

Kansas Principals' Knowledge of Special Education Policies and Procedures

Jennifer R. Dancer
B.A., Park University, 2002
Ed.S., University of Nebraska, Kearney, 2005

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Major Advisor

ABSTRACT

It is critical for principals to be knowledgeable of special education policies and procedures mandated by IDEA, not only to remain in compliance of these regulations, but also to provide appropriate services to children with disabilities. The purpose of this study was to determine the amount of knowledge held by public school principals across the state of Kansas. This study also examined whether the amount of knowledge principals had was impacted by principals' relationships with district special education administration and district assigned school psychologists. Also investigated was whether a difference in the level of knowledge existed among those principals in elementary, middle or junior high, and high schools.

This study was descriptive in nature and utilized quantitative research methods. A survey, originally created by Cypress (2003), was adapted and used to elicit responses from Kansas principals. The survey was uploaded to SurveyMonkey and delivered to 1,128 potential respondents. Data from 334 completed surveys were analyzed, resulting in a response rate of 29.6%. A chi-square test of equal percentages, a one-sample *t* test, two Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients, and a one-factor ANOVA were used for hypothesis testing.

Participating Kansas principals perceived they have proficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures, though principals indicated that they did not receive adequate training in special education law. The results of this study indicated that Kansas principals have proficient knowledge in the area of special education policies and procedures. While the level of knowledge was slightly affected by the principals' relationship with district special education administration, no significant relationship was

found between level of knowledge of special education law and the principals' relationship with their appointed school psychologist. The principals' amount of knowledge was not significantly impacted by their grade level of practice (elementary, middle/junior high, or high school).

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to two strong, ambitious, tremendously loving, and supportive women who helped instill in me the value of education, and paved the way for me to become who I am today. To Phyllis and Elaine.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The role of a public school principal, although consistently defined until the 1970s as the “building manager” or “student disciplinarian,” has recently experienced an evolution. Much of the evolution of the principal’s role is due to research on effective schools. As the principal’s role transformed, the term “instructional leadership” was used to describe the broad set of roles and responsibilities of the principal (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). There are many variables that are indicative of effective schools, but the number one ranked variable associated with effective schools is educational leadership (Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001). The principal of an effective school must be the leader for all programs within the school, including special education programs (Gersten et al., 2001). According to Bateman and Bateman (2001), the ultimate success of special education programs is dependent upon the leadership of building level principals.

As imperative as it is for building leaders to receive training in special education practices and policies, most school administrators receive little training in the area of special education throughout their leadership training programs (Anderson, 1999). “The leadership role of principals is crucial for improved education for students with disabilities, yet in recent years states have moved away from mandating preparation programs to include coursework on special education policy, procedures, laws, and practice” (Cooner, Tochtermann, & Garrison-Wade, n.d., p. 1). Principals are ultimately responsible for providing effective programs for the numerous students receiving special education services.

It is nearly impossible to imagine a principal or instructional leader not utilizing or referring to training in special education policies. According to Aud et al. (2012), “The number of children ages 3–21 receiving special education services was 6.5 million in 2009-2010 or 13 percent of all public school students. Some 38 percent of the students receiving special education services had specific learning disabilities” (p. 31).

Background

According to the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) (2012a), Kansas is home to 1,337 public schools. Of this number, 350 are high schools, 211 are middle schools or junior high schools, and 770 are elementary schools (KSDE, 2012a). During the 2011-2012 school year, these schools were attended by a daily average of 397,867.04 students, grades kindergarten through 12 (KSDE, 2012a). Of this group of students, 49,749.84 or 12.5% were identified as special education students (KSDE, 2012a).

With the substantial number of children identified and placed in special education programs throughout the state comes opportunity for conflict or disagreement. During the fiscal year 2012, there were 12 cases of official mediation in the state of Kansas. Twenty formal complaints were conducted, and 11 due process hearings were filed, with one case being heard (M. Ward, personal communication, August 18, 2012).

In the state of Kansas, there are approximately 1,331 active, licensed public school principals (KSDE, 2012a). In order to earn licensure from the state of Kansas, a candidate must complete a graduate level state approved leadership program, while earning a cumulative 3.25 grade point average in coursework. Candidates must also have eight credit hours of coursework, or one year of accredited experience completed within the last six years, and have a minimum of three years of accredited experience under a

valid professional license. Principal candidates must also take the School Leaders Licensure Assessment. Scores on the assessment are reported on a scale that ranges from 100 to 200 (Educational Testing Services, 2013), and potential administrators who wish to practice in Kansas must earn a score of at least 165 in order to qualify for licensure (KSDE, 2012b).

