEA in varying iterations, students with disabilities continue to lag behind their peers without disabilities with respect to academic achievement, graduation rate, and postsecondary readiness (Mandlawitz, 2016). Some have begun asking what is so special about special education, and others debate pros and cons of the special and general education systems merging into one system. According to Villegas (2017), it is yet to be determined if the ESSA and the IDEA can even coexist in a sociopolitical climate in support of deregulation, school vouchers, and local control. Within all the sociopolitical conjecture and regulatory overreach, some feel solutions might require changes in philosophy and implementation. Fullan (2006) contended that distributed school leadership, predicated on the conceptual aspirations of sustainable change, might offer principals a foundational approach for increased impact. Principals cannot positively influence student achievement outcomes in the absence of distributed leadership practices in which all stakeholders are involved (Harris, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003).

Although distributed leadership practices may serve to ease the administrative constraints of the school principal, distributed practices are only as effective as the knowledge and practices shared by the leader. Therefore, equipping principals with the knowledge and skills necessary for effectively influencing the achievement outcomes of students with disabilities could then distribute this knowledge and responsibility to their teachers. Specifically, by empowering principals with the knowledge and skills needed for administering effective special education services across a continuum of educational

settings on their campuses, students with disabilities might receive high quality instruction individualized according to their needs.

Schools are microcosms of larger systems, and systems always achieve that which they were designed to achieve, therefore, it also suffices to say that the values and beliefs of the individuals that make up these systems are where the potential for change resides. Saphier, Freedman, and Aschheim (2011) postulated that school leaders can utilize mentoring and reflective practice as change agents to advance special education reform. According to Hattie's (2012) visible learning research, collective teacher efficacy as an influence on student achievement is more than double the effect of prior achievement (0.65), and more than triple the effect of home environment (0.52) and parental involvement (.049). Collective teacher efficacy is the contribution to student achievement that comes from the school, not the home and not the students themselves. In this equation, a teacher serves students just as a principal serves teachers. Principals must believe in the abilities of their teachers to teach so that teachers can believe in the abilities of their students to learn.

In research conducted by Gibson and Dembo (1984), differences in classroom behavior have been documented between high-efficacy and low-efficacy teachers. The authors documented the tendency of low-efficacy teachers to utilize the majority of their instructional time in small group instruction and the tendency for high-efficacy teachers to focus more attention on whole group instruction, monitoring and checking student work, and lesson preparation. High-efficacy teachers in the study also provided significantly more positive feedback than criticism for students' correct and incorrect responses in addition to effective questioning of students. Overall, it was determined that

high-efficacy teachers dedicated more energy to teaching students to a higher degree of effective instructional strategies than low-efficacy teachers did. Therefore, Gibson and Dembo (1984) concluded that increases in collective teacher efficacy in relation to positively influencing the student achievement outcomes of students with disabilities will lead to changes in adult behavior, which supports increased student achievement.

Although increasing the efficacy of principals and teachers through distributed leadership could produce sustainable change, some researchers have argued that these actions will not lead to the systemic changes needed. According to Van Horn (2018), the logical next step in the evolution of special education is an educational framework known as UDL. "UDL is a research-based set of principles established to guide the design of learning environments in ways that are accessible and effective for all" (CAST, 2019). Now that UDL is endorsed by federal education policy, many states and districts have followed suite in its endorsement as well. "UDL has come to inform all of our work in educational research and design, professional learning, workforce development, and publishing (Cast, 2019). UDL involves an emphasis on the importance of removing environmental and curricular barriers and providing instructional and assessment options in order to optimize student learning. According to principles of UDL, variability is the norm, and disability is contextual.

In Rose's (2016) assertion of his jaggedness principle, he discussed how individuals are jagged with unique talents and needs rather than average or typical. With a focus on constraints created by learning environments and curriculum, Van Horn (2018) argued for a conceptual shift from the individual as disabled to the environment as disabled in his support of UDL. According to Van Horn (2018), UDL might be the

educational framework to unite these two parallel systems of education (i.e., general and special) into one universally designed educational system in which all students are included. According to Hunt and Andreasen (2011), there has been increasing interest and implementation of UDL because it allows students with disabilities access to regular classrooms and progress in general curriculum without reduction of curriculum demands. The growing endorsements of UDL are evident in its inclusion in the ESSA of 2015, the National Education Technology Plan of 2016, the *Ed Tech Developer's Guide* of 2015, and the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. As UDL has received increasing numbers of endorsements from governmental agencies, the debate regarding students with disabilities, high stakes testing, principals as instructional leaders, and myriad issues has intensified as well.

The world of education is changing, and this applies to special education as well as general education. Principals must be prepared to meet the needs of every student to whom they are responsible. With a clear understanding of the rules and regulations in conjunction with ethical decision making, this is attainable. Courage creates culture, and kindness connects individuals in systems. It will take courageous acts on the part of school leaders to improve this area of education. It will take kindness and compassion to influence the hearts and minds of educators to be the difference for their students. If schools are to become increasingly equitable, it could be argued law must supersede justice in accordance with the expectation of procedural compliance. According to Aristotle (2011/ 384-322 BCE):

> People conceive that the power to act unjustly rests with themselves, and therefore that to be just is easy. But this is not the case [...] [similarly,] people assume [...] that it requires no special wisdom to discriminate between things

> which are just and those which are unjust, because it is not difficult to apprehend such matters as are provided for by the laws. But it is only by happenstance that actions prescribed by law are identical with those dictated by justice. To be just, actions must be done and distributions must be made in a particular manner, and the knowledge required to do these things is more difficult to attain than knowledge of what makes people healthy. (Johnston, 2011, p. 81)

Aristotle (1980/384–322 BCE) clearly articulated that imperfection is inherent within all laws even when even when striving to express justice. As described by Aristotle (1980/384–322 BCE), justice involves equal treatment unto equals and unequal treatment unto unequals specifically in this order to be fair. In contrast, the principle of equity emphasizes the needs of society's most marginalized, oppressed, disadvantaged, and mistreated individuals. Perhaps, solutions for today's problems resonated in the space between equity and equality as defined by Aristotle so long ago. Consideration of the equity/equality paradigm as discussed might provide context for school-based administrators. Additional exploration into principal standards in Texas extends this review in the following section. Principals in Texas require support and training from RESCs to equip them to support general and special education teachers as they improve achievement outcomes of students with disabilities.

Shift Happens Through Strategic Actions

Principal Standards in Texas

In 2011, the Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 1383, which was then codified as Texas Education Code Section 21.3541, Appraisal and Professional Development System for Principals. This bill directed the commissioner of education to launch and oversee a comprehensive appraisal and professional development system for public

school principals. It also authorized the commissioner to establish a nationwide conglomerate of renowned authorities on educational leadership and policy. This coalition of experts was created to help develop the appraisal system and determine recommendations for the training, appraisal, professional development, and compensation of principals. Also included in these responsibilities, this group established school leadership standards and a set of indicators of successful school leadership to align with such training, appraisal, and professional development.

In spring 2012, the TEA assembled a principal advisory committee to examine state policies and laws governing principals in addition to perceived best practices in principal preparation. As part of this work, experts from around the country presented on policies and processes adopted and the effect they had on principal effectiveness in other states. These efforts led to a draft of competencies principals need to acquire in order to effectively lead at the campus level and improve student performance. Following these efforts, the TEA coordinated with educator preparation programs and hosted focus groups at state principal conferences to share and discuss the principal advisory committee findings and recommendations. Working with the principal advisory committee, the TEA began developing principal standards aligned to best practices for principals, predominantly by reframing the fundamental responsibility of the principal as the instructional leader of a campus (TEA, 2014). In his research, Barth (1990) asserted that the success or failure of educational reform hinges on principals becoming instructional leaders.

The complete set of principal standards said to “capture the aspirational practices all principals can strive toward regardless of their level of experience or the context of

their position" (TEA, 2014, p. 2) was completed in the fall of 2013. In June of 2014, the principal standards resulting from these efforts were adopted into Chapter 149 of the Texas Administrative Code. The standards served as the foundation for the T-PESS, and also captured the five main categories of principal leadership as reflected in the literature. These included instructional leadership, human capital, executive leadership, school culture, and strategic operations. Responding to Texas's pursuit of a waiver from certain provisions of the ESEA as amended by the NCLB, a new principal steering committee comprised of campus principals, central office administrators, members of the higher education community, and principal association members convened to build a state principal evaluation system. The result of this group's efforts culminated in the development of an evaluation system linked to principal standards and designed as a continuous improvement model of professional development. Through actionable feedback and continuous reflection, the system was created to enable principals to implement professional practices for improved performance (TEA, 2014).

The TEA piloted the principal evaluation system during the 2014–2015 school year with approximately 60 Texas school districts. Participating school districts received training during the summer of 2014 and began implementing the system that fall. Throughout this process, participating districts provided the TEA with implementation feedback to allow for systemic revisions to training, instruments, and guidelines. Principals and their appraisers contributed feedback regarding perceived pros and cons of the evaluation system piloted. These feedback sessions were facilitated by the TEA with support from McREL International. The TEA then included approximately 135 additional districts in 2015–2016 in what it defined as the refinement year, which resulted

in total participation of approximately 200 districts. This refinement year enabled the TEA to consider 2014–2015 pilot feedback and adjust training materials and evaluation tools. The refinement year also expanded participation prior to statewide rollout of the T-PESS in support of Texas's RESCs being required to train appraisers from approximately 600 districts in a single summer.

In 2015, McREL coordinated with the TEA to host train-the-trainer academies for RESC staff, district trainers, and trainers from higher education who became experts on the evaluation system and the training accompanying the system. These academies consisted of face-to-face training, online instruction, follow-up, revisions based on pilot feedback, and certification. Graduates of these academies then co-trained with McREL trainers before being approved to provide training to refinement year districts. Prior to completion, additional stakeholder groups were assembled to revise the existing administrative rules regarding principal appraisal, contained in Chapter 150 of the Texas Administrative Code with consideration of additional stakeholder feedback (TEC, 2020).

In consideration of the changing responsibilities of the principal and in culmination of the multiyear pilot project conducted by the TEA with support from McREL, the Texas State Board of Educator Certification approved the redesign of the principal standards in 2016. Following the introduction of the new principal standards, the TEA worked alongside principal preparation programs and practicing principals in the development of the new assessment framework and test instruments for certifying Texas principals. The members of Texas Principal Evaluation Steering Committee developed the T-PESS rubric in alignment with the Texas Principal Standards to serve as the foundation for T-PESS. The purpose of the T-PESS rubric was to provide a list of

practices for the improvement of instructional quality, school productivity, and student achievement. This resulted in the alignment of the T-PESS Standards to the Principal as Instructional Leader certification, which became the required certification exam in Texas on September 1, 2019 (TEA, 2019d).

The steering committee utilized research on effective school-level leadership (Marzano et al., 2005; Waters & Cameron 2007; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003) to identify 21 particular leadership responsibilities and 66 related practices that exhibited a statistically significant relationship between principal leadership and student achievement. In order to streamline the complexities and demands of being a principal, the crafters of the T-PESS framework strategically incorporated these 21 specific leadership responsibilities in a rubric. The following paragraph includes a description of the relationship between the four main components of the T-PESS Rubric.

> Each standard is supported by four or five indicators, each providing general expectations for what you should know and be able to do in order to meet performance expectations of the standard. The descriptors that describe and differentiate the leadership practices are detailed horizontally across the rating scale. The indicators for each standard include descriptors (leadership practices) that are associated with evidence-based research (Marzano et al., 2005) and nationally recognized leadership standards (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 2008). (TEA, 2019d, p. 1)

The four primary components of the T-PESS Rubric as described included the following: (a) performance standard, (b) indicator, (c) performance level, and (d) performance descriptor. The design of the T-PESS framework and Rubric assists in the selection of accurate work efforts, stewarding change, executing calculated initiatives, and developing organizational capacity for improve student outcomes (TEA, 2019d).

As principals in Texas continue to grow as instructional leaders, they must have access to innovative solutions, embedded supports, and professional learning opportunities from their RESCs. Since the implementation of the IDEA 2004 and NCLB, special education programming responsibilities at the campus level increasingly fall to principals (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). However, principals alone cannot achieve the ideals of the IDEA. In Texas, this will require the development of new models of professional learning and embedded supports for campus administrators. As aspirational leaders, team builders, instructional coaches, behavior management specialists, change agents, and educational innovators, campus principals have many responsibilities (Alvoid & Black, 2014). If school principals are to serve as the keepers of curriculum and creators of culture, they must find a way to leverage their influence in support of the achievement outcomes of students with special needs on their campuses. Before seeking solutions, a better understanding of the situation from the perspective of school principals in Texas reveals insights into the barriers and constraints they face. By illuminating perceived needs and barriers regarding the administration of special education services, professional learning providers can customize training opportunities in support of these efforts.

The Texas Two-Step

In a battle of the wills between members of the TEA and the ED in the early 2000s, a Texas Tornado swept across the politico-educational landscape of the southwest region of the United States. For decades, the federal government had been concerned states were labeling too many students as having learning disabilities and needing special

education. In an article published in the *Texas Tribune*, Swaby (2018) documented the transition of Texas Governor George W. Bush to the White House in 2001 when “he brought with him the state's strict system for rating schools, and some of its main architects, to use as the basis for the controversial education law called No Child Left Behind” (p. 2). NCLB placed strict requirements on states with respect to testing and accountability standards, which involved the administration of annual standardized assessments as reported by specific subgroups.

In the 2003–2004 school year, Texas excluded 9% of its students in state ratings, which equated to three fourths of all Texas students in special education, although federal law only allowed for the exclusion of 1–3% of a state’s students with the most severe disabilities from counting toward its school ratings. Senior advisor to President Bush and one of the creators of NCLB, Sandy Kressone, referred to the approach of increasing the number of students in special education to eliminate them from school ratings as the "ugly Texas two-step" (as quoted in Swaby, 2018, p. 3). According to Kressone, the federal government’s crackdown on Texas, “was not an absolute cap or a concrete cap, but it was pressure on Texas to reduce the percentage of kids exempted” (as quoted in Swaby, 2018, p. 3). As a result, many Texas state and local leaders claimed that the ED placed pressure on Texas to reduce the number of students receiving special education, particularly throughout President George W. Bush's time in office.

According to Swaby (2018), “the Bush administration believed Texas was gaming the system by putting too many struggling learners in special education—resulting in most of those students' standardized test scores being excluded from their schools' overall results, which counted toward crucial federal school ratings” (p. 1). The TEAs argument

was that only students who should not be required to participate in high-stakes testing should have been exempted, a sentiment shared by many Texas educators. In 2005, a compromise was reached, requiring increasingly more students with disabilities to be included in the state's school ratings over time. Swaby (2018) stated that the TEA felt compelled by this agreement to decrease the overall number of students receiving special education services and to ensure the state was not identifying too many additional students as eligible for services.

At this point, the TEA developed the PBMAS monitoring system to keep track of district percentages of students in special education, in addition to other data points. In 2006, the federal government assessed and approved the PBMAS system for the first time, which they would do many times over the next 10 years. From this point forward, the Texas special education state rates dropped consistently each year to reach their lowest level in history in 2016, at 8.6%. This was also the lowest state reported special education rate in the country. For a decade, LEAs across Texas perceived the PBMAS indicator tracking the special education percentage rates of each LEA to be a cap on the number of students they should have in special education. These perceptions were based on the staging criteria set by the TEA in response to districts that exceeded the 8.5% indicator performance level. Staging and interventions were often accompanied by the TEA desk and onsite visits to LEAs where staging reflected an escalation due to this and other indicators in the PBMAS system. This created much consternation among educators, specifically principals, special education directors, and superintendents who felt the policy implications of the PBMAS system where over stringent and punitive in nature. Following a second showdown between the TEA and the ED in 2016, which

resulted from an article in the *Houston Chronicle* (Rosenthal, 2016) alleging countless children had been denied special education identification and services, changes began to occur. In 2017, the Texas State Legislature passed a law that prohibited the TEA from tracking the percentage of students receiving special education. In her account, Swaby (2018) quoted previous chief deputy commissioner of the TEA, Todd Webster, as saying, "I don't think it's fair for TEA and particularly those who by all accounts have been trying to do good work . . . to have their reputations impugned when the [federal] department doing the impugning was basically putting the pressure on them to rein in special education" (p. 3). There was another storm headed towards Texas and this time it swelled to the size of a Tsunami.

The Texas Tsunami

On September 11, 2016, an investigative report on special education was published in the *Houston Chronicle* describing an alleged denial of special education services by LEAs throughout the state of Texas (Rosenthal, 2016). In response to this publication, the Office for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services launched an investigation into the implementation of the provisions of the IDEA by the TEA. In December of 2016, the Office for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services conducted five listening sessions in Texas to give members of the public an opportunity to provide comments. Officials from OSEP and the TEA attended listening sessions in the following five locations: Dallas, Houston, El Paso, Edinburg, and Austin. Additionally, a blog hosted by OSEP was open for comments from December 5, 2016 through January 6, 2017.

In order to collect more information, a series of onsite monitoring visits were conducted in February 2017 following the listening sessions. Onsite monitoring locations included in these visits included the following 12 independent school districts: Austin, Houston, Everman, North East, United, Ector County, Harlandale, Laredo, Del Valle, Fort Bend, Aldine, and Leander. The following factors were used to determine these locations:

- trends in the percentage of students identified as students with disabilities,
- comments received during the listening sessions conducted in December 2016,
- comments submitted to the Office for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services blog between December 6, 2016 and January 6, 2017, and
- locations of the independent school districts were selected from six of the 20 regions in Texas.

The OSEP summarized its findings in a letter addressed to Texas Education Commissioner Mike Morath dated January 11, 2018. The OSEP's letter of findings required the TEA to develop a plan to address corrective actions and offered considerations for how the TEA could improve its support to LEAs in their implementation of state and federal special education laws and regulations. The TEA documented the drop in special education and added that a multitude of variables influenced fluctuations in special education participation. However, the ED (2018) documented that,

> Some ISDs [independent school districts] took actions specifically designed to decrease the percentage of students identified for special education and related services to 8.5 percent or below, even though there was no evidence to indicate that students were improperly referred and found eligible for special education and related services. Consequently, TEA's use off the 8.5 percent indicator did result in a decline in the State's overall special education identification rate from 11 .6 percent in 2004 to 8.6 percent in 2016. Through evidence collected during

> the monitoring visit, OSEP staff also identified many situations where ISDs engaged in practices that violated the IDEA's child find requirements, particularly in situations in which ISDs provided supports to struggling learners in the general education environment through mechanisms including [response to intervention], Section 504, and the state dyslexia program, even though the students were suspected of having disabilities and needing special education and related services under the IDEA. As such, OSEP's monitoring demonstrated that TEA did not ensure that all ISDs in the State properly identified, located, and evaluated all children with disabilities residing in the State who were in need of special education and related services, as required by 34 CFR §300.111, and consequently, failed to make FAPE available to all eligible children with disabilities residing in the State, as required by 34 CFR §300.101. (p. 4–5)

OSEP's specific findings of noncompliance as stated in the letter were as follows:

1. The TEA failed to ensure that all children with disabilities residing in the State who are in need of special education and related services were identified, located, and evaluated, regardless of the severity of their disability, as required by the IDEA section 612(a)(3) and its implementing regulation at 34 CFR §300.111.

2. The TEA failed to ensure that FAPE was made available to all children with disabilities residing in the state in Texas's mandated age ranges (ages 3 through 21), as required by the IDEA section 612(a)(l) and its implementing regulation at 34 CFR §300.101.

3. The TEA failed to fulfill its general supervisory and monitoring responsibilities as required by the IDEA sections 612(a)(1) and 616(a)(l)(C), and their implementing regulations at 34 CFR §§300.149 and 300.600, along with 20 U.S.C. 1232d(b)(3)(A), to ensure that independent school districts throughout the state properly implemented the IDEA Child Find and FAPE requirements.

Upon receiving the above referenced findings from OSEP, Governor Abbott released the following statement in a press release on January 11, 2018.

> I have read with deep concern the recent monitoring letter sent to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) from the U.S. Department of Education (DOE). The past dereliction of duty on the part of many school districts to serve our students and the failure of TEA to hold districts accountable are worthy of criticism. At the state and local level, the practices that led to the DOE monitoring letter will end. Going back to 2004, the letter points to multiple failures by local school districts to adequately address the needs of our most vulnerable students. Of particular concern were local compliance failures stemming from the long-standing 8.5 percent representation policy. Such failures are not acceptable, and

> TEA must take steps now to significantly increase the oversight provided to ensure our special education students are receiving services they deserve. (p. 1)

In addition to this proclamation, Governor Abbott directed Texas Commissioner of Education Mike Morath of the TEA to develop a response to these findings within seven days. After seeking public feedback and developing several iterations of this document, the TEA's efforts culminated in a corrective action plan that also included a special education strategic plan, which went beyond the corrective actions required by OSEP's findings. According to the TEA, "this strategic plan outlines a system that supports ongoing efforts to achieve strong outcomes for all students with disabilities. The system represents a balanced approach between compliance with federal regulations and a results-driven focus on student outcomes" (TEA, 2018, p. 3). The following section includes a discussion of the plan, which describes the actions needed to correct noncompliance and improve special education systemically in Texas LEAs.

TEA Special Education Strategic Plan

On April 23, 2018, the TEA released its *Special Education Strategic Plan* in response to OSEP's findings of noncompliance with respect to the TEA's oversight and monitoring of specific provisions of the IDEA. In the plan, the TEA emphasizes the agency's statewide responsibilities to LEAs, students with disabilities, and their parents regarding special education, specifically in relation to monitoring, support, and professional development. According to the TEA (2018b), significant ongoing stakeholder feedback including over 7,000 survey responses, 4,000 emails and comments, 100 focus groups and meetings, and over 150 interviews culminated in revisions that led to the *Special Education Strategic Plan*. The goal for Texas as documented in the

strategic plan is to develop a system that supports continuous efforts to realize robust outcomes for all students with disabilities through individualized services aligned with the legal and moral imperative of the ideals within the IDEA.

With a focus on leveraging statewide and regional grants and contracts, the TEA announced the intent to collaborate with RESCs, nonprofit organizations, and higher education institutions to improve student outcomes, but "local education agencies will do most of the heavy lifting" (TEA, 2018b, p. 3). In the strategic plan, the TEA explained that for the majority of school systems in Texas operating within legal and statutory guidelines, minimal additional requirements should be expected. For LEAs with subpar procedures and practices, a moderate to significant increase in workload was to be expected. According to TEA (2018b),

> The ED found that not all eligible students have been given timely access to special education services. While ED did not examine the efficacy of special education services, an analysis of student outcomes in the areas of graduation rates, achievement in reading and mathematics, and college readiness measures indicate we have room for significant improvements. These data highlight significant gaps in performance between students served by special education and their non-disabled peers. For the majority of students served by special education, performing on level academically with their non-disabled peers is an attainable and reasonable goal. We should work to eliminate the gaps in performance exposed by these data. But these data alone cannot describe the full picture of special education efficacy in Texas. Therefore, the agency set out to solicit feedback directly from special education stakeholders throughout the state. This anecdotal feedback, combined with the data, informed the decision to develop a comprehensive strategic plan for special education in Texas. (p. 5–7)

In response to these findings, the TEA restructured its department of special education and implemented a new system of monitoring and support to LEAs referred to as the differentiated monitoring support system. This system consists of two types of special education program monitoring: cyclical reviews and targeted reviews. The review and

support division at the TEA oversees these processes. The division oversees implementation of the *Special Education Strategic Plan*'s specific steps to taking corrective actions related to Child Find. These actions responded to the ED's corrective actions by providing intensified supports for students eligible for special education with the goal of improving outcomes (TEA, 2018b). The *Special Education Strategic Plan* focused on a few primary areas:

- monitoring;
- identification, evaluation, and FAPE;
- training, support, and development;
- student, family, and community engagement; and
- technical assistance networks.

The TEA emphasized the expectation that the strategic plan would evolve as circumstances required changes to occur, and additional details regarding specific initiatives would develop as these initiatives progressed. All materials produced by the TEA intended for parents or guardians would be available in English and Spanish, which is a process the TEA strongly encouraged all school systems to do as well. Throughout the plan's evolution, the TEA assured the process of continuous improvement through the implementation of the following key beliefs:

- *Significant stakeholder input*: This process includes ongoing engagement with students, families, educators, advocacy groups, and district and school officials. This requires numerous, wide-ranging opportunities for stakeholder collaboration and feedback. It should be noted that the development of the strategic plan was not the end of the feedback process. It was expected that throughout the strategic plan's implementation, the solicitation of continual feedback from the special education community would drive the process.

- *Transparency*: With regard to rulemaking and stakeholder processes being made public, the TEA stated a commitment to transparency to the extent allowed by law.

Special Education Student Data - Texas Performance Statistics

According to TEA (2018), "Texas has approximately 1,200 LEAs, more than any other state in the country. These include all local school systems in Texas, both traditional independent school districts, consolidated independent school districts, and charter schools" (p. 9). In Texas, approximately 500,000 students received special education services in 2018 (TEA, 2018b). Of these students, 41% were approaching grade level in reading and math compared to 75% of all Texas students who were approaching grade level. Additional state data from the TEA regarding students receiving special education provided evidence of achievement gaps in Texas. Based on 2017 STAAR data, achievement outcomes of students in special education reflected a 33% gap in reading and 40% gap in math compared to non-special-education students. Data in the TEA's *Special Education Strategic Plan* supported the findings from OSEP and indicated a problem regarding special education enrollment and special education achievement outcomes. As TEA (2018b) referenced, "special education participation and performance trends in Texas highlight the need to improve" (p. 5).

These statistics offered a snapshot of the achievement outcomes of students in special education in Texas. In addition to decreasing special education enrollment are significant gaps in student achievement, graduation rates, and college readiness of Texas students in special education. Although achievement outcomes of students in special education in Texas reflected the achievement gaps present at the national level (TEA,

2018), it could be argued these state- and local-level failures to implement the provisions of the IDEA in Texas contributed to the growing gaps in achievement. Contradictory to this belief, the National Assessment of Educational Progress scores from 2009 to 2015 showed these gaps persisted on a national level, not just in states found to be noncompliant regarding the implementation of the IDEA.

In considering why this problem of special education student achievement persisted in Texas when the ED and the TEA continued to increase expectations regarding achievement outcomes for every student, one area to look at involves second-order change regarding the ideals of the IDEA. According to Marzano et al. (2005), second-order change results in altered systems and dramatic shifts requiring new ways of thinking and acting, and first-order change involves an extension of past knowledge incrementally implemented with existing skills within existing paradigms with prevailing values and norms. Although the plethora of laws and regulations regarding special education achieved first-order change in schools, they failed to produce the second-order change necessary for sustainable progress in relation to the achievement outcomes of students with disabilities. Blanton, Pugach, and Boveda (2018) summed it up as follows:

> Educators will likely need to draw on specific tools and protocols to provide structure for creating new shared discourses required to achieve a common equity agenda and overcome the deeply embedded structural and historical divide between general and special education. (p. 361)

The necessity to overcome historical divides inherent within the minds of general and special educators is accompanied by the need for increased awareness of sociopolitical variables contributing to the adoption of such mindsets. The following section explores

contextual variables and strategic actions that influenced the educational environment in Texas schools.

Looking Back to Move Ahead

In addition to the unintended consequences put forth regarding the implementation of the PBMAS system in Texas, Ravitch (2016) explained that the reauthorization of the IDEA in 2004 provided states with additional latitude to determine the degree to which students belonged in special education. TEA officials utilized this latitude when allowing school districts to use a process known as response to intervention in targeted reading and math instruction to help struggling students catch up. Using data from response to intervention screenings, teachers were to determine the possibility that students had undiagnosed learning disabilities or were in need of additional academic interventions. This regulation from the IDEA 2004 read as follows: "A public agency may not identify any public or private school child as a child with a disability if the determinant factor is lack of appropriate instruction in reading or math" (IDEA, 2004, p. 110). The argument was that many students lacking proper reading and writing instruction had been labeled as having a learning disability (Swaby, 2018). According to former U.S. Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, many students who had legitimate physical or emotional disabilities were mixed in with students who had learning and instructional needs due to inadequate reading instruction. However, various stakeholder groups have continued the debate regarding the appropriateness of using response to intervention to determine if children have learning disabilities. Some have argued that although the IDEA does not define the components of an evaluation used to determine

eligibility for special education, response to intervention programs supplant federal requirements with respect to the use of comprehensive evaluations, which assess cognitive abilities.

For many years, the TEA argued that the decrease in special education participation was a result of the effectiveness of response to intervention leading to fewer students mislabeled as having learning disabilities. Unfortunately, the ED found this not to be the case and reported that many Texas educators were inappropriately using the response to intervention screening process to delay or deny students special education services. As a result, many students in Texas public schools never received the protections of the IDEA due to policies set by the TEA in response to pressure from the ED. In his account of decisions made during his time as the special education director at the TEA in 2012, Gene Lenz reasoned that although the TEA continuously worried about students with disabilities having access to special education, they were equally concerned with the potential of children without disabilities being placed in special education (Swaby, 2018). Such reasoning has been supported by research conducted by Lukianoff and Haidt (2019), who discussed the concept of the looping effect as follows:

> Applying labels to people can create what is called a looping effect: it can change the behavior of the person being labeled and become a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is part of why labeling is such a powerful cognitive distortion. If depression becomes part of your identity, then over time you'll develop corresponding schemas about yourself and your prospects (I'm no good and my future is hopeless). These schemas will make it harder for you to marshal the energy and focus to take on challenges that, if you were to master them, would weaken the grip of depression. (p. 150)

Although the impact on Texas students who might have been eligible for special education services has yet to be determined, research conducted by Ballis and Heath

(2019) suggested that the removal of special education programs for students with marginal disabilities significantly decreases educational attainment. These findings suggested that the stigma associated with receiving special education services or lowered expectations often accompanying such services are outweighed by the benefits received from special education.

In the current era, referred to as the *effective phase* of special education implementation, schools must now adapt to the shifting paradigm in which students are expected to both receive special education services if needed and experience the benefit of high expectations. The ED findings and corrective action requirements for Texas emphasized the necessity that Texas educators adopt the least dangerous assumption regarding students with disabilities. In presuming competence, educators afford students high expectations and belief in their learning abilities. For students with disabilities, this must culminate in experience rich learning environments, effectively designed instruction, and equitable educational opportunities. Additional state, regional, and local reform efforts regarding the provision of special education in relation to student achievement also focused on increasing expectations of students with disabilities and the principals supporting their learning outcomes. The next section provides a discussion of additional changes in Texas, which had a significant impact on Texas principals.

Seismic Shifts Lead to Effective Special Education Practices in Texas

In Texas, a multitude of changes have been converging at the intersection between state accountability, federal accountability, teacher and principal appraisal, and special education practices. The recent introduction of the T-TESS and the T-PESS

added additional responsibilities and possibilities for principals in Texas. The T-TESS and the T-PESS were designed to provide professional evaluation and support in an ongoing improvement framework. The biggest criticism of these systems is the time it takes to implement each with fidelity. The T-TESS is the evaluation mechanism used by principals in Texas to evaluate and provide supports to teachers, and the T-PESS is the evaluation framework utilized by principal evaluators. Both derived from research and evidence-based studies intended to provide principals in Texas useful processes and resources for the improvement and refinement of effective educational practices.

Also significant in Texas was the addition of House Bill (HB) 22 in the 85th Texas Legislature in 2017. HB 22 required all Texas public schools and charter schools and campuses to receive an A through F rating. These ratings are generated from a state system of accountability in which three domains were designed to score schools on student achievement, school progress, and closing the gaps. Incumbent within these domains is the responsibility of Texas school principals regarding improving achievement outcomes of students in numerous subpopulations including special education. Although schools are still adapting to the changes brought about by HB 22, mixed opinions exist regarding the overall impact the bill will have on student achievement and outcomes in Texas.

As part of its *Special Education Strategic Plan*, the TEA also announced its shift to RDA. Currently, Texas along with all other states in the nation are adapting to shifts in special education federal policies with respect to the adoption of RDA. At the start of the 2019–2020 school year, the TEA announced its transition from PBMAS to RDA as its state accountability framework for the assessment of federally required special

education indicators in alignment with federal monitoring and oversight of the implementation of the IDEA. With an emphasis on student achievement and outcomes in addition to compliance indicators, the TEA stated that the transition to RDA offers a balanced approach to the state's responsibility to monitor the implementation of the provisions of the IDEA by the LEAs in Texas (TEA, 2018b).

As part of the shift to RDA and implementation of the *Special Education Strategic Plan*, the review and support division at the TEA is overseeing several new processes in Texas. These include the annual completion of LEA self-assessments and strategic support plans. According to TEA (2019c), the purpose of the self-assessment is to help LEA leadership teams evaluate and improve special education programs. While not considered part of the compliance requirements of LEAs with respect to RDA, TEA has discussed the LEA self-assessments as integral to the continuous improvement of special education in Texas. LEA self-assessments, in addition to RDA reports, serve as the foundational information for the completion of the LEA strategic support plans described by TEA (2019c) as follows:

> The purpose of the Strategic Support Plan (formerly the Targeted Improvement Plan) is to guide local education agencies (LEAs) through the process of prioritizing RDA performance levels demonstrating need for improvement as well as state performance plan (SPP) items that demonstrate the same need. The Strategic Support Plan is designed to assist LEAs to address areas of growth that will positively impact student outcomes associated solely with RDA performance levels and SPP corrective actions. The Strategic Support Plan is a tool used annually as part of an LEAs continuous improvement process to prioritize essential program elements, clear timelines, milestones, metrics, and task owners. The process of developing the Strategic Support Plan has eight (8) steps: Review Sources of Data, Identify Priority Areas, Develop Problem Statement(s), Conduct Root Cause Analysis, Define Annual Goal(s), Develop Strategies for Implementation, Define Implementation Activities, and Monitor and Report Progress. (p. 1)

Through this proactive process, leadership team members are encouraged to collaborate in the assessment of local special education policies, procedures, and practices to improve performance outcomes of students with disabilities.

House Bill 3 and Special Education Funding

In the 85th Texas legislative session, legislators passed HB 21, which directed the Texas Commission of Public School Funding to study the current Texas school funding and finance system and develop recommendations for improvements to this model. The final report included the commission's findings and 34 separate recommendations and the expressed intent that these recommendations should serve as the foundation for comprehensive school finance reform. In the following, the commission made its intent clear:

> The Commission has taken the guidance of the Texas Supreme Court to heart: Texas students "deserve transformational, top-to-bottom reforms that amount to more than Band-Aid on top of Band-Aid." This report seeks to start the dialogue about how to create a fully-aligned education and property tax system that will meet the needs of Texas students to ensure that our state's future remains bright for all Texans. (Brister et al., 2018, p. 4)

The degree to which HB 3 will truly realize the findings and recommendations of the commission's report has yet to be determined. Below is a deeper exploration of Finding 12, which stated that "school funding formulas are complicated, outdated, and haven't kept pace with educational costs" (Brister et al., 2018, page 4).

Finding 12

In Finding 12 of the Texas Commission of Public School Funding report (Brister et al., 2018) focused on the degree to which school funding formulas were complicated

and outdated. As described in the report, the formulas used to generate school funding contained allotments and adjustments, which had not been updated in decades. According to Brister et al., (2018), school funding had not kept pace with changing costs or demographics in the state. The result of this had been growing inequities for students across the state with the basic per student allotment only increasing 8% in 10 years. This finding showed that the career and technology education allotment had not been updated since 2003, the cost of education index had not been updated since 1991, and the transportation allotment had not been updated since 1984 (Brister et al., 2018).

Funding Reform for Students With Disabilities

In the discussion of school funding formulas within Finding 12, the absence of weighted allotments used for calculating special education funding was interesting considering the condition of the state with regard to special education. With the ED's findings against the TEA of noncompliance with provisions of the IDEA specifically, Child-Find, FAPE, and monitoring, it would have been an optimal opportunity to include rigorous discussion on special education funding. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

In November 2018, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit agreed with an ED decision that Texas also violated the IDEA provision regarding state support for special education. According to these findings, the IDEA provision that Texas violated was the maintenance of financial support requirement, also referred to as maintenance of effort at the LEA level. The Fifth Circuit criticized the Texas special education funding formula. The Court wrote:

> The weighted student model certainly poses the potential for future abuse. Though Texas law requires the state to allocate funding based on the needs of

> disabled children, it is the state itself that assesses what those needs are. Hence, the weighted student model creates a perverse incentive for a state to escape its financial obligations merely by minimizing the special education needs of its students. (United States Court of Appeals Fifth Circuit, 2018).

Regarding this statement and in light of findings from the federal government, including the special education funding more prevalently in the commission's findings and recommendations would perhaps have signaled to the ED that Texas intended to prioritize responsibilities to students with disabilities in the state. In a presentation to the House Public Education Committee on February 12, 2019, members of the Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education and Disability Rights Texas highlighted the following six primary problems with the systems of funding special education with weighted allotments.

1. Funding is based on placement and not reflective of current practices.
2. The weights are very old (i.e., 1993).
3. The contact hour factor used for all settings other than mainstream is old (i.e. 1992–1993) and is not reflective of the true cost of services and supports.
4. The system does not support all students with disabilities, just those served by special education.
5. The current formula lacks transparency and understanding. (Aleman & McGuire, 2019).

While these six primary problems regarding the Texas system of funding special education with weighted allotments did not make their way into the commission's report, Kristin McGuire, director of governmental relations at the Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education, testified to members of the House Public Education Committee regarding the need for significant reform with regard to special education funding in Texas (Aleman & McGuire, 2019). The following excerpt from the Texas

Council of Administrators of Special Education and Disability Rights Texas presentation Q&A offers an example reflective of concerns expressed in Problem 4.

> Why Is Lack of State Funds For All Students With Disabilities a Problem? Example: a student identified with dyslexia*or a related disorder who is receiving direct support and instruction in a research-based and peer reviewed program by an appropriately certified professional. There is no direct funding mechanism in place to fund these programs or the certified providers required to provide these intensive services. * The Commission did recommend a dyslexia weight, which would address some of these issues. A 0.1 weight was recommended with an estimated cost of $100 million. (Aleman & McGuire, 2019, p. 9)

While adjustments to the basic allotment did find its way into HB 3, as did minimal variations in special education funding, a federal court significantly criticized the state's method for funding special education.

House Bill 3, Finding 12 of the Commission's Report and Special Education Funding

In the following section, the extent to which HB 3 addressed the findings and recommendations of the commission's report is explored, specifically with regard to Finding 12 (i.e., School funding formulas are complicated, outdated, and haven't kept pace with educational costs). Specific revisions to current Texas funding weights as evidenced in two subsections in HB 3 addressed Finding 12 in the commission's report as follows:

> Formula change repealed the following formula elements and redistributed the revenue attributable to them. Gifted and talented weight: Requires school districts to maintain their gifted and talented programs or funds will be withheld from the district. Districts must report to the commissioner of education regarding the use of funds on gifted and talented programs. School districts cannot limit the number of gifted and talented students identified based on any provisions in HB Increases the basic allotment to $6,160 from $5,140 (+19.8%). Authorizes a school district to increase its M&O tax rate up to $1.17 to make up for lost revenue if the Legislature lowers the basic allotment. Increases compensatory education funding based on student needs; sliding scale weight 0.225-0.275 (from 0.20). Based on "economic census blocks" using median household income,

> average educational attainment, percentage of single-parent households, and rate of homeownership. No longer based on qualification for free and reduced price lunch. Expands career & technology allotment to include courses in Grades 7–12. Increases special education mainstream weight to 1.15 (from 1.10) and requires the Commissioner of Education to distribute funding to school districts for special education students in the amount necessary to comply with federal requirements for maintenance of state financial support. Requires the Commissioner of Education to appoint a Special Education Allotment Committee to make recommendations on special education funding. (Aleman & McGuire, 2019, p. 9)

New allotments and programs included:

- Early education allotment for economically disadvantaged and bilingual students in grades K–3; weight 0.10.
- Dual language allotment; weight 0.15, 0.05 if English proficient.
- Dyslexia allotment for each student identified as having dyslexia or a related disorder; weight 0.10.

These revisions and additions to state statute above aligned with the commission's report regarding Finding 12. The increase in the basic allotment from $5,140 per pupil to $6,160 per pupil at first glance appeared to be a significant step towards updating the per pupil funding part of this equation; however, HB 3 is packed with revisions and additions creating additional complexities and unknowns in an already complicated system. With efforts to compress local taxes accompanied by assessing property values on current year evaluations, schools have speculated on the overall impact of these efforts. Increases to compensatory education based on student needs and expansion of career and technology allotment have also added new money to school budgets. Historically, both of these allotments have been accompanied by stringent program guidelines, which may inhibit schools' use of them. These restrictions may be eased as a result of changes brought on by the transition to the ESSA.

Several of these changes also addressed concerns expressed by the Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education and Disability Rights Texas regarding special education funding. For example, increases to the special education mainstream weight from 1.10 to 1.15 will increase the amount of revenue generated for students with disabilities coded with a Public Education Information Management System Code of 40, which means the students spend their entire day in general education classes with special education services brought to the classroom. The degree to which this incremental change will offset the growing expense of educating students with disabilities has yet to be determined. This also does not address the difference between mainstreaming students versus creating inclusive cultures and campuses.

This revision also required the commissioner of education to distribute funding to school districts for special education students in the amount necessary to comply with federal requirements for maintenance of state financial support. This responded to the findings of noncompliance regarding maintenance of effort and will be an ongoing topic of discussion in years to come as the TEA continues to negotiate fiscal responsibilities with the ED. The last part of this revision required the commissioner of education to appoint a special education allotment committee to make recommendations on special education funding. This committee could have influence with regard to comprehensive special education funding reform in the future. In addition, worthy of discussion is the addition of a dyslexia allotment with a weight of 0.10 for all students identified as having dyslexia or a dyslexia related disorder such as dysgraphia or dyscalculia. Schools have difficulty funding services for students with dyslexia, and this may alleviate some of this struggle. Texas asked for comprehensive school finance reform. HB 3 is far reaching

indeed. Schools have desperately needed additional state funding and now the test of time will determine the degree to which these needs have been addressed.

When the *Special Education Strategic Plan* was released, the TEA noted that the agency could only appropriate funds already approved by the Texas Legislature and the U.S. Congress. Following this statement, the TEA clarified that the agency was committing all available the IDEA resources to the success of the strategic plan and was committed to encumbering additional appropriated funds as well.

Procedural Shifts

Along with the procedural changes required of LEAs as a result of the shift to RDA, school principals as the instructional leaders of their campuses have become increasingly responsible for improving the academic achievement of students with disabilities (Korobkin & Meller, 2019). Such changes continue to add to the responsibilities of the already complex role of principals in Texas. Implementation of this multitude of responsibilities and the realization of the goals asserted in the TEA's *Special Education Strategic Plan* will require support from regional education agencies in Texas. In the TEA's strategic plan, RESCs appeared seven times in varying contexts related to the plan's successful implementation. According to Arsen, Bell, and Plank (2004), RESCs are in an optimal position to provide essential professional development for educational leaders in Texas. Maze (2009) documented that the Texas State Board of Education established 20 RESCs in optimal proximity of the schools they support at 20 geographical locations around Texas as a way to foster relational ties and build trust between the RESCs and their regional schools. This also enabled RESCs to build

capacity in the promotion and sustainability of state and federal accountability regarding school improvement requirements (Texas System of Education Service Centers, 2008a). According to Fielder (2005), RESCs have a history of developing professional development for principals with an emphasis on student achievement, which is consistent with administrative accountability being the responsibility of campus leaders (Marzano et al., 2005). The following section explains the creation and evolution of RESCs in Texas.

Texas Regional Education Service Centers

The Rise and Roles of RESCs

According to Stephens and Keane (2005):

> The evolution of the earlier day educational service agency-type organization is arguably one of the most significant developments in school government, especially during the past four decades. Moreover, the development of the contemporary educational service agency is a fascinating story for it in many ways mirrors the struggles faced by local and state interests to address the huge socioeconomic changes that have impacted education over time, as well as the challenges presented by the rising expectations that have been placed on the schools, school districts, and the state. The efforts of the ESAs (Educational Service Agencies), with their limited resources, to implement policy issues initiated by the state and also serve needs defined by local school districts reflect their continuing efforts to strike a meaningful balance in the centralization-decentralization of educational policy. (p. 2)

Education service centers are documented to have been in operation as early as the 1930s (Stephens & Keane, 2005). Meant to operate as extensions of state offices, these early versions of educational service agencies were intended to provide services, collect educational statistics, develop educational goals, promote educational research, and observing state educational standards (Stephens & Keane, 2005). In those days, Texas schools with very few students spread across the state numbering 6,953 school districts

with an average enrollment of 65 students. This led to great inequities of educational experiences.

In response to a survey investigating this issue, the Texas State Board of Education announced the need to consolidate these small districts to address unequal conditions in the school systems (Hord & Reynolds-Gibbs, 1993). These recommendations met strong opposition from communities fearing the loss of local control and had little effect until the enactment of the Gilmer-Aikin Law in 1949 (Texas Public Schools, 2004). This law established the TEA, abolished the nine-member Texas State Board of Education appointed by the governor, and created a 21-member board, which was elected by popular vote. According to Eby (1954), these changes also included the creation of an office of commissioner of education, a funding plan based on an economic index, and the state's first minimum salary for teachers.

Following the initial resistance to consolidation, the financial incentives of becoming an independent school district with locally elected school board members eventually became the norm in Texas. Currently, there are approximately 1,246 public school districts and charters in Texas with the vast majority of these being independent school districts (TEA, 2019). For the past 50 years, RESCs have been integral to the success of these schools (Maze, 2009).

RESCs in Texas are defined as "intermediate educational units that provide training, technical assistance, administrative support, and an array of other services as determined by the Legislature, the Commissioner of Education, and the needs of local school districts and charter schools" (MGT of America Inc., 2004, p. 1). The expansion and evolution of RESCs in Texas began in 1965 when the Texas State Board of

Education authorized by the 59th Texas Legislature, developed media centers across the state (Maze, 2009). Beginning in 1967, the board utilized Title III funds from the ESEA to create an RESC in each of 20 geographic regions across the state. Initially, the main purpose for RESCs was to distribute 16 mm films to schools and coordinate educational planning in each region (Stephens & Keane, 2005). Funds were limited to revenue generated from media centers and Title III grant funds totaling approximately $85,000 per RESC.

When the Texas Legislature passed HB 72 in 1984, further expansion of RESCs included improving instructional programs and operational efficiency of school districts. The Texas Legislature once again extended the roles of RESCs in 2001 with the expansion of the Texas Reading Initiative and additional training expectations for math teachers in Grades 5–8, which also led to RESCs serving as the primary providers of training in this initiative statewide.

In the 75th Texas Legislature, RESCs became linked to the state accountability system in three sections of the Texas Education Code. With this reauthorization in 1997, RESCs became increasingly accountable for student achievement in the state's accountability system (Castleberry & Alanis, 1998). RESCs became accountable for performance standards and indicators, which in conjunction with RESC executive directors, would be evaluated annually by the commissioner of education (Texas Education Code, 2008). Performance indicators evaluated by the commissioner included student performance, district efficiency and effectiveness, increasing operational efficiencies, technical assistance in core areas, utilization of grants to accomplish state initiatives, and RESCs' achievement results (Texas Education Code, 2008). In addition

to an audit of the RESCs' finances and review of a client satisfaction survey, the commissioner's evaluation of RESCs included reviewing performance indicators (Texas Education Code, 2008).

In efforts to decentralize support for schools across Texas, downsizing at the TEA led to the expansion of RESC responsibilities to include technical support services to schools. There was also an expectation that RESCs provide professional development for the schools they served, resulting in improved student achievement (Texas Education Code, 2008). As state accountability requirements again increased in accordance with the requirements of NCLB, RESCs enhanced their supports to public and charter schools in the assistance of financial viability, compliance, and implementation of accountability standards (Maze, 2009).

Since the Texas Legislature created RESCs through statute in 1967, school districts have benefitted from the services, products, and partnerships afforded by these organizations. According to Arsen et al. (2004), RESCs are in an optimal position to support school reform efforts. RESCs are strategically located throughout the state of Texas, which mitigates geographic constraints to accessing professional learning opportunities. The expectation for RESCs to support student achievement through training and support has evolved along with the demands placed on schools (Arsen et al., 2004). The purpose for RESCs has always been to help schools improve student performance and implement initiatives assigned by the Texas Legislature or the commissioner of education. The evolution of RESCs in Texas has paralleled the evolving role of the school principal as well as the ever-changing world of special education.

Marzano et al. (2005) posited that administrative accountability for student achievement has historically resided with the school principal. Although studies into preservice preparation programs for principals were plentiful in the literature, information regarding professional development programs that met the ongoing needs of current school principals was quite limited (Fleck, 2008; LaPointe & Davis, 2006). In Texas, the principal preparation and certification revisions leading to the development of the new principal examination and the principal as instructional leader certification increased expectations of school principals' competence. Principals as instructional leaders are required to ensure the quality of instruction all students receive including students with disabilities.

As state, regional, and local education agencies continue to respond to changes brought about by RDA, principals must be prepared with the knowledge and skills they will need to lead these change efforts. According to Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008), the manner in which educational leaders react and respond to the challenges of large-scale reform determines the efficacy of implementation with regard to their efforts. Perhaps having a voice in the design and content of their professional learning opportunities will enable principals to gain knowledge and skills needed to implement the transition from compliance-focused systems to results-focused systems. As RESCs continue to evolve, an opportunity to gain insight from school principals presented itself in this study. According to Beavers (2009), adults are often reluctant learners in the absence of collaboration, input, and choice in the development of their own professional learning goals. Within the organizational structure of RESCs there existed the potential to support campus principals through the revisioning of professional development

opportunities designed with insight into the perceptions and needs of this group of educators. Because of their proximity to districts and organizational expertise in professional learning, RESCs were in an optimal position to provide principal professional development focused on the administration of special education services. In order to do so, principals needed the opportunity to provide perceptions and feedback about their perceived efficacy to administer special education services and the efficacy of RESC-based professional learning opportunities in support of these efforts.

Region 12 Education Service Center

There are 20 RESCs strategically located throughout Texas. The RESC 12 is a nonprofit service organization in Waco, Texas committed to supporting educators and school staff members in their efforts to improve student outcomes. RESC 12 serves 76 school districts, 10 charter schools, 22 private schools, 413 campuses, 160,613 students, 12,138 teachers, and 24,500 staff members in the 12 surrounding counties. Supporting schools to ensure students receive equitable educational opportunities and operate efficiently and economically, RESC 12 has striven to maximize district efficiency through systems alignment. All programs and services have focused on three impact areas: educator success, resource development, and community outreach (Education Service Center Region 12, 2020).

According to the RESC 12 website, this organization has prioritized the importance of relationships. It is in this understanding that servant leadership within RESC 12 has fostered trusted relationships with the superintendents, principals, special education directors, teachers, and support staff of LEAs throughout the region. These

schools trust in and rely on the relevant professional learning opportunities, supports, and services provided from RESC 12. Through a variety of delivery methodologies, personalized learning opportunities are available in the following areas: leadership, alternative certification preparation, business information and finance, curriculum, instruction and assessment, federal programs support, data management, and special education services and technology. Educational specialists utilize research-based strategies, blended learning, and flexible scheduling to accommodate the needs of educators throughout Region 12. By offering cost-sharing services, customized professional development, and embedded coaching and support services, RESC 12 removes time constraints, funding limitations, and geographical barriers experienced by many educators in small and rural schools around the region (Education Service Center Region 12, 2020). Strategic partnerships, innovative solutions, and responsive leadership define the progressive culture within RESC 12.

Transformative efforts are underway at RESC 12 through its initiative referred to as transformED: Modern Learning for Today's Educators. Through this initiative, RESC 12 assists schools in achieving digital convergence and in doing so, models modern learning for today's educators through innovative practices, collaborative facilities, and redesigned professional development. In the multiyear phase-in strategic framework, digital convergence will encompass areas of leadership, instructional models, modern curriculum, digital ecosystem, and professional learning. Informed by theories of action, the transformED Steering Committee hypothesized that learning about varied and modern delivery methods for adult learning would empower RESC 12 to design and model meaningful learning experiences for modern adult learners (Education Service Center

Region 12 TransformED, 2020). This was evident in the redesign of professional learning opportunities defined by characteristics of blended learning, flexible scheduling, flipped classrooms, and participant engagement. The committee also posited that planning and structuring opportunities and spaces for internal collaboration would result in shared learning, strengthened relationships, and increased internal efficiency (Education Service Center Region 12 TransformED, 2020). By providing diversity through modern, collaborative learning opportunities in a variety of formats, RESC 12 has appealed to a broad audience of educators. As leaders in adult learning, RESC 12 adapted services and supports to the changing needs of educators with instructional coaching for both general education teachers and special education teachers.

In 2014, Huckabee Architecture, RESC 12, and Baylor University's Center for Astrophysics, Space Physics and Engineering Research joined together to develop the Learning Experience (LEx) Collaborative. Participants of the LEx Collaborative at the Baylor Research and Innovation Collaborative research the intersectionality of professional development and the built environment to study the influence this relationship has on student engagement and the learning experience. This innovative partnership supports training and research in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The LEx Collaborative consists of three primary focus areas: LEx Laboratories, LEx Impact, and LEx Research (Education Service Center Region 12 Lex Labs, 2020).

The LEx Labs are designed to test the next generation of innovative classrooms and laboratories in this nearly 6,000 square-foot educational research facility. The LEx Labs serve as an incubation space to test new concepts, techniques, technologies, and

flexible spaces while conversing about educational environments and learning experiences. In addition to the flexible and innovative building designs are Huckabee Architecture's progressive classroom furniture intended to facilitate collaboration, creativity, and curiosity. The LEx Labs also enable educators from around the region to attend redesigned professional learning opportunities at the Baylor Research and Innovation Collaborative state-of-the-art facilities (Education Service Center Region 12 Lex Labs, 2020).

Stakeholder engagement through purposeful communication and collaboration epitomizes LEx Impact. The LEx Impact team facilitates change management through inspiration and research-based evidence regarding the benefits associated with innovative professional learning. The primary focus of this team's efforts emphasizes redesigned learning experiences through informed educators and students. The LEx Impact team seeks to infuse variation by design through conversations with students, teachers, principals, and superintendents. By engaging various stakeholders in the change efforts underway, LEx Impact team members collect valuable feedback (Education Service Center Region 12 Lex Labs, 2020).

While working with LEAs onsite and at the LEx Labs, LEx researchers focus on collecting data, evaluating learning space effectiveness, and developing recommendations for professional development specific to new and evolving learning environments. The LEx Research team has completed multiple projects focused on flexible learning environments. In 5 years of research, four research pilots have provided valuable insights into the intersection of learning environments and experiences. In the next phase of research, the LEx Research team will explore the intersection between special education

learning environments and experiences (Education Service Center Region 12 Lex Labs, 2020).

Special Education Liaisons

In 2017, the TEA coordinated with RESCs to establish a new job description to be included in all 20 RESCs across Texas. Although all RESCs received state-level discretionary IDEA grant funding from the TEA to employ one additional personnel member, several larger RESCs received grants adequate to fund multiple positions. The use of discretionary IDEA funding by a state agency for regional staff intended to improve outcomes of students with disabilities was an undertaking novel to Texas. These positions defined as special education liaisons were referenced in the TEA's *Special Education Strategic Plan* as follows:

> Twenty-eight Education Service Center (ESC) liaisons were employed by the education service centers to perform multiple functions with regard to improving outcomes for students with disabilities. They are engaged with LEAs to develop ways to address challenges and are supporting best practices around issues that may include significant disproportionality and/or other programmatic components of the Corrective Action response. (TEA, 2018, p. 32)

Although special education liaisons carry out similar but not duplicative services within the 20 RESCs, their primary functions and responsibilities are consistent. The following explains the vision, mission, and why-statement regarding special education liaisons.

- Vision: The TEA piloted the implementation of special education liaisons in each of the RESCs to provide differentiated and targeted support and assistance to local districts.

- Mission: Connecting resources and supports across Texas to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

- Why-statement: Disrupting the status quo to change learning trajectories (TEA, 2019c).

Since their inception in August 2017, the roles and responsibilities of special education liaisons have varied from year to year and from location to location. This evolution has occurred in response to the unique needs in each RESC service area and the specific skills and knowledge of the special education liaisons in each region. In the first year's grant cycle, the three primary functions of special education liaisons were as follows.

1. They served as conduits of information, products, and initiatives from the state, regional, and local levels in two-way conversations. They provided LEAs and RESCs opportunities to highlight innovation and creativity with respect to products and practices that improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

2. They lead design teams in collaboration with LEAs with the focus of creating pockets of innovation regarding improving outcomes for students with disabilities.

3. They provided support for LEAs who elected to take part in the Georgia-based company SPEDx's IEP Analysis Data Mining Pilot Program in the exploration of data collected from student IEP's and in the design team process. This was accomplished through the dissemination of best practices and the coordination of rapid ready responses to the needs of stakeholders participating in the pilot program.

The third essential function referenced was to provide support for LEAs who elected to take part in the SPEDx IEP Analysis Pilot Program in the exploration of data generated and in the design team process; however, this responsibility never came to fruition. Swaby (2017) quoted Commissioner Morath as saying:

> Significant concerns have been raised regarding our agency's processes and the scope of the project. The efficacy of the project would be undermined without real support from parents and educators alike. . . . As a result, this project cannot proceed effectively. TEA will continue to work with parents and educators to identify methods to improve outcomes for our special education students. (p. 1)

Swaby (2017) reported that the TEA ended this special education data-mining contract following growing criticism regarding the decision to forgo a competitive bidding process with SPEDx as reported in a release from the TEA.

In Year 2, special education liaisons continued to support innovative projects and products to improve outcomes of students with disabilities in Texas public schools. Although the first two essential functions were defined as requirements in the IDEA discretionary grant applications, the remaining three essential functions were unique to the needs of each RESC as determined by special education liaisons and RESC special education directors.

In Year 3, special education liaisons developed essential functions in addition to providing support for LEAs in the implementation of requirements as set out in the TEA's *Special Education Strategic Plan*. Also, as part of RDA, these requirements included providing supports to LEAs in the development of self-assessments and strategic support plans. Implementation efforts with respect to providing supports to LEAs with RDA varies from region to region.

In addition to the responsibilities and functions described, special education liaisons have iterated and piloted numerous innovative projects and products over the past 3 years. The following section describes a few of these projects and products developed by the special education liaison employed by RESC 12. RESC 12 is in its second year of hosting a Special Education Leadership Academy at the Baylor Research and Innovation Collaborative LEx Labs. The Special Education Leadership Academy is a series of professional learning sessions scheduled monthly for special education directors interested in a continuing growth model of special education administration. A variety of

special education administrative tasks and topics frame each learning experience. Sessions are designed as follows, with SPED referring to special education:

- Session 1: SPED Leadership & Administration,
- Session 2: SPED Budgeting & Finance,
- Session 3: SPED Compliance & Monitoring,
- Session 4: SPED Pedagogy & Progress,
- Session 5: SPED Human Capital & Community Relations, and
- Session 6: SPED Reflection & Projection.

Future iterations of the Special Education Leadership Academy might include a series of special education leadership forums for LEA administrative team planning to address the changing special education procedures and practices related to the transition to RDA and the TEA's *Special Education Strategic Plan*. This would allow RESC 12 to facilitate collaborative learning through braided professional learning experiences in which special education guidance and resources would be shared with LEA teams. These could consist of special education directors and their departmental leadership teams, cross-departmental teams, or vertical leadership teams consisting of teachers, principals, directors, and superintendents. The possibility of developing Special Education Leadership Forums has also been entertained. Additional special education projects and products developed by the special education liaison at RESC 12 include the following:

- *SPED Dashboard*: Designed for efficiency when searching for statewide special education documents, guidance, and resources. It was structured in pillars of related content with hyperlinks for ease of access. Initially iterated for special education directors to spend less time searching for resources, it may also have potential utility with respect to professional learning that supports the flow of information more efficiently throughout school systems.

- *ARD Buddy*: Designed as a positive participation platform to demystify the admission, review, and dismissal process, empower the admission, review, and dismissal committee members, and amplify state and regional special education resources. Initially iterated as a tool for admission, review, and dismissal committee members to locate special education resources from around the state of Texas, it also serves to personalize professional development and increase organizational capacity by supporting the flow of information more efficiently throughout communities, schools, and systems.

- *Principal Dashboard*: Designed to quiet down the role of the principal by streamlining the search for information and resources related to special education. It serves as the principal navigation station for special education resources from around the state and nation.

- *SPEDTalk* podcast: Developed to highlight the positive changes occurring in the world of special education in Texas. By celebrating the people and organizations creating educational and experiential excellence for students with disabilities, *SPEDTalk* elevates the conversation and amplifies the state's special education resources.

- *SPEDTalk* newsletter: Designed as a statewide resource to share ideas, information, and resources regarding special education in Texas, the SPEDTalk newsletter provides insight into the ongoing changes resulting from the TEA's *Special Education Strategic Plan*.

- *Destination Education—When Worlds Collide* podcast: Connects the concepts and practices from gifted and talented education and passion/strength-based learning to the world of special education. This podcast blurs the lines between the worlds of gifted and talented and special education.

Through innovative practices and approaches, redesigned facilities, and redefined professional development models, RESC 12 has continued to push the boundaries of education in Central Texas. Currently, RESC 12 hosts superintendent forums and academies in addition to instructional leadership symposiums for campus administrators. As RESC 12 continues to explore novel formatting of workshops, embedded supports, coaching, webinars, videos, and zoom meetings through its TransformED initiative, principals will be the recipients of reimagined professional learning opportunities. Through blended learning opportunities provided by RESC 12, principals can now

engage in professional learning without having to leave their respective campuses as frequently as they have in the past. Technological advances leading to distance learning and blended learning may serve to accelerate principals' capacity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to administer effective special education services across a continuum of educational settings.

Summary

In this doctoral study, Texas principals' perceptions of self-efficacy to administer special education services were investigated. An additional focus of the study was the degree to which principals perceived their RESC-based professional learning opportunities to be supportive of their efforts to administer special education services. The researcher sought to identify the degree to which Texas principals perceive their RESC-based professional learning opportunities to be supportive of their efforts to administer special education services. A perspective was also provided on the historical context in which children with disabilities receive educational opportunities in relation to the ever-changing role of the principal in the context of the complexities characterizing the coordination of services and supports provided through special education. In Texas, efforts at the state, regional, and local levels align with federal mandates and practices in a transition from compliance-heavy systems of special education to one that balances compliance requirements with a focus on improving student outcomes (TEA, 2018). RESCs are at the center of this shift (TEA, 2018) and have potential to develop professional learning opportunities strategically designed to support Texas principals in the administration of special education services.

Chapter Two consisted of a review of the literature regarding the relationship between Texas principals' perceptions of their efficacy to administer special education services and RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting these efforts. Understanding the relationship between Texas principals' perceptions of their efficacy to administer special education services and RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting these efforts necessitated a review of literature on this topic.

This review of literature consisted of 10 sections. The first section was an overview of the chapter. The second section characterized the historical phases of special education implementation used to frame the evolution of special education service delivery in relation to the role principals have in the administration of implementation. The third section was an exploration of the first phase of implementation referred to as the paperwork phase in which the principal first becomes aware of special education but has little involvement in its implementation or administration. The fourth section provided a discussion of the second phase of implementation referred to as the efficiency phase in which the principal begins to take on minimal managerial responsibilities regarding special education implementation. The fifth section addressed the third phase of implementation referred to as the compliance phase in which the principals become procedural pundits in response to the multitude of federal mandates characterizing this period. The sixth section was an investigation of the fourth and final phase of implementation referred to as the effectiveness phase in which principals are charged with the shared responsibility for reimaging special education. The seventh section revisited the literature for additional analysis and topic saturation regarding the principal and special education implementation. The eighth section transitioned from the national

to the state context regarding significant events characterizing the Texas educational landscape. The ninth section focused on the role of the RESCs in providing professional learning opportunities for principals to acquire and improve the knowledge and skills necessary for the administration of special education services in a time characterized by effective educational practices. The final section summarized the literature review in its conclusion.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

The purpose of this broadly nonexperimental, quantitative study was to investigate Texas principals' perceptions of self-efficacy to administer special education services. An additional focus of the study was the degree to which principals perceived their RESC-based professional learning opportunities to be supportive of their efforts to administer special education services. The information gathered from this study will inform future RESC offerings for supporting Texas principals in the administration of special education services.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

There continues to be a widening achievement gap between students receiving special education services and their peers without disabilities, which has been evident at the national, state, and local level (Korobkin & Meller, 2019; TEA, 2018). Unless this problem is approached differently, there will always be an achievement gap. With adequate resources and instruction, students with disabilities can gain higher levels of achievement to close that gap (McLaughlin, 2009). However, despite ongoing efforts on the part of the ED, a real change in approach has not been seen from compliance focus to an achievement focus, nor has a closing of the achievement gap occurred.

The importance of effective leadership practices in relation to the administration of special education was explored in this study. Extensive research conducted by Marzano et al. (2005) suggested that campus leadership drives change at the campus

level. In the presumption that campus principals are amenable to implement changes on their campuses to better address the issue of achievement among special education students, McLaughlin (2009) posited that they may be lacking in knowledge or skills to effect such a change. Principals also may not have a high level of urgency for addressing these issues or may feel they do not have the time to attend additional training. To develop the capacity for such leadership knowledge and skills, principals need professional learning customized to their needs. This can be accomplished through practice-based learning, which focuses on the specific areas in need of improvement. In this case, that would be related to campus administration of special education and the deployment and implementation of systemic changes, which necessitates managing staff effectively. By collecting perception data from principals around the state of Texas, RESCs will be able to provide professional learning that meets these criteria.

The following research questions guided this study.

RQ1. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services? And will there be a difference in the perceived level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by gender of school administrator?

RQ2. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by campus descriptor of school administrator?

RQ3. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by perceived level of inclusivity?

RQ4. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by special education certification status of school administrator?

RQ5. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by age?

RQ6. To what degree do principals perceive the level of efficacy of their RESC-based professional learning opportunities in supporting their administration of special education services?

The focus of Chapter Three is on the research methodology and instrumentation utilized for data collection and analysis resulting in findings and implications for practice. The following sections are included in this chapter: research design, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and summary.

Participant Selection

The subject population targeted for this research derived from RESC listservs. There are 20 RESCs in Texas and each maintains a listserv of school-based administrators. All but one RESC agreed to forward the survey instrument from this study to their principal email listservs. Participants received an email with a link to the survey instrument included. Taking part in this research study was voluntary. The total time to complete this online survey was approximately 25 minutes. When completing the survey, respondents self-reported their position. All data collected was secured in an account protected by single-signer login duo authentication.

Participants

Study participants included 125 principals practicing in public schools in 2019 from the southwest region of the United States (i.e., Texas). Approximately 65% of the study's participants identified as female with the remaining 35% identifying as male. Nearly nine in 10 were principals by official position, with the remaining 12% identifying as assistant principals with approximately 90% of study participants identifying their ethnic status as White.

Research Methods

The research methodology featured in the study was survey research by definition. Perceptions of Texas principals practicing in November 2019 were collected through a survey instrument designed to gather insights into their ability to administer special education services and the degree to which professional learning opportunities at their RESCs supported their efforts to do so. The research questions framing this study and the resulting survey questions evolved from the T-TESS, which is the instrument utilized by teacher supervisors in the evaluation and support of effective teaching practices. This instrument is the most commonly utilized tool by principals in Texas in "assessing teaching proficiency and ensuring that teachers and administrators derive reliable and meaningful information from the teacher evaluation process" (Teach for Texas, 2019, p. 1). The four domains and 16 dimensions that make up the T-TESS Rubric consisted of evidence-based practices to assist principals with teachers in decision making for the improvement of instructional quality and student performance.

Questions from the survey instrument were designed to provide data related to the six research questions framing this study. The first section of survey gained principals' perceptions of their ability to administer effective special education services and their perceptions of their ability to attend professional learning opportunities relevant to these efforts at RESCs. The second section of questions in the survey instrument were developed from the four domains and 16 dimensions that comprise the T-TESS Rubric and were designed to gain insight into principals' self-efficacy to administer effective special education services on their campuses. The third section of questions from the survey instrument were also developed from the four domains and 16 dimensions

comprising the T-TESS Rubric; however, these questions were designed to illicit responses related to principals' perceptions of professional learning opportunities at RESCs in support of their efforts to administer effective special education services on their campuses.

A nonexperimental design was chosen for this research study for the flexibility this type of study provides in gathering perceptions of large groups of respondents (Muijs, 2004). Additionally, the quantitative methodology that was employed in this study provides the opportunity to collect a wide range of information separated into measurable categories (Golafshani, 2003) while also permitting the examination and analysis of relationships between variables (Creswell, 2014).

Validity and Reliability

Research employing quantitative methodology will always involve the collection and statistical analysis of numerical data, regardless of the topic or approach (Berger, 2004; Kee, 2004). Criteria necessary to establish accuracy in quantitative research studies are validity and reliability (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). By using the T-TESS in the development of the survey instrument, validity and reliability were initially established by the TEA. The following paragraphs detail the ways in which the researcher ensured both of these criteria were established, specifically for this study.

According to Cook and Campbell (1979), validity is defined as "the best available approximation to the truth or falsity of propositions" (p. 37). In quantitative studies such as this one, the degree to which the data collected reflects that which the researcher desired is referred to as validity (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). "Validity refers to the

appropriateness, meaningfulness, correctness, and usefulness of any inferences a researcher draws based on data obtained through the use of an instrument" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009 p. 162). The TEA established criterion and content validity of T-TESS in its development. Throughout this process, TEA worked alongside a steering committee consisting of teachers and principals with participation from higher education and educator organizations. The process of updating Texas teacher standards began in 2013, which led to the development of a rubric aligned to the standards in 2014. With support from the Texas Comprehensive Center at SEDL, the TEA facilitated the development of the T-TESS system, which was designed as a continuous growth model by educators across the state (Teach for Texas, 2019).

In this study, all questions on the survey instrument were designed to answer the research questions framing this study. Each of the survey questions in sections 2 and 3 of the survey were taken verbatim from the four domains and 16 dimensions that make up the T-TESS Rubric. The T-TESS Rubric is the instrument utilized by teacher supervisors in Texas for the evaluation and support of effective teaching practices. Furthermore, the four domains and 16 dimensions that make up the T-TESS Rubric consisted of evidence-based practices to assist principals with teachers in decision making for the improvement of instructional quality and student performance. Moreover, the T-TESS Rubric is the most commonly utilized tool by principals in Texas in "assessing teaching proficiency and ensuring that teachers and administrators derive reliable and meaningful information from the teacher evaluation process" (Teach for Texas, 2019, p. 1).

When research findings can be replicated, the study is deemed reliable (Merriam, 1998). The reliability of this study resides in the processes and instrumentation

employed. The researcher of this study completed the Collaborative International Training Initiative regarding responsible conduct of research and adhered to the guidelines established by the institutional review board of Baylor University. Taking part in this research study was voluntary. Internal consistency (i.e., reliability) of participant responses to the survey instrument were assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. Missing data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The randomness of missing data was assessed using Little's MCAR test statistic.

Instrumentation

According to Scheuren (2004), a survey is an efficient method for collecting information from a group of individuals quickly. Well-designed surveys have a defined purpose, follow specific procedures for the gathering of data, and ensure respondent anonymity and confidentiality. Researcher objectivity is of the utmost importance in the development and dissemination of a survey in order to ensure data validity and reliability (Scheuren, 2004). Precise compilation and analysis of data also legitimizes statistical findings and helps to rule out any possibility of predetermination of results. Although survey instruments and methods vary greatly, an online, web-based survey was chosen as the optimal instrument to collect data for this study. In consideration of the respondent group and the general accessibility of computers and the Internet, an online survey offered an expedient data collection method with little risk of data errors. According to Ritter and Sue (2007), online surveys allow for greater anonymity resulting in increased response honesty when answering questions on the survey.

Likert-scale survey questions were developed from the T-TESS, which is the instrument utilized by teacher supervisors in the evaluation and support of effective teaching practices. This instrument is the most commonly utilized tool by principals in Texas in "assessing teaching proficiency and ensuring that teachers and administrators derive reliable and meaningful information from the teacher evaluation process" (Teach for Texas, 2019). The four domains and 16 dimensions that make up the T-TESS Rubric consist of evidence-based practices to assist principals with teachers in decision making for the improvement of instructional quality and student performance. The questions on the survey instrument derived from the T-TESS Rubric. The stem statements from the T-TESS dimensions were utilized verbatim in the development of these questions to provide data related to the research questions.

Participants also provided demographic data in response to seven questions regarding the following areas: years in current position, campus designation, LEA University Interscholastic League classification, years of experience as a campus administrator, age, gender, ethnicity, and special education certification status. Participants ranked perceptions on a 4-point Likert scale with response intervals ranging from least to most. Responses ranked according to the following methodology: not effective, somewhat effective, mostly effective, and effective. The survey instrument utilized in this research study can be found in Appendix A.

Data Collection Procedures

Survey responses from principals practicing in public schools in 2019 from the southwest region of the United States (i.e., Texas) served as the data used in this study.

The subject population targeted for this research derived from RESC listservs. There are 20 RESCs in Texas and each maintains a listserv of school-based administrators. All but one RESC agreed to forward the survey instrument from this study to their principal email listservs. Participants received an email with a link to the survey instrument included. Taking part in this research study was voluntary. The total time to complete this online survey was approximately 25 minutes. When completing the survey, respondents self-reported their position. All data collected was secured in an account protected by single-signer login duo authentication.

Surveys were developed using Survey Monkey and distributed electronically through RESCs to their principal listservs via email. Respondents were invited to participate through email, which included an electronic link for those who choosing to access the survey instrument. Participants were assured anonymity of identity and responses with all collected data aggregated at the state level. Participation in this study was voluntary.

Data Analysis

Prior to analysis, survey response data was imported into a CSV (comma separated value) zip file from Survey Monkey. Responses collected were then converted into IBM's *Statistical Program for the Social Sciences* statistical package for analysis. Data analysis consisted of a series of quantitative statistical methods. Survey responses from 125 Texas principals practicing in November 2019 generated quantitative data in response to six research questions. Section 1 of the survey instrument consisted of 15 questions designed to collect demographic data. Section 2 of the survey instrument

consisted of 16 questions designed to capture principal perception data regarding their efficacy to administer special education services. Section 3 of the survey instrument comprised 16 questions designed to capture principal perception data regarding efficacy of RESC-based professional learning opportunities in the support of the administration of special education services.

Preliminary Analyses

Prior to the analysis of the six research questions posed in the study, preliminary analyses were conducted. These analyses included: missing data, internal consistency (i.e., reliability) of participant response, and essential demographic information.

Missing data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Specifically, frequency counts and percentages were utilized for illustrative purposes. The randomness of missing data was assessed using Little's MCAR test statistic. An MCAR value of $p > .05$ was considered indicative of sufficient randomness of missing data.

Internal consistency (i.e., reliability) of participant responses to the survey instrument were assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. A Cronbach alpha level of .80 or beyond was considered appropriate. The statistical significance of *a* was evaluated through the application of an F test. F values of $p < .05$ were considered statistically significant.

Essential demographic information was analyzed broadly using primarily descriptive statistical techniques. Specifically, frequency counts and percentages were utilized for comparative and illustrative purposes.

Proposed Analysis by Research Question

The study's proposed research questions were addressed broadly using a variety of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations represented the primary descriptive statistical techniques used to address the seven research questions.

A variety of between-subjects inferential statistical techniques were utilized to assess the statistical significance of study findings. The one sample *t* test, *t* test of independent means, and the one-way ANOVA were used to assess the statistical significance of comparisons involving two mean scores and those involving more than two mean scores. Post hoc testing utilizing Tukey's HSD test were applied in instances where a one-way ANOVA was used to assess the statistical significance of findings. The probability level of $p < .05$ represented the threshold value for statistical significance of findings.

The magnitude of effect (i.e., effect size) of study findings was assessed using Cohen's *d* statistic. In instances where a one-way ANOVA was utilized, eta square values were transformed into Cohen's *d* values for ease of interpretation. IBM's 26th edition of the *Statistical Program for the Social Sciences* represented the analytics platform used for analysis, interpretation, and reporting of study findings.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations

According to Pyrczak and Bruce (2005), controls on scope and design of a study that are within the control of the researcher are delimitations. The imposition of

delimitations by the researcher may have affected reliability, validity, and generalization of the findings in this study. The choice to conduct research by survey method was a delimitation imposed by the researcher due to time constraints. In determining the methodology and instrumentation for this study, the quantitative methodology employed may have been strengthened from a mixed methods approach with additional trend analysis provided from qualitative data compared with quantitative findings provided by the survey instrument. Analysis of survey response variances could have provided trend data from which high frequency response topics could have synthesized in the development of interview questions.

Additional delimitations included the following: the convenient sampling method of selecting participants, the choice of literature utilized for the literature review, and the development of survey questions using the T-TESS Rubric. The culmination of these delimitations narrowed the scope of responses from which quantitative analysis was conducted resulting in research findings.

Limitations

In all research, limitations exist. The following limitations were present in the research design of this study. The sampling method for this study known as convenient sampling represents an important form of sampling; however, it limits generalizability of findings. Although the overall participant sample of 125 practicing principals in the southwest region of the United States was robust, it was not broadly representative of principals in this region or the state of Texas. The survey method utilized in this study may also have been a limitation due to the possibility of response bias. This phenomenon

occurs in quantitative research when participant responses on a survey reflect politically or socially acceptable statements rather than authentic responses.

The nonexperimental research design of this study limited the responses provided in that there was no follow up regarding reasons for perceptions expressed in the survey instrument. Perception data is important because perceptions often become reality, but such studies as this do not measure hard data (Staumont, 2017). Participation in this study was voluntary as were survey responses, which might also have created conditions that were nonrepresentative of the general population of principals in Texas. This study focused on practicing principals in the southwest region of the United States (i.e., Texas), which may have further limited the generalizability of findings. Additionally, there existed very limited scholarly research regarding the purpose and effectiveness of RESCs (Maze, 2009). The study of educational service agencies was relatively unexplored with very little research found on this topic.

Summary

In Chapter Three, the research questions and methodology utilized in this study were discussed. This chapter was organized around the descriptions of the research participants, study design, survey instrument, data collection process, and analysis procedures. A discussion of the analysis of data collected in this study comprises Chapter Four. Discussion of major findings, implications for practice, future research, and conclusions structure the final chapter in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

The study was designed to evaluate principal perceptions of self-efficacy in administering special education services. An additional focus of the study was the degree to which principals perceived their RESC-based professional learning opportunities to be supportive of their efforts to administer special education services. A broadly nonexperimental, quantitative approach was utilized to address the study's research problem. The four domains and 16 dimensions that make up the T-TESS Rubric consist of evidence-based practices to assist principals with teachers in decision making for the improvement of instructional quality and student performance. Archival data of principal perceptions of self-efficacy and level of RESC support (i.e., T-TESS) represented the study's data source. The four domains analyzed in this study consisted of planning, instruction, learning environment, and professional practices. The research methodology featured in the study was survey research by definition.

Six specific research questions were posed to address the study's research problem. Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were utilized to analyze, interpret, and report findings associated with each research question. Chapter Four contains a reporting of findings with respect to preliminary analyses and analyses conducted to address the research questions of the study. The quantitative methodology and statistical analysis utilized in this study addressed the following research questions:

RQ1. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services? And will there be a difference in the perceived level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by gender of school administrator?

RQ2. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by campus descriptor of school administrator?

RQ3. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by perceived level of inclusivity?

RQ4. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by special education certification status of school administrator?

RQ5. To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by age?

RQ6. To what degree do principals perceive the level of efficacy of their RESC-based professional learning opportunities in supporting their administration of special education services?

Preliminary Analysis and Findings

Prior to addressing the research questions posed in the study, analyses were conducted of a preliminary, yet essential nature. The preliminary analyses provided a foundation for credibility purposes for subsequent interpretation and reporting of findings associated with the six formally posed research questions. The study's demographic information, essential descriptive statistical findings, missing data, and internal reliability represented areas specifically addressed in a preliminary analytic manner.

Demographic Information

A total of 125 school-based administrators comprised the study's sample of participants. Considering gender of study participant, slightly over 60% (64.8%; n = 81)

of the study's sample of participants identified as female with the remaining 35.2% as male. Nearly nine in 10 (88.0%; *n* = 110) were principals by official position, with the remaining 12.0% (*n* = 15) identifying as assistant principals. Approximately 90% (84.8%; *n* = 106) of study participants identified their ethnic status as White.

Slightly over 80% (83.2%; *n* = 104) of study participants did not possess formal certification in special education with the state's department of education. The study's participant sample nearly evenly represented secondary school administrators (48.8%; *n* = 61) and elementary school administrators (51.2%; *n* = 64). Nearly half of study participants (48.0%; *n* = 60) were ages 46–55, with 38.4% (*n* = 48) identified as being 36 to 45 years old.

When asked to identify the degree of inclusiveness associated with their school programming, eight in 10 (80.0%; *n* = 100) of study participants noted that their schools were either inclusive or mostly inclusive. The single greatest rating within the inclusiveness category identified by study participants was mostly inclusive (32.9%; *n* = 53).

Table 4.1 contains a summary of findings with respect to demographic survey question response data from this research study. A complete data set of demographic survey question responses from this study can be found in Appendix B.

Table 4.1

Demographic Characteristics

Participant Characteristics	*n*	%
Current Position		
Principal	110	88.0
Assistant Principal	14	11.2
Dean of Instruction	1	0.80
Campus Description		
Elementary	61	48.8
Secondary	64	51.2
LEA UIL Classification		
1A	16	12.8
2A	12	9.60
3A	14	11.2
4A	27	21.6
5A	36	28.8
6A	20	16.0
Years of Experience		
1-5	63	50.4
6-10	32	25.6
11-15	18	14.4
16-20	10	8.00
More than 20	2	01.6
Gender		
Female	81	64.8
Male	44	35.2
Age		
25-35	3	02.4
26-35	48	38.4
46-55	60	48.0
56 and over	14	11.2
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian	4	3.20
African American	5	4.00
Hispanic or Latino	9	7.20
White (not Hispanic)	107	85.6

Essential Descriptive Findings

Although the mean scores for all four dimensions of the T-TESS used to elicit study participant perceptions of self-efficacy in administering special education programs were manifested at noteworthy statistically significant levels ($p < .001$), the dimension of learning environment manifested the greatest degree of effect in study participant response. The effect for learning environment was considered to be very large ($d \geq 1.30$).

Table 4.2 contains a summary of findings for the comparative effect of response on the T-TESS survey dimensions related to self-efficacy in administering special education programs. A complete data set of T-TESS self-efficacy survey question responses from this research study can be found in Appendix C.

Table 4.2

Comparative Effect for T-TESS Dimensions of Self-Efficacy

T-TESS dimension	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*T*	*D*
Planning	125	2.84	0.52	7.35***	.65
Instruction	109	2.87	0.60	6.39***	.62
Learning environment	123	3.38	0.64	15.14***	1.38[a]
Professional practices	122	3.09	0.55	11.85***	1.07[b]

Note. ***$p < .001$. [a]Very large effect ($d \geq 1.30$). [b]Large effect ($d \geq .80$).

Missing Data

The problem of missing data is a common issue in survey research (Mohamed, Sedory, & Singh, 2018). With or without missing data, the goal of a statistical procedure

should be to make valid and efficient inferences (Schafer & Graham, 2002). Therefore, the intactness of a study's data set relates greatly to its credibility with the interpretation of subsequent analytic techniques. In the current study, the extent of missing data was minimal (.3%) and inconsequential. In light of the minimal nature of missing data in the study's actionable data arrays, issues of randomness and imputation of missing values were not considered.

Internal Reliability

When research findings can be replicated, the study is deemed reliable (Merriam, 1998). The following measures were conducted to ensure internal reliability of the survey instrument utilized in this study. The internal reliability of study participant response to research instrument (i.e., T-TESS) was assessed using the Cronbach's alpha statistical technique. As a result, excellent levels ($a \geq .90$) were achieved on both the self-efficacy and RESC sections of the T-TESS. Using the F test for statistical significance testing purposes, the alpha levels for both the self-efficacy and RESC sections were manifested at noteworthy statistically significant levels ($p < .001$; $p = .008$).

Table 4.3 contains a complete summary of findings for the evaluation of internal reliability of study participant response to items on both the self-efficacy and RESC sections of the T-TESS. A complete data set of T-TESS RESC survey question responses from this research study can be found in Appendix D.

Table 4.3

Internal Reliability T-TESS Self-Efficacy and RESC

T-TESS Section	*N*	*A*
Administrator self-efficacy	56	.98**
RESC support	54	.99*
Total	110	.99**

Note. $^{**}p < .001$. $^{*}p = .008$.

Findings Related to Research Questions

The study's six research questions were addressed broadly using a variety of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations represented the primary descriptive statistical techniques used to address the study' six formally stated research questions. The alpha level of $p \leq .05$ represented the threshold for statistical significance of finding for instances where inferential statistical techniques were utilized. Cohen (1988) and Sawilowsky's (2009) parameters of interpretation of effect sizes were employed for comparative purposes.

Research Question 1

The first research question guiding this study was: To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services? And will there be a difference in the perceived level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by gender of school administrator?

The one sample *t* test was utilized to determine the statistical significance of study participant perceived level of efficacy in the administration of special education services. Using a null value of 2.5 on the research instrument's Likert Scale, the overall mean score of 3.04 (SD = 0.54) of participant response to Research Question 1 was manifested at a statistically significant level ($t_{(105)} = 10.43$; $p < .001$). Moreover, the magnitude of effect of study participant response with regard to perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs was considered large (d = 1.00).

In the second portion of Research Question 1, a *t* test of independent means was administered to assess the comparison of perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs by gender of study participant. As a result, the mean score difference of 0.08 favoring female study participants was manifested at a nonstatistically significant level (p = .46). The magnitude of effect in the comparison was considered small (d = .15)

Table 4.4 contains a summary of findings for the comparison of perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs by gender of study participant featured in Research Question 1.

Table 4.4

Perceived Self-Efficacy Comparison: Gender

Gender	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*T*	*D*
Female	66	3.07	0.50	0.74	.15
Male	40	2.99	0.59		

Research Question 2

The second research question guiding this study was: To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by campus descriptor of school administrator?

The *t* test of independent means statistical technique was utilized to assess the comparison of perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs by campus descriptor of study participant. As a result, the mean score difference of 0.06 favoring secondary school study participants was manifested at a nonstatistically significant level ($p = .58$). The magnitude of effect in the comparison was considered small ($d = .11$).

Table 4.5 contains a summary of findings for the comparison of perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs by campus descriptor of study participant featured in Research Question 2.

Table 4.5

Perceived Self-Efficacy Comparison: Campus Descriptor

Campus Descriptor	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*T*	*D*
Elementary	53	3.01	0.55	0.56	.11
Secondary	53	3.07	0.52		

Research Question 3

The third research question guiding this study was: To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by perceived level of inclusivity?

The one-way ANOVA (1 x 4 ANOVA) statistical technique was used to assess the effect of perceived level of school inclusivity upon study participant perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs. As a result, a statistically significant effect ($p < .001$) was exerted by perceived level of inclusivity of school upon study participant perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs. The magnitude of effect for the independent variable of perceived level of school inclusivity was considered large ($d = .97$).

Table 4.6 contains a summary of findings for the evaluation of effect of school inclusivity upon participant perceived self-efficacy in administering special education.

Table 4.6

Effect of School Inclusivity Upon Study Participant Perceived Self-Efficacy

Inclusivity level	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*D*
Inclusive	40	3.29	0.36	7.94*	.97[a]
Mostly inclusive	46	2.96	0.52		
Somewhat inclusive	17	2.82	0.64		
Not inclusive	3	2.21	0.36		

Note. *p < .001. [a] Large effect (d ≥ .80).

In light of the face-value linear relationship between the independent variables of (a) inclusiveness level of school and (b) study participant perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs, formal predictive analysis was conducted using the simple linear regression statistical technique. As a result, perceived school level of inclusivity represented a robust correlate and statistically significant predictor of study participant perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs. The predictive effect for inclusivity level of school was considered large (d = .92).

Table 4.7 contains a summary of findings associated with the predictive model used in the follow-up analysis in Research Question 3, predicting study participant perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs by perceived inclusivity level of school.

Table 4.7

Predicting Perceived Self-Efficacy: Perceived Inclusivity Level of School

Model	*B*	*SE*	Standardized β
Intercept	2.15	0.20	
Level of Inclusivity	0.28	0.06	.42*

Note. *p < .001.

For interpretation purposes, the findings may be interpreted as: for every full unit of increase in study participant perceived level of school inclusivity, slightly over a quarter (.28) of a full unit increase in perceived self-efficacy to administer special education programs was predicted.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question guiding this study was: To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by special education certification status of school administrator?

The *t* test of independent means statistical technique was utilized to assess the comparison of perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs by special education certification status of study participant. As a result, the mean score difference of 0.13 favoring study participants not formally certified in special education was manifested at a nonstatistically significant level ($p = .36$). The magnitude of effect in the comparison was considered slightly beyond the upper threshold for a small effect ($d = .23$).

Table 4.8 contains a summary of findings for the comparison of perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs by special education certification status of study participant featured in Research Question 4.

Table 4.8

Perceived Self-Efficacy Comparison: Special Education Certification Status

Certification Status	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*T*	*D*
Certified	17	2.93	0.63	0.93	.23
Noncertified	89	3.06	0.52		

Research Question 5

The fifth research question guiding this study was: To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by age?

The one-way ANOVA (1 x 4 ANOVA) statistical technique was utilized to assess the effect of study participant age upon subsequent perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs. As a result, a nonstatistically significant effect (p = .42) was exerted by study participant age upon perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs. The magnitude of effect for the independent variable of study participant age was considered between small and medium at d = .33.

Table 4.9 contains a summary of findings for the evaluation of effect of study participant age upon subsequent perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs.

Table 4.9

Effect of Study Participant Age Upon Perceived Self-Efficacy

Age	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*D*
25–35	3	3.22	0.74	0.95	.33
36–45	43	3.00	0.49		
46–55	51	3.02	0.53		
56 ≥	9	3.30	0.69		

Research Question 6

The sixth research question guiding this study was: To what degree do principals perceive the level of efficacy of their RESC-based professional learning opportunities in supporting their administration of special education services?

The one sample *t* test was used to determine the statistical significance of study participant perceived level of efficacy of their RESC-based professional learning opportunities in supporting their administration of special education services. Using a null value of 2.5 on the research instrument's Likert Scale, the overall mean score of 2.79 ($SD = 0.66$) of participant response to Research Question 6 was manifested at a statistically significant level ($t_{(114)} = 4.76$; $p < .001$). Moreover, the magnitude of effect of study participant response with regard to perceived level of efficacy of their RESC-based professional learning opportunities in supporting their administration of special education services was considered approaching a medium effect at $d = .44$.

Summary

The study was designed to evaluate principal perceptions of self-efficacy in administering special education services. An additional focus of the study was the degree to which principals perceived their RESC-based professional learning opportunities to be supportive of their efforts to administer special education services. Chapter Four contained a reporting of findings with respect to preliminary analyses and analyses conducted to address the research questions of the study. Six specific research questions were posed to address the study's research problem. A broadly nonexperimental, quantitative approach was utilized to address the study's research problems in which

descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were utilized to analyze, interpret, and report findings associated with each research question.

The study's sample of participants consisted of 125 school-based administrators from the southwest region of the United States (i.e., Texas). Although the mean scores for all four domains of the *T-TESS* used to elicit study participant perceptions of self-efficacy in administering special education programs were manifested at noteworthy statistically significant levels, the dimension of learning environment manifested the greatest degree of effect in study participant response. The internal reliability of study participant response to research instrument (i.e., T-TESS) was assessed using Cronbach's alpha statistical technique. As a result, excellent levels were achieved on both the self-efficacy and RESC sections of the T-TESS. Using the *F* test for statistical significance testing purposes, the alpha levels for both the self-efficacy and RESC sections were manifested at noteworthy statistically significant levels.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

Reintroduction

This study was conducted to advance the understanding of Texas principals' perceptions of their efficacy to administer special education services. An additional focus of the study was the degree to which principals perceived their RESC-based professional learning opportunities to be supportive of their efforts to administer special education services. In Texas, efforts at the state, regional, and local levels align with federal mandates and practices in a transition from a compliance-heavy system of special education to one that balances compliance requirements with a focus on improving student outcomes (TEA, 2018). RESCs are at the center of this shift (TEA, 2018) and have potential to develop novel models of professional learning strategically designed to support Texas principals in the administration of special education services.

A broadly nonexperimental, quantitative approach was utilized to address the study's research problem. The findings of this statewide study included archival data collected from 125 principals practicing in November 2019 from the southwest region of the United States (i.e., Texas). The research methodology featured in the study was survey research by definition. Six specific research questions were posed to address the study's research problem. Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were utilized to analyze, interpret, and report findings associated with each respective research

question posed. The information gathered from this study will inform future RESC offerings for supporting Texas principals in the administration of special education.

Discussion of Preliminary Analyses and Findings

Prior to addressing the research questions posed in the study, analyses were conducted of a preliminary, yet essential nature. The preliminary analyses provided a foundation for credibility purposes for subsequent interpretation and reporting of findings associated with the six formally posed research questions. The study's demographic information, essential descriptive statistical findings, missing data, and internal reliability represented areas specifically addressed in a preliminary analytic manner.

Missing Data

Although the problem of missing data is a common issue in survey research (Mohamed et al., 2018), in the current study, the missing data was inconsequential (.3%) to the validity and reliability of the study's research findings. The goal of statistical procedures should be to make valid and efficient inferences with or without missing data, (Schafer & Graham, 2002). The high level of participant response rates (.97%) is indicative of the intactness of the survey instrument in this study. Furthermore, the intactness of this study's data set relates to its credibility with the interpretation of subsequent analytical techniques. Moreover, the near total data set obtained in this study validates the use of the T-TESS Rubric as the survey instrument and further substantiates its validity and reliability. In light of the minimal nature of missing data in the study's actionable data arrays, issues of randomness and imputation of missing values were not contemplated.

Internal Reliability

When test components represent internal consistency, they are considered reliable. Internal reliability measures consistency within a research instrument with respect to how well a set of items measures what they intend to measure (Drost, 2011). The internal reliability of a survey instrument is measured by estimations of reliability with respect to the average intercorrelations amongst single items within the instrument. According to Drost (2011), "the most popular method of testing for internal consistency in the behavioral sciences is coefficient alpha" (p. 111). In 1951, Cronbach popularized the coefficient alpha after its usefulness proved generalizable. Generally, coefficients of internal consistency increase as the number of items on a survey instrument increase if the instrument possesses internal reliability. Drost (2011) offered the following example for consideration, "for instance, a 5-item test might correlate .40 with true scores, and a 12-item test might correlate .80 with true scores" (pp. 111–112).

The internal reliability of this study's participant responses to the survey instrument (i.e., T-TESS) was assessed using the Cronbach's alpha statistical technique. As a result, excellent levels ($a \geq .90$) were achieved on both the self-efficacy and RESC sections of the T-TESS. Using the F test for statistical significance testing purposes, the alpha levels for both the self-efficacy and RESC sections were manifested at noteworthy statistically significant levels ($p < .001$; $p = .008$). Therefore, in this nonexperimental research study, the use of the T-TESS Rubric to develop the survey instrument was a good choice for the participants and the topic in that it resulted in extraordinarily high levels of internal consistency with high levels of statistical significance. Furthermore, such high levels of internal reliability from the near total data set obtained by this study's

survey instrument substantiates subsequent findings from research questions posed. These exceptionally high levels of internal consistency also validate the cohesiveness of the T-TESS Rubric with respect to its integrity as an internally reliable instrument. Such findings also substantiate the TEA's use of the T-TESS Rubric with respect to its validity and internal reliability.

Demographic Identifying Information

This study's sample of participants consisted of 125 school-based administrators practicing in 2019 from the southwest region of the United States (i.e., Texas). Considering gender of study participants, approximately 65% of the study's sample of participants identified as female with the remaining 35% as male. According to the demographics of employed principals for the years 2014–2018 (TEA, 2018a), these findings mirror the percentages of school-based administrators by gender for Texas in 2018.

Nearly nine in 10 of the participants were principals by official position, with the remaining 12.0% (n = 15) identifying as assistant principals. Approximately 90% of study participants also identified their ethnic status as White. Three percent of respondents recorded their race/ethnicity as American Indian, 4% as Black or African American, and 7% as Hispanic or Latino. None of the participants responded as being Asian, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander.

The majority of participants (50%) reported being in their first 5 years of serving as a school-based administrator, followed by 26% reporting their experience as being between 6–10 years; 14% selected 11–15 years as their experience range, and 8%

reported their school-based administrative experience as 16–20 years. Only 2% of participants reported having 20 or more years' experience serving as school-based administrators. Nearly half of the study participants (48%) were aged 46–55, and 38% identified as being 36 to 45 years old. Additionally, secondary school administrators (49%) and elementary school administrators (51%) nearly evenly represented the study's participant sample.

Thirteen percent of respondents reported their LEA University Scholastic League classification as 1A; 10% reported it as 2A; 11% selected 3A; 22% selected 4A; 29% indicated 5A, and 16% reported 6A. Although 51% of participants selected either 4A or 5A as their University Scholastic League classification, the remaining participants were similarly distributed in their choices. These results did not support the findings of prior studies. In two prior studies involving superintendent perceptions of RESCs, demographic information of participating superintendents reflected that 80% reported themselves as being from 1A–3A, with 37% in the 1A group (Glass & Franceschini, 2007; Maze, 2009). Prior studies reported that superintendents from smaller schools made up the majority of participants. According to Maze (2009), superintendents from these smaller schools reported time, money, and geography as their greatest barriers with respect to attendance at RESC-based professional development.

Approximately 83% of participants reported that they did not possess formal certification in special education with the state department of education. When asked to identify the degree of inclusiveness associated with their school programming, 80% of study participants noted that their schools were either inclusive or mostly inclusive. The

single greatest within the inclusiveness category identified by study participants was mostly inclusive (33%).

Fifty-eight percent selected general education setting as an area of greatest need regarding the administration of special education services on their campus. Because the increasing expectations of principals included the supervision of special education programs and the provision of special education services, tension existed for many principals between being responsible for the best interests of all students in addition to managing the individual needs of each student with disabilities (McLaughlin, 2010). Frick et al. (2012) argued that the struggle to balance these two responsibilities necessitates ethical and moral decision making anchored in best practices that sometimes conflict with one another. The difficulties experienced by principals in the administration of special education within general education settings might be the result of an imbalance with respect to the ethical and moral responsibilities with which they struggle as cited by Frick et al. (2012). Poignant yet perplexing was the possibility that principals' perceptions might shine light into potential solutions regarding these puzzling paradigms.

Additionally, 34% of respondents chose self-contained behavior settings as an area of greatest need regarding the administration of special education services. Principals must be available to support and guide the work of special educators in their provision of services to students with disabilities. According to Praisner (2003), preservice programs that fail to prepare principals effectively lead to growing inequities for students with disabilities. When principals do not receive effective preservice training regarding special education, inclusion, and best practices, they are ill-equipped to manage and administer special education programs on their campuses to the detriment of

their students and staff (Praisner, 2003). With expertise regarding positive behavior supports and restorative practices, RESCs must engage principals with on-site, embedded supports and coaching designed to distribute these practices throughout their systems. RESCs must partner with principals in the development of innovative approaches and customized solutions designed with the end in mind to effectively influence the achievement outcomes of students with disabilities. Specifically, if principals are empowered with the knowledge and skills needed for administering effective special education services across a continuum of educational settings on their campuses, students with disabilities will receive high-quality individualized instruction.

Although 65% of respondents reported a preference for face-to-face (i.e., traditional) access to professional development opportunities, the vast majority (90%) of respondents reported that time was a constraint that limited their ability to participate in RESC-based professional development opportunities. This finding is consistent with the literature (Fullan, 2014; Maze, 2009; McLaughlin, 2009; Wakeman, 2005). Sixty-three percent of respondents selected flexible scheduling options as a preferred solution to constraints that limited their attendance at RESC-based professional development opportunities, and 41% of respondents chose attendance by zoom options as a preferred solution to such constraints. A complete set of demographic responses are provided in Appendix B.

General Descriptive Statistical Outcomes

Although the mean scores for all four dimensions of the *T-TESS* manifested at noteworthy statistically significant levels ($p < .001$), the dimension of learning

environment manifested the greatest degree of effect in study participant response. The effect for learning environment was considered to be very large and the degree of effect for the dimension professional practices was considered large. Additionally, the dimensions of planning and instruction both manifested statistically significant levels worth noting with moderate degrees of effect.

Therefore, participating principals positively perceived their efficacy to administer special education services within all four dimensions of T-TESS at statistically significant levels with the dimensions of learning environment and professional practice being noteworthy in their respectively very large and large degrees of effect. Positive principal perceptions of efficacy with respect to administration of special education with regard to learning environment and professional practice are consistent with the historical responsibilities associated with the administration of special education by school-based administrators (McLaughlin, 2009). Professional practices and the management of learning environments have historically been in the purview of principal responsibilities, which likely contributed to higher levels of perceived efficacy in the administration of special education for these dimensions.

Furthermore, the moderate levels of effect regarding perceived efficacy in the administration of special education for the dimensions of planning and instruction are consistent with the changing role of principals in Texas (Korobkin & Meller, 2019). Until quite recently, Texas principals did not receive preservice training to be instructional leaders (TEA, 2018b), and therefore, the dimensions of planning and instruction related to administration of special education were likely perceived areas of moderate effectiveness for many. With the recent adoption of the Principal as

Instructional Leader (268) certification, which became the required certification exam in Texas on September 1, 2019, preservice principals in Texas will receive additional training regarding instructional leadership. However, for currently practicing principals in Texas to adequately embody their responsibilities as instructional leaders, they must have access to innovative solutions, embedded supports, and professional learning opportunities from their RESCs. This will require principals from around the state to utilize the services available to them from their RESCs; however, this may require RESCs to rethink their approach to supporting school principals.

Historically, RESCs have provided special education support to special education administrators, staff, and teachers. With the shift to RDA and the TEA expectations spelled out in the *Special Education Strategic Plan*, RESC supports and services must be customized to the needs of school principals for the implementation of effective special education to improved student outcomes. Leaders at RESCs and LEAs will need to collaboratively develop more efficient processes for disseminating information while also fashioning strength-focused special education practices. This will require a shift in mindset from problem-focused to solution-focused approaches and from a deficit to an abundance perspective. Engagement with design thinking, empathy interviews, and strength-focused practices might identify blind spots and unintended negative assumptions. This will allow principals to explore the least dangerous assumption in theory and application. Through design-inspired leadership, principals can shift from being accidental designers to intentional creators of inspired educational destinations (Gallagher & Thordarson, 2018).

Discussion of Findings by Research Questions Posed

The study's six research questions were addressed broadly using a variety of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations represented the primary descriptive statistical techniques used to address the study' six formally stated research questions. The alpha level of $p \leq .05$ represented the threshold for statistical significance of finding for instances where inferential statistical techniques were utilized. Cohen (1988) and Sawilowsky's (2009) parameters of interpretation of effect sizes were employed for comparative purposes.

Research Question 1

To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services? And will there be a difference in the perceived level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by gender of school administrator? The one sample *t* test was utilized to determine the statistical significance of study participants' perceived level of efficacy in the administration of special education services. Using a null value of 2.5 on the research instrument's Likert Scale, the overall mean score of 3.04 of participant response to Research Question 1 was manifested at a statistically significant level. Moreover, the magnitude of effect of study participant response with regard to perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs was considered large. Therefore, the principals in the study reported high levels of perceived efficacy in the administration of special education services at significantly high levels. Put another way, the results of this study indicated a high level of perceived effectiveness among participating principals with respect to the

administration of special education. These findings substantiate those of Frost and Kersten (2011), which suggested, “that principals tended to rate themselves between average to good in their overall knowledge of special education” (p. 16).

In the second portion of Research Question 1, a *t* test of independent means was administered to assess the comparison of perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs by gender of study participant. As a result, the mean score difference slightly favoring female study participants manifested at a nonstatistically significant level with a magnitude of effect in the comparison considered small. To clarify, the overall perceptions of efficacy in the administration of special education services were reported to be significantly high with a large magnitude of effect, however, the findings of this study regarding differences of perceived levels of efficacy by gender were not statistically significant. According to Thompson (2010), gender is not statistically significant to perceived levels of effectiveness to administer special education. This is consistent with the findings of this study in which the gender of the participants in this study did not affect their perceived levels of efficacy in the administration of special education services. While principals in this study perceived themselves to be quite effectual in the administration of special education services overall, there did not appear to be a statistically significant effect by gender. Therefore, the gender of the participants in this study did not affect their perceived levels of efficacy in the administration of special education services.

Research Question 2

To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by campus descriptor of school administrator? The *t* test of independent means statistical technique was utilized to assess the comparison of perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs by campus descriptor of study participant. As a result, the mean score difference favoring secondary school study participants manifested at a nonstatistically significant level, and the magnitude of effect in the comparison was considered small ($d = .11$). While Praisner (2000) established that attitudes of principals regarding inclusion for students with disabilities in elementary settings are influenced by their knowledge of special education practices and concepts, findings reflected that of this study with respect to the nonstatistical nature of the relationship between campus descriptor and efficacy in the administration of special education. Findings from Thompson (2010) also suggested that campus descriptor was not significantly influential on perceptions of efficacy to administer special education. Although principals in this study perceived themselves to be quite effectual in the administration of special education, according to the study's findings, the campus description of participants did not have a statistically significant impact on perceptions of self-efficacy in the administration of special education services. Therefore, the campus descriptor (e.g., elementary, secondary) of the participants in this study did not affect their perceived levels of efficacy in the administration of special education services.

Research Question 3

To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by perceived level of inclusivity? The one-way ANOVA (1 x 4 ANOVA) statistical technique was used to assess the effect of perceived level of school inclusivity upon study participant perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs. As a result, a statistically significant effect ($p < .001$) was exerted by perceived level of inclusivity of school upon study participant perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs. The magnitude of effect for the independent variable of perceived level of school inclusivity was considered large ($d = .97$).

In light of the face-value linear relationship between the independent variables of (a) inclusiveness level of school and (b) study participant perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs, formal predictive analysis was conducted using the simple linear regression statistical technique. As a result, perceived school level of inclusivity represented a robust correlate and statistically significant predictor of study participant perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs. The predictive effect for inclusivity level of school was considered large ($d = .92$).

For interpretation purposes, the finding may be interpreted as: for every full unit of increase in study participant perceived level of school inclusivity, slightly over a quarter (.28) of a full unit of increase in perceived self-efficacy to administer special education programs was predicted. Therefore, a major finding in this study was the statistically significant predictive effect reflected by the fact that participants' perceptions of self-efficacy in the administration of special education increased with the increased

perceptions of inclusivity of participants. In other words, increased levels of perceived inclusivity of special education services were a statistically significant predictor of increased levels of perceived principal self-efficacy in the administration of special education. This reinforces prior findings emphasizing the importance of preparing principals to create inclusive campuses and classrooms (Baglieri et al., 2011; Billingsly, 2005; Causton & Tracey-Bronson, 2015; Daane et al., 2000; Estes-Jones, 2013; Hedge & MacKenzie, 2012; Jacobs-Bell, 2014; McLaughlin, 2009). In addition, these findings add to this body of research and provide incentive for preparing principals to create inclusive settings because they highlight the relationship between perceptions of inclusivity and the predictability of increased perceived self-efficacy in the administration of special education services. While the statistically significant predictive effect evidenced in this study does not imply causation between variables, it is worthy of additional analysis.

Research Question 4

To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by special education certification status of school administrator? The *t* test of independent means statistical technique was utilized to assess the comparison of perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs by special education certification status of study participant. As a result, the mean score difference favoring study participants not formally certified in special education manifested at a nonstatistically significant level. The magnitude of effect in the comparison was considered slightly beyond the upper threshold for a small effect. Therefore, the special education certification status of the participants in this study did

not affect their perceived levels of efficacy in the administration of special education services. These findings are consistent with previous findings in which principals with and without a background in special education were surveyed regarding perceptions of leadership attributes. Frost and Kersten (2011) found that, "principals with and without special education certification perceived themselves to have comparable knowledge and involvement in the legal and foundation indicators" (p. 18). Additionally, Schulz and Boscardin (2018) found no evidence that principals' background in special education had an impact on leadership perceptions. However, contradictory findings were also evident in the research. For example, Jacobs, Tonnsen & Baker (2004) found that special education service delivery and quality could be influenced by the special education background of principals' experience and knowledge. Additionally, Bevel and Altrogge (2010) found that empathy increased in principals reporting that they had opportunities to be in the company of individuals with disabilities, and Washington (2010) reported that school administrators reported increased positivity with respect to administering special education services when they possessed a special education certification. While findings in the area are conflicting in the literature, the findings of this study are supportive of previous findings in which special education certification status of the participants did not affect their perceived levels of efficacy in the administration of special education services.

Research Question 5

To what degree do principals perceive their level of efficacy in the administration of special education services by age? The one-way ANOVA statistical technique was

utilized to assess the effect of study participant age upon subsequent perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs. As a result, a nonstatistically significant effect (p = .42) was exerted by study participant age upon perceived self-efficacy in administering special education programs. The magnitude of effect for the independent variable of study participant age was considered between small and medium at d = .33. These findings are consistent with the existing body of research with the respect to the age being nonstatistically indicative of perceived effectiveness to administer special education (Thompson, 2010). If the study's sample had been larger, study participant age may have exerted a statistically significant effect through subsequent analysis. Nonetheless, the age of participants in this study did not affect their perceived levels of efficacy in the administration of special education services.

Research Question 6

To what degree do principals perceive the level of efficacy of their RESC-based professional learning opportunities in supporting their administration of special education services? The one sample t test was used to determine the statistical significance of study participant perceived level of efficacy of their RESC-based professional learning opportunities in supporting their administration of special education services. The overall mean score of participant responses to Research Question 6 was manifested at a statistically significant level. Moreover, the magnitude of effect of study participant response with regard to perceived level of efficacy of their RESC-based professional learning opportunities in supporting their administration of special education services approached a medium effect. Principals responding to the questions in this survey

instrument regarding RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting their efforts to administer special education services manifested a statistically significant level. Therefore, the principals in this study reported statistically significant levels of perceived efficacy in the RESC-based professional learning opportunities in supporting their administration of special education services. Therefore, participants in this study generally perceived their RESC supports as effective. These findings validate prior findings of effectiveness regarding RESC services and supports in which, Maze (2009) found "high levels of perceived effectiveness among superintendents regarding their RESC-based professional development" (p. 99).

Implications of Findings for Professional Practice

Principals' perceptions regarding self-efficacy to administer special education and perceived levels of efficacy regarding RESC-based professional learning opportunities in support of these efforts provided feedback for Texas RESCs in the continued effort to develop innovative professional learning opportunities for principals. Emerging themes from this study suggest prominent topics of importance for principals that will inform future RESC-based professional learning opportunities regarding effective administration of special education services.

In retrospect, principals surveyed generally perceived their efficacy in the administration of special education and the efficacy of the support of RESC-based professional learning opportunities as effective; however, they perceived themselves to be more effective than the supports received from RESCs. These findings are consistent with the status of special education in Texas in that expectations of principals for RESC-

based professional learning opportunities are evolving in areas related to the administration of special education. Therefore, it is logical for principals to perceive themselves to be slightly more effective in their administration of special education than the RESC-based supports they receive during a time of significant change as is occurring in Texas. As RESCs respond to changes resulting from the TEA's *Special Education Strategic Plan* and adapt professional learning opportunities for principals accordingly, these perceptions could shift. Currently, Texas principals have yet to experience many aspects of the TEA's *Special Education Strategic Plan* because this is the first year of its implementation. As principals in Texas implement the plethora of changes ushered in by RDA and the TEA's *Special Education Strategic Plan*, RESCs have an opportunity to seek additional feedback from principals in the development of innovative solutions and responsive professional learning opportunities to meet their changing needs.

Principals in this study reported a significant preference for face-to-face (i.e., traditional) access to professional development opportunities, but conversely, 90% of participants selected time as a barrier to attending RESC-based professional development. Participants also expressed a preference for coaching, embedded supports, and webinars/zoom/teleconferences as delivery methods for professional development opportunities, which could serve as solutions to perceived time constraints. In his study of superintendent perceptions of RESC-based professional development in leadership for superintendents, Maze (2009) found:

> For RESCs to remain the key providers of superintendent professional development, they will be required to create innovative and relevant solutions responsive to the perceived barriers and recommendations of superintendents, with priority given to the needs of those working in small schools. For example, superintendents suggested distance learning as a possible solution to perceived

> barriers. RESCs possess the technology and capacity to expand distance learning, on-line courses, and virtual training activities for superintendents. (p. 102-103).

Insightful in his findings and recommendations, Maze (2009) has continued to realize innovative solutions as the executive director at RESC 12 in Waco, Texas. In this same vein, for RESCs to continue to thrive as effective providers of principal professional development, attention to perceived barriers to professional development for principals must lead to novel approaches and innovative solutions. The greatest of these barriers according to the findings in this study was the perceived time constraints experienced by school-based administrators. Building on Maze's (2009) insights, RESCs must respond with professional learning opportunities for principals that leverage technological advances. Zoom and webinars are growing in popularity, primarily because they allow for professional development attendance via distance learning. Flexible scheduling and embedded coaching and supports are also increasing in popularity as reflected in the findings of this study. RESCs must develop comprehensive solutions for principals that incorporate these types of technological advances and opportunities for embedded supports and coaching. Although such approaches could be utilized to support principals in all areas of need appropriate for RESC intervention, for the purpose of this study, the focus was on supporting principals in the administration of special education services.

Effective Special Education Transformation

As principals lead change efforts in response to the shift to RDA and the effectiveness phase of special education implementation, potential exists for innovative approaches to emerge for creating inclusive classrooms, campuses, and cultures that emphasize system-wide supports, processes and procedures that adhere to the principles

of UDL, and strength-focused practices. Special education is a complex, multifaceted, ever-changing area of education that involves complex problems requiring creativity within constraints if lasting solutions are to be found. Beliefs, perceptions, and assumptions construct the realities of the mindsets of teachers, counselors, principals, and superintendents. These individuals in addition to myriad others create the culture in which children receive educational opportunities—at times equitable, and unfortunately, sometimes not.

Although the United States educates more students with greater diversity and need to a higher standard than ever before in the history of its public education system, this is not always the narrative shared with the public. Furthermore, heavily influenced by federal education policies, the United States actually has 60 states and territories, each with its own unique version of the larger national vision of education. While the majority of the 1,200 plus public schools in Texas are independent school districts with locally elected citizens serving as school board trustees, this is not necessarily the case for other states and territories.

Innate within Texas's identity is the belief in local control of government; perhaps, in some part harkening to a time when Texas was—independent from the country and fierce in its Republic—an educational topography defined by geographical, economic, and financial barriers. Within this fierce independence, exists the potential for Texas to reinvent special education with an emphasis on equity and effectiveness. According to Maze (2009),

> The effective schools correlates identified effective schools as those having five common characteristics: (a) principal as instructional leader; (b) high

> expectations for student success; (c) instructional focus; (d) a safe and orderly environment; and (e) frequent monitoring of student progress (p. 38).

Texas is at a pivotal point with respect to future educational opportunities for students with disabilities. By leveraging the urgency for improvement of special education implementation felt across the state, LEAs might ride the wave of change into the effectiveness phase. To do so, principals will need to play an integral role in the development of effective school-based special education programs. This will require a systemic approach for navigating the complexities that arise at the intersection of people, processes, and mindsets. If principals can leverage these three elements effectively, they will hold the potential to create sustainable positive change to special education in Texas. So how does a principal or LEA for that matter leverage these drivers – people, processes, and cultural mindsets – effectively?

Leveraging Key Drivers for Effective Special Education (A Systems Approach)

According to Korobkin and Meller (2019), schools must leverage each of the three key drivers simultaneously in order to get to the *effectiveness phase* of special education implementation. The first of these drivers involves leveraging people within school systems. Increasing human capital is synonymous with developing organizational capacity. The following examples – expounding on the efforts of Korobkin and Meller (2019) – describe strategies for increasing organizational capacity with respect to effective special education implementation.

- Provide professional learning opportunities designed to foster implementation of instruction and interventions within a multi-tiered system of supports framework.

- Support inclusive practices leading to increased access and progress in grade-level standards and increased normalization of friendships between students with differing abilities.

- Invest in professional learning opportunities for all district administration, instructional, and support staff that support a culture/climate of shared responsibility.

- Create cultures of interdisciplinary collaboration across district departments, campuses, and community stakeholder groups.

- Partner with teacher and principal preparation programs and providers of professional development programs to emphasize effective instruction and support for students with disabilities.

- Expand inclusive practices through professional development, job-embedded coaching, and improved collaboration and implementation of high yield instructional practices across all educational settings.

- Regard special education teachers as subject-matter teachers in the areas they are dually certified and consistently incorporate their presence in professional learning communities at all levels of the district.

While building organizational capacity and leveraging human capital are of paramount importance in the successful transition to the *effectiveness phase* of special education implementation, schools must also undertake the revision of processes and procedures with an emphasis on high quality special education programming and implementation of evidence-based practices. For schools engaged in these efforts, the following examples – expounding on the efforts of Korobkin and Meller (2019) – offer considerable insight on which to ponder.

- Use flexible, web-based student data systems that identify students at risk, support the documentation of student interventions, drive the creation of personalized IEPs, and build systems to measure the progress of these goals by using student data.

- Build multi-tiered systems of support into all LEA processes that support all learners while ensuring robustness and fidelity in design and implementation across all areas of the educational environment.

- Study the State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report. Take note of the Statewide Systemic Improvement Plan that was created as a result of RDA; compare LEA performance results against the state's identified measurable result.

- Leverage outside expertise in support of LEA special education data and reporting as needed and available. Conduct internal and external reviews of LEA special education programming; assess LEA's policies, procedures, instructional outcomes, inclusive practices, community engagement, and family outreach.

Leveraging cultural mindsets is the third key driver referenced by Korobkin and Meller (2019). Educators within each LEA have established sets of beliefs and attitudes. Dweck (2015) postulates that people often have *fixed* or *growth* mindsets about intelligence, abilities, and talents and argued, "Students who believe their intelligence could be developed (a growth mindset) outperform those who believe their intelligence was fixed (a fixed mindset)" (p. 1). Mindsets – be them *fixed* or *growth* oriented – are influenced by the cultural beliefs, norms, and biases implicit within organizational systems and processes in which one works. This is why cultivating a culture of *academic optimism* is essential. The following examples – expounding on the efforts of Korobkin and Meller (2019) – provide options with which to explore.

- Grow and nurture a system-wide culture of academic optimism and child-focused supports.

- Define a system of effective special education procedures, practices, expectations, and monitoring which emphasizes continuous growth and improvement.

- Conduct annual surveys, interviews, and pilot groups to assess teachers' instructional perceptions, practices, constraints, needs, and ideas for improvement.

- Conduct annual surveys, interviews, and pilot groups to assess school-based administrators' perceptions, practices, constraints, and ideas for improvement.

- Conduct annual surveys, interviews, and pilot groups to assess parent/guardians' perceptions, practices, constraints, needs, and ideas for improvement.

- Strengthen communication and relationships between schools and families of students with disabilities through facilitation of conversations and functions in which families are prioritized as experts in understanding their child's unique characteristics and needs.

- Celebrate diversity through interagency partnerships, which emphasize and support the normalization of friendships between students of differing abilities.

People, Processes, and Mindsets (A Practitioner Approach)

Human capital is the most valuable commodity a school possesses. The people within a system hold the power to protect the status quo or push back on the system until change occurs. American activist Mario Savio (1964) expressed his frustration with the state of affairs at his time, but his words are apropos for the feelings shared by students and parents during the PBMAS years in Texas.

> There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part. You can't even passively take part! And you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop! And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it—that unless you're free, the machine will be prevented from working at all! (p. 1).

In its transition from PBMAS to RDA, the TEA signaled the necessity for LEAs to adapt special education programs by emphasizing effective instructional practices for students with disabilities and maintaining procedural compliance. Effective practice, reflective leadership, and supportive governance define the effectiveness phase of special education implementation. Improvements to special education practices and outcomes requires the support of people from the top to the bottom of a school system. From the school board

to the classroom, the individuals in a school system create the cultural norms and expectations experienced in the daily lives of children of all abilities.

School boards that are eager to create organizational cultures in which student learning is the work of every member of the educational community must effectively navigate political processes to create support-oriented central offices. Helping members of school boards and central offices to consider the impact adult expectations have on student outcomes might facilitate cultural shifts in which school climates transition from adult-focused environments to kid-centric educational destinations. When governance embraces such beliefs, it creates the potential to adopt strength-focused practices in which the differing abilities of staff and students strengthen organizational operations while normalizing relationships between students of differing abilities.

By providing school boards with information about frameworks and processes such as UDL, which are designed to remove barriers to learning, school board trustees might better understand and support such approaches if embraced at the district or campus level. Sharing improved achievement outcomes of students with disabilities and communicating with school board members about promising special and general education practices, including the ways teachers collaborate with school-based administrators to remove learning barriers and create inclusive campuses would highlight for school boards the kinds of practices that are effective in educating all students. Informing school boards about organizations such as Best Buddies and Unified Sports can create opportunities for interagency partnerships. Utilizing design thinking with school boards when ideating about what schools could be might generate novel ideas leading to effective change within the district. Most importantly, educating school board

members so they better understand the conditions necessary for optimal learning to occur for all children with emphasis on struggling learners might create support for such efforts from local governance.

Superintendents are also integral to improving achievement outcomes of students with disabilities in their district. With the current shifts in special education monitoring from the TEA, forward-thinking superintendents understand the importance of creating systems and processes that will lead to improved achievement outcomes of students with disabilities in their district. Nonetheless, many superintendents lack the knowledge necessary to contribute to such efforts. Mastering the complexities of special education implementation is not required for superintendents to play an integral role in creating effective special education programs in their schools. What is crucial for superintendents in Texas is that they become educated about RDA, differentiated monitoring and support, and the TEA's review and support division. It is equally important that they understand the annual LEA special education self-assessment and strategic support plan, which are requirements for schools in Texas with respect to continuous improvement in special education. Superintendents can collaborate with their special education directors and support staff in the special education departments at their RESCs to learn more about these topics.

For superintendents wanting additional insight into how to shift focus from procedural compliance to students' outcomes, frameworks such as UDL provide processes that focus on removing barriers to learning. More information on UDL can be found on the CAST website. In addition, organizations like Best Buddies (https://www.bestbuddies.org/bbu), Unified Sports

(https://www.specialolympics.org/our-work/sports/unified-sports), and the Penguin Project (https://penguinproject.org/) create opportunities for interagency partnerships. Each of these organizations focuses on the normalization of relationships between students with differing abilities, and design thinking provides a creative process with which to ideate innovative solutions within constraints and barriers such as time, funding, and mindsets. The book, *Design Thinking for School Leaders* by Gallagher and Thordarson (2018) provided excellent examples for implementing the principles of design thinking in the K–12 setting.

Principals are the catalysts for creating sustainable change because of their power to influence vertically and horizontally throughout a school system. Principals can facilitate collaboration among special and general education teachers and staff while attending to instructional quality control for all students. When principals embrace the ethics of justice, care, and profession, they can develop systems to control the chaos that so often characterizes their role. McChesney, Covey and Huling (2012) provided a process for balancing the whirlwind of daily responsibilities while remaining focused on goals for improvement in the book, *The 4 Disciplines of Execution: Achieving Your Wildly Important Goals*. *Design Thinking for School Leaders* is also appropriate for school-based administrators when ideating innovative solutions within constraints and barriers such as time, funding, and mindsets. Such examples provide insight into processes and practices that enable principals to create change within their systems while enabling them to work on their systemic cultures.

Mastering the complexities of special education implementation for school-based administrators elevates in importance when attempting to create effective special

education programs in their schools. Principals in Texas must acquire an understanding of RDA, differentiated monitoring and support, and the TEA's review and support division. It is equally important that they understand the annual LEA special education self-assessment and LEA strategic support plan, which are requirements for schools in Texas with respect to continuous improvement in special Education. Principals should collaborate with their special education programs in the completion of these annual monitoring requirements to provide insight and feedback from the campus level. Special education directors should be including a diverse committee of stakeholders in the completion of these processes. Principals can collaborate with their special education directors and support staff in the special education departments at their RESCs to learn more about these topics.

School-based leadership depends on support from central offices, school boards, and RESCs. Because of the plethora of responsibilities populating a principal's calendar, resources and supports must be easily digestible and accessible. For this reason, a list of readings and resources providing perspective, practices, and potential solutions for improved special education implementation are listed in Appendix E.

Ideas for Teachers

This section provides information for all teachers. The aim is not for recommendations from this study to send the message that special and general education teachers are separate and require separate assistance and supports. All teachers need the equivalent assistance and supports to varying degrees. Each needs an understanding of curricular standards and alignment, high yield instructional practices, differentiation and

accommodations, and positive behavioral supports. The medicalization of special education reinforced by an educational system defined by lack mentality and deficit perspective has created confusion and apathy with respect to the education of students with disabilities in otherwise capable educators (special and general). This must change to ensure a successful transition into the effective phase of special education implementation. This will require increased empathy among special and general education teachers and their school-based administration.

Educators are changing. Evidence of this can be found in every classroom, on every campus, and all across our state and country. Emerging research into neurology, mindsets, perseverance, and habits is reshaping the collective psyche of our profession. Ideas about pedagogy once believed to be fringe are being embraced by innovative educators employing kid-centric practices in collaborative learning spaces. The quest for student engagement and instructional influence has uncovered an interesting paradigm in which children are arriving to campuses needing adults who will do more than teach and who will listen more than they speak. In empathy interventions, teachers gain insight into the lives of their students by engaging in student-led conversations about topics of their choice. Teachers are learning, students are teaching, and systems are adapting. The energy and excitement is palpable with a focus on creativity and passion pouring in from every corner. Too often such experiences are saved for students deemed worthy by standardized assessments denoting giftedness and exceptionality when schools and educators operate from a lack mentality characterized by deficit perspectives. While all children would benefit from kid-centric practices and collaborative learning environments, various constraints prevent many schools from applying such approaches

full scale. In an effort to design to the edges of educational systems, effective special education departments will begin to choose personalized learning experiences, effectively designed instruction, strength engineered practices, and experience rich environments – traditionally seen in educational programs for the gifted and talented – for students with disabilities.

For some, these changes in preparation, pedagogy, and practice are disconcerting. When a teacher reaches a level of proficiency in his or her craft, change can feel forced. It is important to create a sense of normalcy whenever transitions in approach or shifts in practice take place. There has and always will be a tension between that which is and that which will be. We cannot have one without the other, and successfully navigating such changes requires courageous leadership. Kindness is the glue that holds cultural values and norms together when system transformation occurs. Organizations always take on characteristics of their leaders, and this is why it is crucial that our educational leaders maintain collegiality among all members of the school community.

Educators must stand together despite generational differences and pedagogical preferences and speak with one voice, stand as one profession, and rise with one purpose. All kids—each and every one—need caring and positive adult role models who prioritize the needs of children above their own. When we pair these characteristics with growth-minded individuals dedicated to studying their standards and mastering their craft in the classroom, children thrive. In the recipe for creating a high performing classroom, campus, and culture, these are the basic ingredients required to help the general education student, special education student, gifted student, English language learner, and all the

rest. The following list of attributes will serve all educators – general and special – when working towards transitioning to RDA and effective special education programs:

- Each needs an understanding of curricular standards and alignment, high yield instructional practices, differentiation and accommodations, and positive behavioral supports.

- Each needs competent/attentive school-based administrators prepared to evaluate and support professional growth and maintain quality control regarding curricular and instructional practices.

- Each needs opportunities to collaborate with one another in support of students of differing abilities.

- Each needs opportunities to continue learning and refining pedagogical knowledge and application.

- Each needs an understanding of the difference between Lag data (STAAR results) and Lead Data (daily work, formative assessments, interim exams, and other forms of student feedback).

- Each needs to understand how to collect, analyze, and utilize student generated data in making determinations with respect to daily instruction (pivot or persevere).

- Each needs to cultivate the ability to talk so kids will listen and listen so kids will talk through pedagogical eclecticism and experience rich learning environments.

- Each needs to become proficient at personalizing learning experiences for themselves and the children they support through the cultivation of becoming expert learners.

- Each needs to understand how to implement on concepts such as growing grit, encouraging effort, supporting sustained struggle, and failing forward.

- Each needs to understand how to engineer passion, purpose, and potential in self and others.

- Each needs to facilitate strength searching, engineered passion, defined deficit digs, interest investigations, controlled chaotic cultures, and comfortably challenging classrooms and campuses.

- Each needs to understand and implement the least dangerous assumption when planning lessons, engaging student discussions, and organizing classroom settings for optimal student learning.

- Each needs to understand the jaggedness profile of each child by learning their individual interests, beliefs, micro-motives, and propensities.

- Each needs to understand the potential detriment to relationship that overly punitive settings and practices create with an illusion of control.

- Each needs to feel safe to take chances when facilitating the learning of students through pedagogical variations, creative curricular implementations, and innovative instructional practices.

- Each needs to remain keenly aware of personal attitudes, behaviors, interactions, and tendencies ensuring that strengths and solutions permeate the conscious.

- Each needs to cultivate positive, supportive interactions with students, colleagues, and families in an effort to maximize learning, relationships, and communication.

- Each needs to understand the other's role and responsibilities in connection to that of their own in an effort towards shared responsibilities, efficiency of effort, and maximization of strengths.

- Each must teach with and through one another, coopting the learning experiences of shared students while retaining autonomous identities and collective priorities.

Recommendations for Future Research on the Topic

The purpose of this study was to investigate the degree of relationship between Texas principals' perceptions of self-efficacy to administer special education services and professional learning opportunities supporting these efforts at their RESCs. In Texas, efforts at the state, regional, and local levels align with federal mandates and practices in a transition from a compliance-heavy system of special education to one that balances compliance requirements with a focus on improving student outcomes (TEA, 2018b).

RESCs are at the center of this shift and have potential to develop novel models of professional learning strategically designed to support Texas principals in the administration of effective special education services. The information gathered from this study could inform future RESC offerings designed to support Texas principals in the administration of special education. Furthermore, the implications of this research provide RESCs with opportunities for additional analysis with respect to the study's questions and findings.

As principals lead change efforts in response to the shift to RDA and the effectiveness phase of special education implementation, much potential exists for additional research to inform and improve practice. Specifically, this study highlights the following areas for future research.

- A companion study to this nonexperimental quantitative research study could include a mixed methods approach in which analysis of survey response variances from this study could provide trend data from which high frequency response topics could be synthesized in the development of interview questions. Additional trend analysis provided from qualitative data collected from a sample group of principal interviewees regarding high frequency response theme questions could then be compared with quantitative findings provided by the survey instrument.

- A companion study could also include a similar methodology using a survey instrument derived from the T-PESS Rubric in place of the T-TESS Rubric used in this study. Using the findings of this additional qualitative study, a comparison of the two surveys may provide additional insight into principals' perceptions of the T-PESS versus the T-TESS standards designed for the supervision of teachers.

- An additional companion study might include a secondary analysis of the data set from this study with additional attention given to the survey responses regarding perceived efficacy of RESC-based professional learning supports. Although preliminary analysis of this revealed participants in this study generally perceived their RESC supports as being effective, additional investigation may lead to other insights worthy of consideration.

- An additional companion study might include a secondary analysis of the data set from this study with additional attention given to the survey responses regarding principals' perceptions of self-efficacy in the administration of special education. Although the results of this study indicated a high level of perceived effectiveness in this area among participating principals, additional investigation of each survey question under statistical analysis may lead to additional insight for consideration.

- Further study might include a secondary analysis of the data set from this study in which a question-by-question correlational investigation between the survey responses regarding principals' perceptions of self-efficacy in administration of special education as compared to the companion questions regarding perceived efficacy of RESC-based professional learning supports. Although the results of this study indicated a high level of perceived effectiveness among participating principals with respect to the administration of special education, additional investigation of each survey question under statistical analysis may lead to additional insight for consideration.

- Another area for future research might involve a follow-up study in which special education directors are given the same survey instrument from this study and are asked to rate themselves or their principals.

- Additionally, a follow-up study might include qualitative methodology in the form of interviews in which special education directors are asked to discuss high frequency responses from this study.

- Another possible topic for future consideration might be a meta-analysis of available literature of the most effective principal practices regarding the administration of special education.

- In response to the shift to RDA, an additional study might be a review of literature regarding the impact of strength-focused practices with respect to administration and implementation of special education services.

- With the need for RESCs to provide innovative solutions and modern approaches, an area of focus for future research could be the impact of modern learning environments and pedagogies on the effectiveness of the administration of special education implementation.

- With the need for RESCs to provide innovative solutions and modern approaches, an area of focus for future research could be the impact of modern learning environments and pedagogies on the practice of effective special education instruction.

- Given the need for RESCs to provide innovative solutions and modern approaches, an area of focus for future research could be the impact of modern learning environments and pedagogies on the learning outcomes of students with disabilities.

- A final area for future research might include a semi experimental design in which students with disabilities are provided educational experiences adapted for students classified as gifted and talented to ascertain the degree to which such practices have an educational impact on learning outcomes for students with disabilities.

Summary

This study was conducted to advance the understanding of Texas principals' perceptions of their efficacy to administer special education services. An additional focus of the study was the degree to which principals perceived their RESC-based professional learning opportunities to be supportive of their efforts to administer special education services. In Texas, efforts at the state, regional, and local levels align with federal mandates and practices in a transition from a compliance-heavy system of special education to one that balances compliance requirements with a focus on improving student outcomes (TEA, 2018b). RESCs are at the center of this shift (TEA, 2018b) and have potential to develop novel models of professional learning strategically designed to support Texas principals in the administration of special education services.

A broadly nonexperimental, quantitative approach was utilized to address the study's research problem. The findings of this statewide study included archival data collected from 125 principals practicing in November 2019 from the southwest region of the United States (i.e., Texas). The research methodology featured in the study was survey research by definition. Six specific research questions were posed to address the study's research problem. Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were

utilized to analyze, interpret, and report findings associated with each respective research question. The findings of this study add to the body of research on these topics and will assist RESCs in the development of innovative solutions for supporting principals in administration of the effective implementation of special education.

Education is changing. A growing tension exists between two schools of thought: one emphasizing kid-centric practices and a strength (abundance) mindset, the other emphasizing adult focused controls and a deficit (lack) mindset. Although some believe that schools should be places of wonder and excitement in which students should be engaged in passion-based problem solving, many others insist on preserving a more traditional form of education, one in which teachers are viewed as the keepers of knowledge and controllers of concepts. However, these opposing views may not be such a new phenomenon in the collective psyche of American society.

According to Craft (1984), there are two different Latin roots of the English word *education*. They are *educare*, which means to train or to mold, and *educere*, meaning to lead out. Although the two meanings are quite different, they are both represented in the word education. One root suggests a process of preserving and passing down knowledge and shaping youths in the image of their parents. The other root suggests a process of preparing a new generation for the changes that are to come, readying them to create solutions to problems yet unknown. There are also those who believe both are achievable—that we can both honor the lessons learned and paths paved by the generational teachings that came before while also forging ahead into new innovative approaches and practices and educational destinations yet to be discovered. I am from this latter group of thinkers. Craft (1984) contended that striking the right balance in

educational aims is a valid focus for educators; however, this requires changing organizational structures and the ways in which decisions are made. The first steps to achieving such a balance involves utilizing stakeholder perceptions, establishing a shared vision of education, and facilitating a change in educators' roles.

The changes to Texas educator certifications including the special education certification and the principal as instructional leader certification most certainly aim to facilitate a change in educators' roles. The TEAs *Special Education Strategic Plan* offered several responses to stakeholder perceptions and feedback. Although these changes have created chaos in the system, the shift occurring with regard to RDA and effective special education practices has arrived. With change comes opportunity, and with all these new opportunities, it truly is an exciting time to be an educator in Texas. Excitement can elevate and complicate improvement efforts by making it more difficult to remember the details needed to drive change. Although the attention span of most may be getting shorter from generation and generation, some things are worth remembering. It would seem that remembering the first moments of learning to read would represent a significant event in most people's memories, but many people, including myself, cannot recall the precise moment or day when it happened. This suggests that the age when readings skills are acquired may not matter as much as the fact that they were eventually mastered. Everyone learns at different rates and to varying degrees of proficiency given optimal conditions, but everyone is not yet afforded the equal educational opportunity to realize their individual potential to learn.

Principals should ask themselves if they feel students with disabilities in their schools receive the quality of instruction and attention that their peers without disabilities

receive. They should ask themselves if students deemed to be average in their schools are exposed to educational and pedagogical opportunities like those offered to high performing students and students classified as gifted learners. Principals should ask: Do all students believe they have attributes that add value to classroom culture, experiences, and learning? Do all teachers believe that every child regardless of differing abilities can learn and contribute in their classrooms? These are questions with which many educators grapple in an effort to implement the ideals of federal and state expectations regarding the provisions defined within the IDEA.

Questions like these often lead to debate into the appropriateness of inclusion. Educators wonder if and when it's appropriate, how it should be implemented, and how far it should be taken. In my own experiences, I have seen a trend in which elementary campuses in a district or feeder pattern embrace inclusive practices, but the secondary campuses in these systems struggle or refuse to do so. For years, I participated in the quiet conspiracy of agreeing that inclusion was easier to do at elementary campuses while justifying why it might be a more allusive ideal for secondary educators. I am no longer remaining silent about my thoughts on this matter because I believe that when we know better, we are obligated to do better. I don't believe we do children any favors by developing inclusive environments in our elementary campuses only to segregate children with disabilities into restrictive settings in our secondary campuses. I do believe we live inclusion through our thoughts, words, and actions. I have also grown to understand that doing inclusion equates to doing exclusion.

Here's where I have landed on my quest for an understanding of the concept referred to as *inclusion*. If the question is: Should we do inclusion? The answer at best

will be a flawed solution to the wrong problem. What I now hear is: Should we choose to include or choose to exclude? We include or we exclude, it's really that simple! In an inclusive environment, we do not exclude. When we are truly open and honest about what we want for our own children, do we not want them to feel and be included? What I want for Emma, Mia, Aiden, and Addi May is a school culture that includes them in all settings and at all levels. I want each of them to be encouraged and challenged to realize their potential and fight for what they believe to be good and right about this world. I believe we all want this for our own children: for them to feel whole, perfect, strong, powerful, loving, harmonious, and happy. In my aspirations for them, I hope they learn not to be comfortable with the attributes born in them, but to aspire themselves to become their best selves and realize their god given potential. Isn't this what we all want for our children? I know it's what I want for mine.

But are they not all my children? Am I not responsible to each and every child who comes under my influence? Should I not care for each as though he or she were Aiden or Mia? Should I not search for patience and wisdom in my duty to serve their development as I often find myself doing for Emma and Addi May? They are all our children! I will care for yours if you for mine. Isn't that a concept innate in society? It takes a village of caring adults to tend to their needs. We cannot do it alone! I need you and you need me, together we are us, but have we stopped long enough lately to ask, who are we?

We are educators! We believe when others doubt. We ignite the flames that others douse. It is our love and life's lessons that guide their hearts and minds when their families fail to do so. We don't need to treat them all the same or expect them all to get

across the proverbial finish line at the same time. They don't need to be motivated by our expectations or indoctrinated by our opinions. They do however, need us to manage our priorities and agendas so as not to let our needs negatively impact our relationships with them. They need role models that are fair and just, but not perfect. Their greatest needs are of attention and time. Our children need us to prioritize their longing to feel loved, appreciated, and challenged above our need to manage time and teach subjects. They all need to feel valuable, and they all need to be included, just like you and just like me!

According to the law of the diffusion of innovation, there will be early adopters choosing to engage these efforts with rigorous intent. These LEAs will break the mold regarding the current approaches to special education service delivery. LEAs willing to take chances on innovative ideas and strength-focused practices will shape the future of special education implementation in Texas. In doing so, procedural compliance—once the ceiling for success in special education—will become the foundation for improved student outcomes, the new ceiling under which children thrive. Someone must be the model. Why not let that someone be you?

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Survey Instrument

Region 12 Education Service Center
Innovate. Empower. Educate.

Principals' Perceptions of Self-Efficacy in the Administration of Effective Special Education Services Across a Continuum of Educational Settings in Relation to Professional Learning Opportunities at Regional Education Service Centers

Principal Perception Survey

Principals' perceptions of self-efficacy to administer special education services assessed by T-TESS Dimensions in relation to professional learning opportunities at Regional Education Service Center (RESCs)

1. The purpose of this survey is to gather insight into your perceptions about your ability to administer effective special education services across a continuum of educational settings in relation Regional Education Service Center (RESC) offerings on this topic. We are asking you to take part in this study because you are a campus administrator in Texas and have valuable insights into these questions.

The information we gather will be used to inform future RESC offerings for supporting Texas Principals in the administration of effective special education serves across a continuum of educational settings.

Taking part in this research study is up to you. If you decide to take part in this research study, click on the bottom button to begin the survey. The total time to complete this online survey is 10-15 minutes.

At no time during this survey and the ongoing research process will any of your personal and identifiable information be collected or used. All data collected via this online survey will be confidential and stored under a secured password.

As you may be aware, electronic communication may be subject to interception, legally by your employer or illegally by another party, while the information is in transit. Therefore, it is possible that your information might be seen by another party, and I am unable to control this from happening.

Keep in mind, there are no questions or prompts that might identify you as the respondent. If you are still unsure about the security of your confidential information, please print the survey, fill out the answers by hand, and mail the completed survey to the address of the principal investigator included at the end of this message.

By commencing this brief, voluntary survey, you give your consent and are aware of your rights as a participant, and have agreed to participate in this research. Based on the nature of the survey questions, there are no reasonable foreseeable risks or discomfort to you. You are under no obligation to participate and can withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.

If you want to speak with someone not directly involved in this research study, you may contact the Baylor University IRB through the Office of the Vice Provost for Research at 254-710-1438.

You can talk to them about:

- Your rights as a research subject
- Your concerns about the research
- A complaint about the research

If you have any questions or comments regarding this survey or the research study, please contact:

John C. Bullion
Principal Investigator
Department of Special Education
2101 W. Loop 340,
Waco, TX 76712
Education Service Center, Region 12
(254) 297-1150
jbullion@esc12.net or
John_Bullion1@baylor.edu

☐ I give my consent, am aware of my rights, and agree to participate in this research

* 2. **Demographic Survey Questions. This part of the survey is to gather personnel demographic information.**

What is your current position?

- ◯ Assistant Principal
- ◯ Principal
- ◯ Dean of Instruction
- ◯ Other

* 3. **How would you define your campus?**

- ◯ Elementary
- ◯ Middle School
- ◯ Junior High School
- ◯ High School
- ◯ Alternative School

* 4. **What is your district UIL classification?**

- ◯ 1A
- ◯ 2A
- ◯ 3A
- ◯ 4A
- ◯ 5A
- ◯ 6A

* 5. **How many years have you practiced as a Principal?**

- ◯ 1-5
- ◯ 6-10
- ◯ 11-15
- ◯ 16-20
- ◯ More than 20

* 6. **What is your age range?**

- ◯ 25-35
- ◯ 36-45
- ◯ 46-55
- ◯ 56 and over

* 7. **What is your gender?**

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female

* 8. **What is your race/ethnicity?**

- ◯ American Indian
- ◯ Asian
- ◯ Black or African American
- ◯ Hispanic or Latino
- ◯ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ◯ White (not Hispanic or Latino)
- ◯ Other

* 9. **Do you have a special education certification?**

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

* 10. **How inclusive do your perceive your campus to be?**

- ◯ Not inclusive
- ◯ Somewhat inclusive
- ◯ Mostly inclusive
- ◯ Inclusive

* 11. **In what topics do you need the most support in the administration of special education services and supervision of special education teachers?**

- ☐ Child Find
- ☐ Specially designed instruction (SDI)
- ☐ Differentiation/Modifications/Accommodations
- ☐ Positive behavior supports (PBS)
- ☐ Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

* 12. **In what type of settings do you need the most support in the administration of special education services and supervision of special education teachers?**

- ☐ Preschool settings
- ☐ General education settings
- ☐ Resource settings
- ☐ Self-contained academic settings
- ☐ Self-contained behavior settings
- ☐ Other (please specify)

* 13. **How do you prefer to access professional development opportunities?**

- [ ] Face to face traditional
- [ ] Coaching/embedded supports
- [ ] Webinars/zoom/teleconference
- [ ] Conferences
- [ ] Forums
- [ ] Micro-credential courses
- [ ] other

* 14. **What constraints, if any, do you perceive as limiting your participation in RESC-based professional development?**

- [ ] Time
- [ ] Expense
- [ ] Geography
- [ ] Topic Relevance
- [ ] Other (please specify)

* 15. **What solutions available to your RESC would allow you to overcome those constraints to your professional development activities?**

- [ ] Flexible scheduling options
- [ ] Flexible fee-based options
- [ ] Attendance by Zoom options
- [ ] Having input into topics covered
- [ ] Other (please specify)

* 16. ***T-TESS Effectiveness Survey Questions. This part of the survey is to understand how principals rate their abilities to evaluate and support special education teachers.***

T-TESS PLANNING DIMENSION 1.1 Standards and Alignment:

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers design clear, well-organized, sequential lessons that...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Reflect best practice	◯	◯	◯	◯
Align with standards	◯	◯	◯	◯
Are appropriate for diverse learners	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 17. **T-TESS PLANNING DIMENSION 1.2 Data and Assessment:**

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Use **formal** methods to measure student progress	◯	◯	◯	◯
Use **informal** methods to measure student progress	◯	◯	◯	◯
Manage data of students with disabilities to inform instruction	◯	◯	◯	◯
Analyze data of students with disabilities to inform instruction	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 18. **T-TESS PLANNING DIMENSION 1.3 Knowledge of Students:**

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that through knowledge of students and proven practices special education teachers ensure high levels of...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Learning for all students with disabilities	◯	◯	◯	◯
Social-emotional development for all students with disabilities	◯	◯	◯	◯
Achievement for all students with disabilities	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 19. **T-TESS PLANNING DIMENSION 1.4 Activities:**

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers plan engaging, flexible lessons that encourage...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Higher-order thinking of students with disabilities	○	○	○	○
Persistence of students with disabilities	○	○	○	○
Achievement of students with disabilities	○	○	○	○

* 20. **T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.1 Achieving Expectations:**

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers support learners with disabilities in their pursuit of high levels of...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Academic success	○	○	○	○
Social-emotional success	○	○	○	○

* 21. **T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.2 Content Knowledge and Expertise:**

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring all special education teachers use content and pedagogical expertise to...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Design lessons aligned with state standards	○	○	○	○
Execute lessons aligned with state standards	○	○	○	○
Design lessons aligned with related content	○	○	○	○
Execute lessons aligned with related content	○	○	○	○
Design lessons aligned student needs	○	○	○	○
Execute lessons aligned with student needs	○	○	○	○

* 22. **T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.3 STUDENT-CENTERED ACTIONS TEACHER-CENTERED ACTIONS:**

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers clearly communicate to support...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Persistence of students with disabilities	○	○	○	○
Deeper learning of students with disabilities	○	○	○	○
Effective effort of students with disabilities	○	○	○	○

* 23. **T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.4 Differentiation:**

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers differentiate instruction by...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Aligning **methods** to diverse student needs	○	○	○	○
Aligning **techniques** to diverse student needs	○	○	○	○

* 24. **T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.5 Monitor and Adjust:**

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Formally collect student progress data to make needed lesson adjustments	○	○	○	○
Informally collect student progress data to make needed lesson adjustments	○	○	○	○
Analyze student progress data to make needed lesson adjustments	○	○	○	○
Use student progress data to make needed lesson adjustments	○	○	○	○

* 25. **T-TESS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION 3.1 Classroom Environment, Routines and Procedures:**

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers organize...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
A **safe** classroom	◯	◯	◯	◯
An **accessible** classroom	◯	◯	◯	◯
An **efficient** classroom	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 26. **T-TESS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION 3.2 Managing Student Behavior:**

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Establish clear expectations for student behavior	◯	◯	◯	◯
Communicate clear expectations for student behavior	◯	◯	◯	◯
Maintain clear expectations for student behavior	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 27. **T-TESS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION 3.3 Classroom Culture:**

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers lead...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
A **mutually respectful** class of actively engaged learners	◯	◯	◯	◯
A **collaborative** class of actively engaged learners	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 28. **T-TESS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DIMENSION 4.1 Professional Demeanor and Ethics:**

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers meet district expectations for...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Attendance	○	○	○	○
Professional appearance	○	○	○	○
Decorum	○	○	○	○
Procedural responsibilities	○	○	○	○
Ethical responsibilities	○	○	○	○
Legal and **statutory responsibilities**	○	○	○	○

* 29. **T-TESS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DIMENSION 4.2 Goal Setting:**

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Reflect on their practice	○	○	○	○
Set professional goals	○	○	○	○

* 30. **T-TESS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DIMENSION 4.3 Professional Development:**

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Have opportunities to enhance the professional community	○	○	○	○
Understand how to enhance the professional community	○	○	○	○
Enhance the professional community	○	○	○	○

* 31. **T-TESS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DIMENSION 4.4 School Community Involvement:**

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers demonstrate leadership with...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Students in the school through effective **communication**	○	○	○	○
Students in the school through effective **outreach**	○	○	○	○
Colleagues in the school through effective **communication**	○	○	○	○
Colleagues in the school through effective **outreach**	○	○	○	○
Community members through effective **communication**	○	○	○	○
Community members through effective **outreach**	○	○	○	○

* 32. ***Region Education Service Center (RESC) Effectiveness Survey Questions. This part of the survey is to understand how principals rate their Regional Education Service Center (RESC) professional learning opportunities in support of their efforts to evaluate and support special education teachers.***

T-TESS PLANNING DIMENSION 1.1 Standards and Alignment:

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers design clear, well-organized, sequential lessons that...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Reflect best practice	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Align with standards	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Are appropriate for diverse learners	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				

* 33. **T-TESS PLANNING DIMENSION 1.2 Data and Assessment:**

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Use **formal** methods to measure student progress	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Use **informal** methods to measure student progress	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Manage data of students with disabilities to inform instruction	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Analyze data of students with disabilities to inform instruction	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				

* 34. **T-TESS PLANNING DIMENSION 1.3 Knowledge of Students:**

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that through knowledge of students and proven practices, special education teachers ensure high levels of...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Learning for all students with disabilities	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Social-emotional development for all students with disabilities	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Achievement for all students with disabilities	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				

* 35. **T-TESS PLANNING DIMENSION 1.4 Activities:**

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers plan engaging, flexible lessons that encourage...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Higher-order thinking of students with disabilities	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Persistence of students with disabilities	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Achievement of students with disabilities	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				

* 36. **T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.1 Achieving Expectations:**

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers support learners with disabilities in their pursuit of high levels of...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Academic success	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Social-emotional success	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				

* 37. **T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.2 Content Knowledge and Expertise:**

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers use content and pedagogical expertise to...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Design lessons aligned with **state standards**	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Execute lessons aligned with **state standards**	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Design lessons aligned with **related content**	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Execute lessons aligned with **related content**	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Design lessons aligned with **student needs**	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Execute lessons aligned with **student needs**	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				

* 38. **T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.3 STUDENT-CENTERED ACTIONS TEACHER-CENTERED ACTIONS:**

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers clearly communicate to support...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Persistence of students with disabilities	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Deeper learning of students with disabilities	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Effective effort of students with disabilities	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				

* 39. **T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.4 Differentiation:**

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers differentiate instruction by...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Aligning **methods** to diverse student needs	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Aligning **techniques** to diverse student needs	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				

* 40. **T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.5 Monitor and Adjust:**

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Formally collect student progress data to make needed lesson adjustments	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Informally collect student progress data to make needed lesson adjustments	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Analyze student progress data to make needed lesson adjustments	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Use student progress data to make needed lesson adjustments	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				

* 41. **T-TESS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION 3.1 Classroom Environment, Routines and Procedures:**

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers organize...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
A **safe** classroom	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
An **accessible** classroom	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
An **efficient** classroom	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				

* 42. **T-TESS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION 3.2 Managing Student Behavior:**

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Establish clear expectations for student behavior	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Communicate clear expectations for student behavior	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Maintain clear expectations for student behavior	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				

* 43. **T-TESS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION 3.3 Classroom Culture:**

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers lead...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
A **mutually respectful** class of actively engaged learners	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
A **collaborative** class of actively engaged learners	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				

* 44. **T-TESS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DIMENSION 4.1 Professional Demeanor and Ethics:**

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers meet district expectations for...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Attendance	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Professional appearance	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Decorum	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Procedural responsibilities	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Ethical responsibilities	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Legal and statutory responsibilities	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				

* 45. **T-TESS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DIMENSION 4.2 Goal Setting:**

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Reflect on their practice	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Set professional goals	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				

* 46. **T-TESS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DIMENSION 4.3 Professional Development:**

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Have opportunities to enhance the professional community	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Understand how to enhance the professional community	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Enhance the professional community	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				

* 47. **T-TESS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DIMENSION 4.4 School Community Involvement:**

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers demonstrate leadership with...

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Mostly Effective	Effective
Students in the school through effective **communication**	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Students in the school through effective **outreach**	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Colleagues in the school through effective **communication**	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Colleagues in the school through effective **outreach**	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Community members through effective **communication**	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				
Community members through effective **outreach**	○	○	○	○
Other (please specify)				

APPENDIX B

Demographic Survey Question Responses

Current Position

Eleven percent of respondents reported their current position as assistant principal. Eighty-eight percent reported their position as principal. One percent chose dean of student as their current position.

Campus Description

Forty-nine percent of respondents reported their campus to be elementary. Fifteen percent reported their campus as middle school. Nine percent reported being on Junior High Campuses. Twenty-seven percent chose High School as their campus.

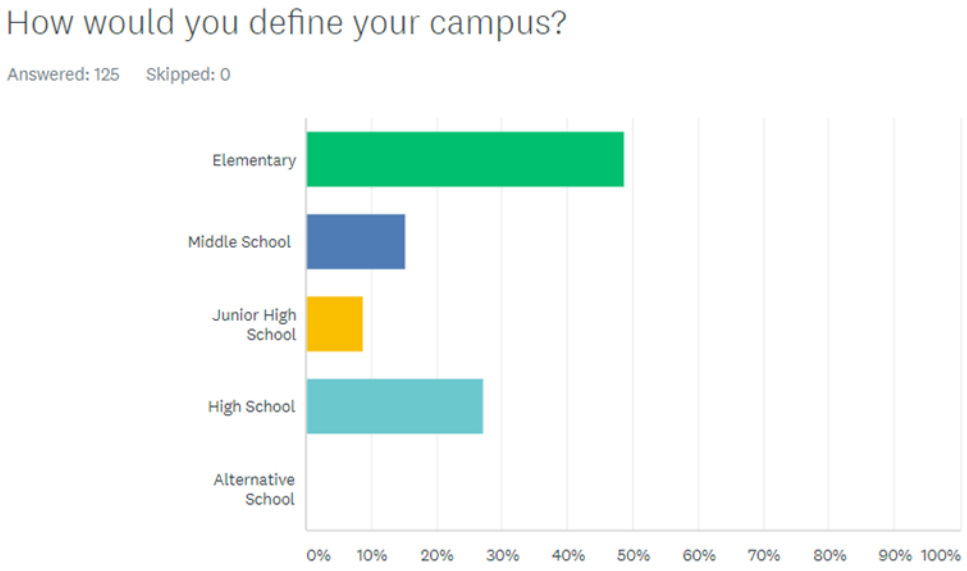

Figure B.1. Campus description.

LEA UIL Classification

Thirteen percent of respondents reported their LEA UIL classification as 1A. Ten percent report LEA UIL classification 2A. Eleven percent selected 3A as their UIL classification. Twenty-two percent selected 4A. Twenty-nine percent chose their UIL classification as 5A. Sixteen percent of respondents reported their LEA UIL classification as 6A.

Years as a Campus Administrator

Fifty percent of respondents reported being in their first 5 years of serving as a campus administrator. Twenty-six percent of respondents reported their experience as a campus administrator as being between 6-10 years. Fourteen percent selected 11-15 as their range to describe the number of years they have served as campus administrators. Eight percent reported being in the role of campus administrator between 16-20 years. Two percent of respondents reported having 20 or more years' experience serving as campus administrators.

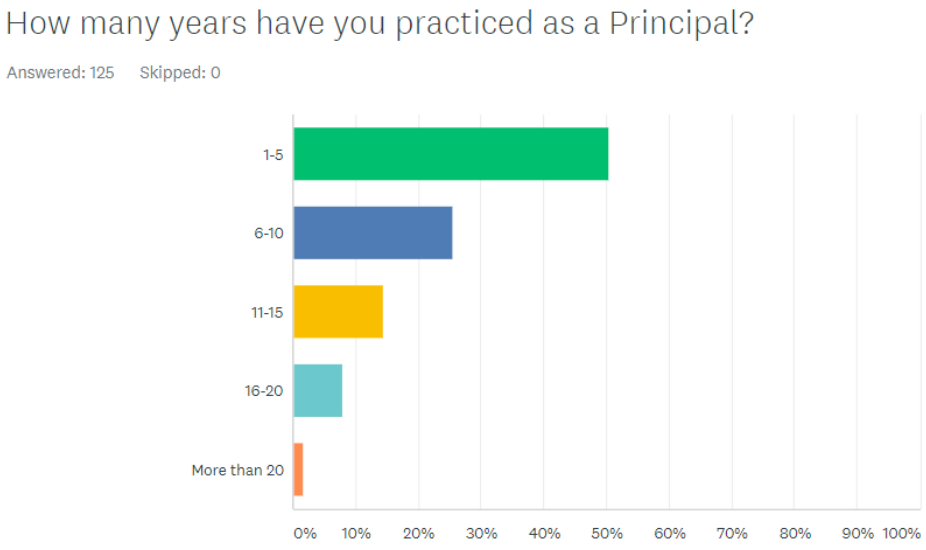

Figure B.2. Principal experience in years.

Age Range

Two percent of respondents recorded their age range to be 25-35. Thirty-eight percent recorded their age range as 36-45 years. Forty-eight percent chose 46-55 years as their age range. Eleven percent of respondents reported their age to be 56 and over.

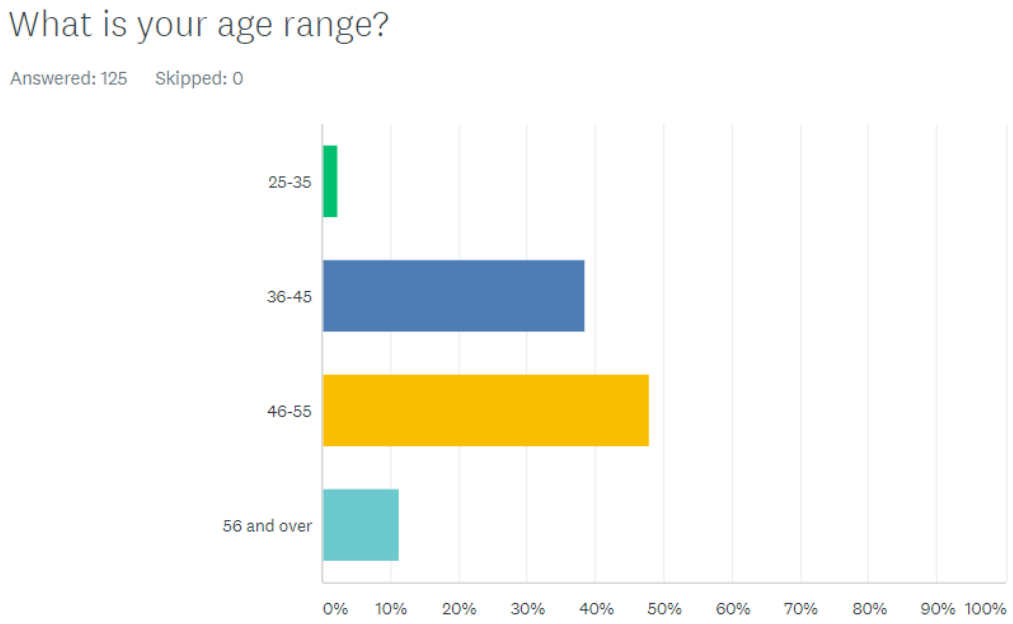

Figure B.3. 2017 Principals by age.

Gender

Sixty-five percent of responding campus administrators were female. Thirty-five percent were male. Research findings regarding gender suggested a significantly higher percentage of females than males serving as campus administrators in Texas during the 2019-2020 school year. According to the Employed Principal Demographics 2014-2018 found on the TEA's website, these findings mirror the percentages of campus administrators by gender for Texas in 2018.

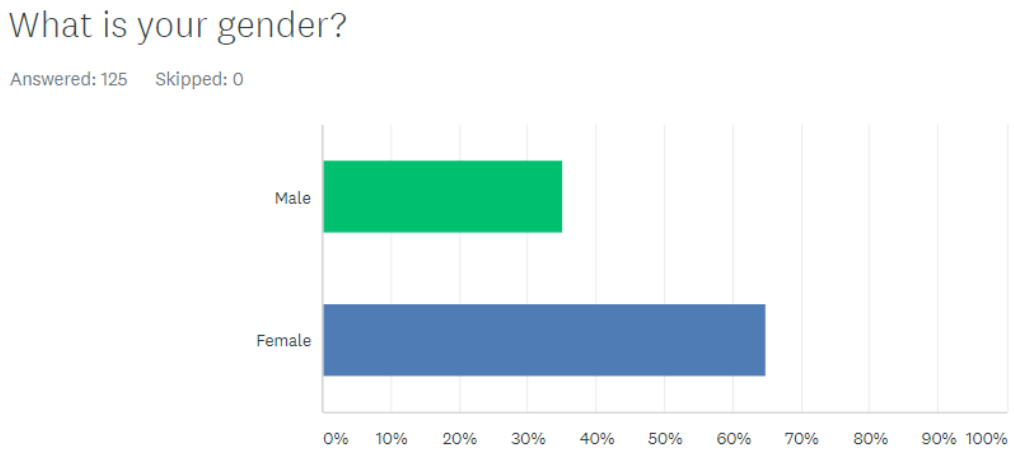

Figure B.4. 2017 Principals by gender.

Race/Ethnicity

Three percent of respondents recorded their race/ethnicity as American Indian. Four percent reported race/ethnicity as Black or African American. Seven percent reported their Hispanic or Latino as their race/ethnicity. Eighty-five percent reported race/ethnicity as non-Hispanic White. One percent selected "Other" as their race/ethnicity. None of the participants responded as being Asian, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander. These percentages for White, African-American, and Latino campus administrators mirror the percentages for Texas.

Special Education Certification Status

Seventeen percent of respondents reported having their special education certification. Eighty-three percent of respondents indicated that they did not have their special education certification.

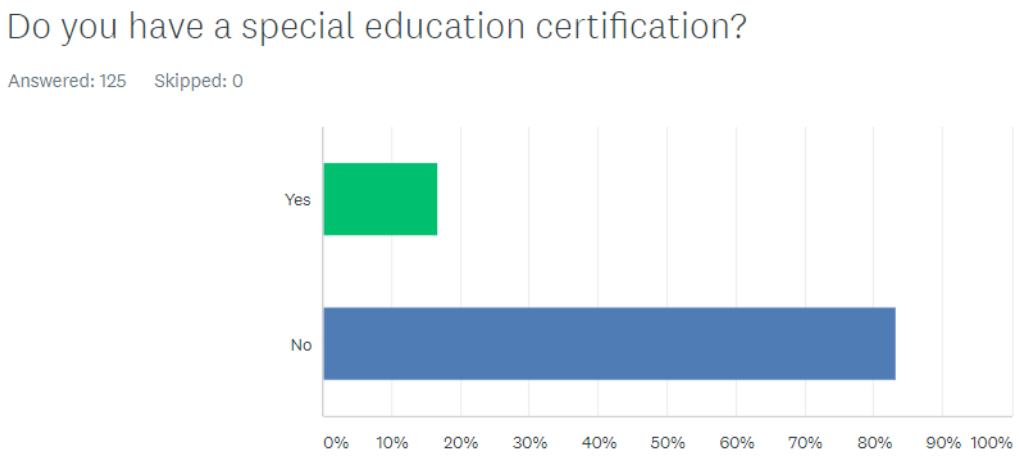

Figure B.5. 2017 Special education certification status.

Perceived Campus Inclusivity

Two percent of respondents reported that they perceive their campus to be "Not Inclusive." Eighteen percent of respondents reported perceiving their campus as "Somewhat Inclusive." Forty-two percent reported perceiving their campus as "Mostly Inclusive." Thirty-eight percent of respondents reported that they perceive their campus to be "Inclusive."

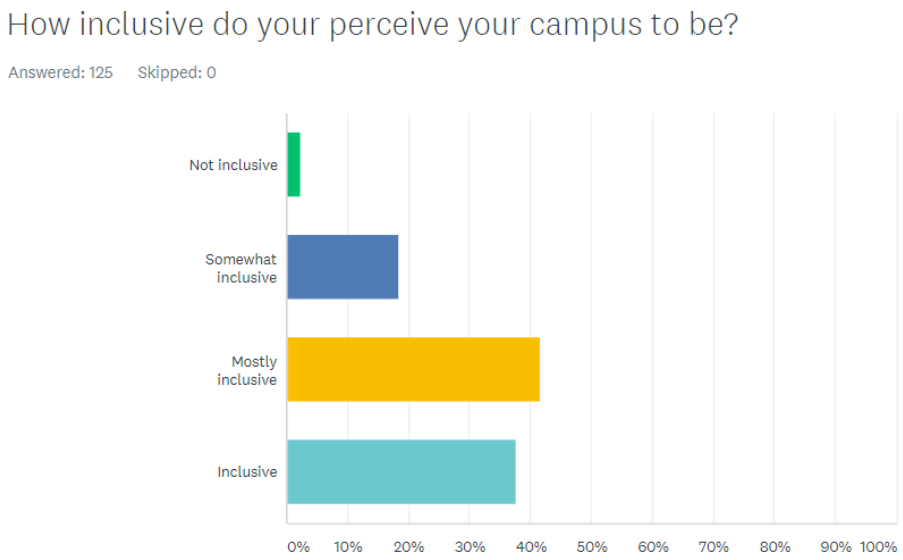

Figure B.6. Perceived campus inclusivity.

Greatest Area of Need Regarding Administering Special Education

Nine percent of respondents chose "Child Find" as one of the areas of greatest need regarding their ability to administer effective special education services on their campus. Thirty-five percent of respondents selected "Specially Designed Instruction" as an area of greatest need regarding administering effective special education services. Fifty percent of respondents chose "Differentiation/Modifications/Accommodations" as one of the areas of greatest need they have in the administration of effective special education services. Thirty-four percent of respondents indicated "Positive Behavioral Supports as one of their greatest areas of need regarding administering special education services. Thirty-eight percent chose "Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, as one of the greatest areas of need they have with regard to administering effective special education services on their campus. Six percent of respondents selected "Other" as one of their greatest areas of need and listed additional responses in this section. These six responses included the following: admission, review, and dismissal committee process, district level support for inclusion, data analysis, early childhood special education, students with an emotional disturbance (two responses), staffing and scheduling, and serving students with mental health disorders or behavioral outbursts.

Greatest Area of Need Regarding Instructional Setting

Nine percent of respondents chose "Preschool Setting" regarding area of greatest need for administering effective special education services on their campus. Fifty-eight percent selected "General Education Setting" as an area of greatest need regarding their

ability to administer effective special education services on their campus. Twenty percent of respondents selected "Resource Setting" as an area of greatest need for administering effective special education services. Fourteen percent of respondents reported one of their areas of greatest need to be "Self-Contained Academic Settings." Thirty-four percent of respondents chose "Self-Contained Behavior Settings" as an area of greatest need regarding their ability to administer effective special education services on their campus. Three percent of respondents selected "Other" as an area of greatest need. These responses include the following: Special Education Law, admission, review, and dismissal committee guidance, Scheduling for Inclusion, and Co-Teaching.

Preference for Accessing Professional Development Opportunities

Sixty-five percent of respondents reported a preference for face-to-face/traditional access to professional development opportunities. Forty-two percent chose coaching/embedded supports as preferable in accessing professional development opportunities. Forty-one percent of respondents chose webinars/zoom/teleconferences as being preferential in the access of professional development opportunities. Thirty-five percent reported a preference for conferences in the access of professional development opportunities. One percent selected Forums as preferable, and 2% indicated their preference for Micro-credentialing I accessing professional learning opportunities. Two percent selected "Other" as their preferred format for accessing professional development opportunities.

Perceived Constraints Limiting Participation in RESC-Based Professional Development

Ninety percent of respondents reported "Time" as a constraint, which limits their ability to participate in RESC-based professional development opportunities. Twenty-four percent of respondents selected "Expense" as a constraint that limits their ability to access RESC-based professional development opportunities. Fifteen percent of respondents reported "Geography" as a constraint to their ability to attend RESC-based professional development. Eleven percent chose "Topic Relevance," and 2% chose "Other" as a constraint that limits their ability to attend RESC-based professional development opportunities. Respondents who chose "Other" offered the following two constraints: Lack of Knowledge of Program Offerings, and Quality of Presenters.

Preferred Solutions for Overcoming Constraints Limiting Participation in RESC-Based PD

Sixty-three percent of respondents selected "Flexible Scheduling Options" as a preferred solution to overcome constraints that limit their attendance at RESC-based professional development opportunities. Seventeen percent of respondents reported "Flexible Fee-Based Options" as a preferred solution to overcome these constraints. Forty-one percent of respondents chose "Attendance by Zoom Options" as a preferred solution to overcome constraints limiting their ability to attend RESC-based professional development opportunities. Eighteen percent of respondents selected "Having Input into Topics" as a preferred solution, and 2% chose "Other" as a solution to overcoming constraints limiting attendance at RESC-based professional development opportunities.

Respondents selecting “Other” including the following additional solutions: Publicity of Events and Embedded Training on Campuses.

APPENDIX C

T-TESS Self-Efficacy Survey Question Responses

The four Domains and sixteen Dimensions that make up the T-TESS Rubric consist of evidence-based practices to assist principals with teachers in decision making for the improvement of instructional quality and student performance. This section catalogues the T-TESS self-efficacy survey question responses as captured by T-TESS Domain and Dimension in the survey instrument from this study. Specifically, the following descriptive analysis focuses on survey questions regarding principals' perceptions of their efficacy to evaluate and support special education teachers in the administration of special education services.

T-TESS PLANNING DIMENSION 1.1
Standards and Alignment

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers design clear, well organized, sequential lessons that...

Reflect best practice – Thirty-two percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and eighteen percent reported being "effective."

Align with standards – One percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-two percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty-seven percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-one percent reported being "effective."

Are appropriate for diverse learners - Twenty-six percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty-seven percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and seventeen percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS PLANNING DIMENSION 1.2
Data and Assessment

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers...

Use formal methods to measure student progress – Thirty percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-eight percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-two percent reported being "effective."

Use informal methods to measure student progress - Twenty-six percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty-six percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and eighteen percent reported being "effective."

Manage data of students with disabilities to inform instruction - One percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and nineteen percent reported being "effective."

Analyze data of students with disabilities to inform instruction - One percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-three percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-eight percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and eighteen percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS PLANNING DIMENSION 1.3
Knowledge of Students

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that through knowledge of students and proven practices special education teachers ensure high levels of...

Learning for all students with disabilities– Twenty-five percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Sixty-two percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and thirteen percent reported being "effective."

Social-emotional development for all students with disabilities- Twenty-six percent of respondents
reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty-three percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-one percent reported being "effective."

Achievement for all students with disabilities- Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-eight percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty-six percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fourteen percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS PLANNING DIMENSION 1.4
Activities

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers plan flexible lessons that encourage...

Higher-order thinking of students with disabilities – Three percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Fifty percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty-nine percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and seven percent reported being "effective."

Persistence of students with disabilities – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-two percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty-one percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fifteen percent reported being "effective."

Achievement of students with disabilities - One percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-eight percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twelve percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.1
Achieving Expectations

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers support learners with disabilities in their pursuit of high levels of...

Academic success – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-two percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-nine percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and eighteen percent reported being "effective."

Social-emotional success – One percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-eight percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-eight percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-three percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.2
Content Knowledge and Expertise

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring all special education teachers use content and pedagogical expertise to...

Design lessons aligned with state standards – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-one percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-eight percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and nineteen percent reported being "effective."

Execute lessons aligned with state standards - Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-one percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-eight percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and nineteen percent reported being "effective."

Design lessons aligned with related content - Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-nine percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and eighteen percent reported being "effective."

Execute lessons aligned with related content - One percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-three percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty-one percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fifteen percent reported being "effective."

Design lessons aligned to student needs - Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and nineteen percent reported being "effective."

Execute lessons aligned to student needs - One percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-one percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-eight percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.3
Student-Centered and Teacher-Centered Actions

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers clearly communicate to support...

Persistence of students with disabilities – Three percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-one percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty-six percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-one percent reported being "effective."

Deeper learning of students with disabilities - Three percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Forty-two percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-six percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and ten percent reported being "effective."

Effective effort of students with disabilities - Three percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-two percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty-three percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-two percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.4
Differentiation

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers differentiate instruction by...

Aligning methods to diverse student needs – One percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-three percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and sixteen percent reported being "effective."

Aligning techniques to diverse student needs - Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-four percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-seven percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and eighteen percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.5
Monitor and Adjust

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers...

Formally collect student progress data to make needed lesson adjustments – Twenty-one percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-six percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-six percent reported being "effective."

Informally collect student progress data to make needed lesson adjustments - One percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-five percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty-four percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-one percent reported being "effective."

Analyze student progress data to make needed lesson adjustments - One percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-four percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-four percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-two percent reported being "effective."

Use student progress data to make needed lesson adjustments - Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-three percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-two percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-three percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION 3.1
Class Environment, Routines and Procedures

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers organize...

A safe classroom – Ten percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and sixty percent reported being "effective."

An accessible classroom - Nine percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty-two percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and Fifty-nine percent reported being "effective."

An efficient classroom - Thirteen percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty-four percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fifty-three percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION 3.2
Managing Student Behavior

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers...

Establish clear expectations for student behavior – Sixteen percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty-two percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fifty-two percent reported being "effective."

Communicate clear expectations for student behavior - Eighteen percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty-three percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and Forty-nine percent reported being "effective."

Maintain clear expectations for student behavior – Twenty-two percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and forty-eight percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION 3.3
Classroom Culture

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers lead...

A mutually respectful class of actively engaged learners – Twelve percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty-eight percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fifty percent reported being "effective."

A collaborative class of actively engaged learners – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Seventeen percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and forty-three percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DIMENSION 4.1 Professional Demeanor and Ethics

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers meet district expectations for...

Attendance – Fourteen percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fifty-six percent reported being "effective."

Professional appearance - Seven percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty-seven percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fifty-six percent reported being "effective."

Decorum - Nine percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty-four percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fifty-seven percent reported being "effective."

Procedural responsibilities – Seven percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty-four percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fifty-eight percent reported being "effective."

Ethical responsibilities - Eight percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Twenty-seven percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and sixty-five percent reported being "effective."

Legal and statutory responsibilities - Thirteen percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Twenty-eight percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fifty-nine percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DIMENSION 4.2 Goal Setting

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers…

Reflect on their practice – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-six percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-four percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-seven percent reported being "effective."

Set professional goals - Nineteen percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-nine percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and thirty-two percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DIMENSION 4.3 Professional Development

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers...

Have opportunities to enhance the professional community – One percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-four percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-five percent reported being "effective."

Understand how to enhance the professional community – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-seven percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-one percent reported being "effective."

Enhance the professional community - One percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-one percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-six percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-two percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DIMENSION 4.4 School Community Involvement

What is your perception of your effectiveness of ensuring that all special education teachers demonstrate leadership with...

Students in the school through effective communication – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Fifteen percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty-six percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-seven percent reported being "effective."

Students in the school through effective outreach – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-five percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty-four percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and eighteen percent reported being "effective."

Colleagues in the school through effective communication - Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-two percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-six percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and thirty percent reported being "effective."

Colleagues in the school through effective outreach - Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-six percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-eight percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-four percent reported being "effective."

Community members through effective communication - Six percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fourteen percent reported being "effective."

Community members through effective outreach - Seven percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-four percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-six percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twelve percent reported being "effective."

APPENDIX D

T-TESS RESC Survey Question Responses

The four Domains and sixteen Dimensions that make up the T-TESS Rubric consist of evidence-based practices to assist principals with teachers in decision making for the improvement of instructional quality and student performance. This section catalogues the T-TESS RESC survey question responses as captured by T-TESS Domain and Dimension in the survey instrument from this study. Specifically, the following descriptive analysis focuses on survey questions regarding principals' perceptions of the efficacy of their RESC-based professional learning opportunities in support of their efforts to evaluate and support special education teachers in the administration of special education services.

T-TESS PLANNING DIMENSION 1.1
Standards and Alignment

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers design clear, well organized, sequential lessons that...

Reflect best practice – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective. "Thirty-four percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-seven percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and sixteen percent reported being "effective."

Align with standards – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-eight percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-nine percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-one percent reported being "effective."

Are appropriate for diverse learners - Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-six percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-six percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and seventeen percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS PLANNING DIMENSION 1.2
Data and Assessment

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers...

Use formal methods to measure student progress – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-two percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and sixteen percent reported being "effective."

Use informal methods to measure student progress - Three percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and seventeen percent reported being "effective."

Manage data of students with disabilities to inform instruction - Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-nine percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-two percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and seventeen percent reported being "effective."

Analyze data of students with disabilities to inform instruction - Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Forty-four percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty-nine percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fifteen percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS PLANNING DIMENSION 1.3
Knowledge of Students

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that through knowledge of students and proven practices, special education teachers ensure high levels of...

Learning for all students with disabilities – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-four percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fourteen percent reported being "effective."

Social-emotional development for all students with disabilities - Five percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Fifty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fifteen percent reported being "effective."

Achievement for all students with disabilities- Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Forty percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-six percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and eleven percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS PLANNING DIMENSION 1.4
Activities

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers plan engaging, flexible lessons that encourage...

Higher-order thinking of students with disabilities – Five percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Fifty-six percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and ten percent reported being "effective."

Persistence of students with disabilities – Three percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Forty-four percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-one percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twelve percent reported being "effective."

Achievement of students with disabilities - Four percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Forty-four percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty-nine percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and thirteen percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.1
Achieving Expectations

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers support learners with disabilities in their pursuit of high levels of...

Academic success – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Forty-one percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-five percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twelve percent reported being "effective."

Social-emotional success – Four percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-four percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-seven percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fifteen percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.2
Content Knowledge and Expertise

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers use content and pedagogical expertise to...

Design lessons aligned with state standards – Three percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-two percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-three percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-two percent reported being "effective."

Execute lessons aligned with state standards - Five percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-six percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-two percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and seventeen percent reported being "effective."

Design lessons aligned with related content - Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-eight percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and nineteen percent reported being "effective."

Execute lessons aligned with related content - Five percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Forty-one percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty-nine percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fifteen percent reported being "effective."

Design lessons aligned to student needs - Three percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-four percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-one percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-two percent reported being "effective."

Execute lessons aligned to student needs - Six percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Forty percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty-seven percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and eighteen percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.3
Student-Centered and Teacher-Centered Actions

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers clearly communicate to support...

Persistence of students with disabilities – Four percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-seven percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-six percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and thirteen percent reported being "effective."

Deeper learning of students with disabilities - Six percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Forty-four percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-one percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and nine percent reported being "effective."

Effective effort of students with disabilities - Six percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-nine percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-three percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twelve percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.4
Differentiation

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers differentiate instruction by...

Aligning methods to diverse student needs – Four percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-seven percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-five percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fourteen percent reported being "effective."

Aligning techniques to diverse student needs - Four percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-eight percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-five percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and thirteen percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS INSTRUCTION DIMENSION 2.5
Monitor and Adjust

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers...

Formally collect student progress data to make needed lesson adjustments – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-three percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-nine percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and sixteen percent reported being "effective."

Informally collect student progress data to make needed lesson adjustments - Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Forty percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-four percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fifteen percent reported being "effective."

Analyze student progress data to make needed lesson adjustments - Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Forty percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-three percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fourteen percent reported being "effective."

Use student progress data to make needed lesson adjustments - Five percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-nine percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-one percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fifteen percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION 3.1
Classroom Environment, Routines and Procedures

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers organize...

A safe classroom – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-two percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-one percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and thirty-five percent reported being "effective."

An accessible classroom - Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-two percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-one percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and thirty-six percent reported being "effective."

An efficient classroom - Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-two percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-three percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and thirty-three percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION 3.2
Managing Student Behavior

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers...

Establish clear expectations for student behavior – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-two percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-six percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and thirty percent reported being "effective."

Communicate clear expectations for student behavior - Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-seven percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-two percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and thirty percent reported being "effective."

Maintain clear expectations for student behavior – Three percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-seven percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-two percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-seven percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DIMENSION 3.3
Classroom Culture

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers lead...

A mutually respectful class of actively engaged learners – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-two percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-five percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and thirty percent reported being "effective."

A collaborative class of actively engaged learners – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-five percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-eight percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-five percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DIMENSION 4.1
Professional Demeanor and Ethics

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers meet district expectations for...

Attendance – Six percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-three percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty-nine percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and thirty-one percent reported being "effective."

Professional appearance - Six percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Nineteen percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and thirty-four percent reported being "effective."

Decorum - Six percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-one percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and thirty-three percent reported being "effective."

Procedural responsibilities – Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-three percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty-nine percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and thirty-seven percent reported being "effective."

Ethical responsibilities - Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Nineteen percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty-eight percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and forty-one percent reported being "effective."

Legal and statutory responsibilities - Two percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Twenty-one percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Thirty-six percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and forty-one percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DIMENSION 4.2 Goal Setting

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers...

Reflect on their practice – Four percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-two percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-five percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and nineteen percent reported being "effective."

Set professional goals – Three percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-three percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and twenty-three percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DIMENSION 4.3 Professional Development

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers...

Have opportunities to enhance the professional community – Six percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-six percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and eighteen percent reported being "effective."

Understand how to enhance the professional community – Six percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-eight percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-one percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fifteen percent reported being "effective."

Enhance the professional community - Six percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-four percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-five percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fourteen percent reported being "effective."

T-TESS PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DIMENSION 4.4 School Community Involvement

What is your perception of the effectiveness of your RESC-based professional learning opportunities supporting your efforts to ensure that all special education teachers demonstrate leadership with...

Students in the school through effective communication – Five percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-two percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-six percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and eighteen percent reported being "effective."

Students in the school through effective outreach – Five percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-six percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-six percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and fourteen percent reported being "effective."

Colleagues in the school through effective communication - Six percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-six percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and eighteen percent reported being "effective."

Colleagues in the school through effective outreach - Seven percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Thirty-four percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty-two percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and eighteen percent reported being "effective."

Community members through effective communication - Seven percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Forty-one percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and eleven percent reported being "effective."

Community members through effective outreach - Eight percent of respondents reported being "not effective." Forty-two percent of respondents reported being "somewhat effective." Forty percent of respondents reported being "mostly effective," and ten percent reported being "effective."

APPENDIX E

Additional Resources

- Designing Thinking for School Leaders (Book)
- The Four Disciplines of Execution (Book)
- The End of Average (Book)
- Dark Horse (Book)
- The Innovators Mindsets (Book)
- Thinking in Bets (Book)
- The Coddling of the American Mind (Book)
- Strength Based Leadership (Book)
- Change by Design (Book)
- Radical Candor (Book)
- Together is Better (Book)
- What School Could Be (Book)
- What Got You Here Won't Get You There (Book)
- The Death and Life of the Great American School System (Book)
- Just Listen (Book)
- Switch (Book)
- Grit (Book)
- Flow (Book)
- Drive (Book)

- Mindset (Book)
- Learning to Improve (Book)
- Little Bets (Book)
- Thinking Fast and Thinking Slow (Book)
- Deciding What to Teach & Test (Book)
- How to Lead When You’re Not in Charge (Book)
- Start With Why (Book)
- The Power of Habit (Book)
- The Obstacle is the Way (Book)
- The Deepest Well (Book)
- It’s More Than Being In (Book)
- All Mean’s All (Book)
- Every Kid Needs A Champion (Ted Talk)
- The Basketball – Gorilla (Video Clip)
- Don't Limit Me (Video Clip)
- The Peanut Butter Falcon (Movie)
- Unified Schools (Organization)
- The Penguin Project (Organization)
- Best Buddies (Organization)
- CAST UDL Guidelines (Organization)
- IRIS Center/Evidence-Based Practices (Organization)

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