Statement of the Problem

Principals must have knowledge of special education law in order to avoid inadvertently breaking regulations. According to Yell, Katsiyannis, and Bradley (2003), “Special education is one of the most legislated and litigated areas in U.S. public school law. Huge amounts of money are spent on due process hearings that arise from parental challenges to schools’ special education programming” (p. 22). Even when a due process hearing results in the favor of the school district, bills may easily add up to \$40,000 or \$50,000 (Yell, 1998). In order for schools to meet the needs and expectations of students and parents, as well as to avoid judicial consequences, building-level administrators must possess a thorough understanding of special education school law and how it impacts them, their staff, and their students (Davidson & Algozzine, 2002). Although many studies have been conducted across the nation regarding principals and their knowledge of special education (Cypress, 2003; Hirth, 1988; Overturf, 2007; Power, 2007; Smith Collins, 2008), no study has been conducted in the state of Kansas. More data in this important area is needed in order to identify the knowledge held by Kansas principals. This information is crucial, in order to provide the appropriate training opportunities throughout the state, to increase the knowledge of special education law, and to minimize opportunities for litigation. Of utmost importance, however, is that principals are aware

of special education policies and procedures in order appropriately provide for the students in their schools who require special education services.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures of Kansas principals. For the purpose of this study, proficient knowledge was defined as 80% accuracy of knowledge items. A further purpose of the study was to examine how closely building administrators worked with district special education administrators and school psychologists to determine whether the frequency of working together affected the amount of knowledge held. Lastly, the author of this study sought to determine whether a difference in level of knowledge existed between high school, middle school/junior high school, and elementary principals.

Significance of the Study

The data gleaned from this research could identify areas of special education law in which principals have a firm knowledge base. Conversely, results of this research could identify the areas of special education law in which principals lack knowledge. After gaps in knowledge are identified, professional development programs could be organized and provided. In addition, leadership training programs might utilize this research in order to build stronger principal preparation programs. Information for this study may also add to the knowledge base related to research in this specific area.

Delimitations

According to Calabrese (2006), delimitations are the self-imposed boundaries that are used to delimit the scope of the study. This study was delimited to public school

building administrators in the state of Kansas. Private school administrators were not included in the population. The survey was administered in the fall of 2012, and principals had 30 days to complete the survey.

Assumptions

“Assumptions are what you take for granted relative to your study” (Roberts, 2004, p. 129). It was assumed that participants completed the survey independently, without seeking support from outside influence, resources, or materials. It was assumed that all participants had some knowledge of and experience with special education law. The third assumption was that the list of Kansas public school principals from the Kansas State Department of Education was current and accurate. The final assumption was that the data was downloaded from SurveyMonkey and input correctly into the IBM® SPSS® Statistics Faculty Pack 21 for Windows for analysis.

Research Questions

Every research study begins with a question. In order to guide this research study, five research questions were established.

1. What are the self-perceptions of Kansas public school principals regarding their knowledge and training of special education policies and procedures?
2. What are Kansas public school principals’ knowledge of special education policies and procedures?
3. To what extent is there a relationship between Kansas public school principals’ knowledge of special education policies and procedures and how frequently they work with their assigned school psychologist?

4. To what extent is there a relationship between Kansas public school principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures and how frequently they work with their district special education administrators?
5. To what extent are there differences in the knowledge of special education policies and procedures among high school, middle school/junior high, and elementary principals?

Definition of Terms

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), key terms used throughout a researcher's dissertation should be defined. For the purposes of this study, the following items are defined.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). FAPE is a federal mandate that requires all children with disabilities to receive a free public education to the same extent as offered to non-disabled peers. FAPE provides access to general education as well as specialized educational services (National Center for Learning Disabilities Editorial Staff, 2009).

Due process. "A due process hearing provides a forum where disagreements about the identification, evaluation, educational placement, and provision of a free appropriate public education for students with exceptionalities may be adjudicated" (KSDE, 2013b, p. 187).

Inclusion. Inclusion is the "meaningful participation of students with disabilities in general education classrooms" (Bateman & Bateman, 2001, p. 73). Students are only taught outside of the general education classroom when all other methods have been exhausted (Bateman & Bateman, 2001).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA is “a law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities” (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, p. 1).

Individualized Education Program (IEP). An IEP is a legally binding document, created by the school in collaboration with the parents of a disabled student, encompassing learning goals and objectives for both general education and special education (Skrtic, Harris, & Shriner, 2005).

Least restrictive environment (LRE). LRE is a regulation within IDEA that requires a student with a disability access to and progress through the general curriculum, including academic, extracurricular, and other school activities for students without disabilities (Turnbull, Turnbull, & Wilcox, 2002).

Overview of Methodology

This quantitative study was correlational and non-experimental in its research design. The instrumentation used was a modified survey originally created by Cyprus (2003). Principals across the state of Kansas were emailed a link in order to complete the online survey confidentially. Data were uploaded to IBM® SPSS® Statistics Faculty Pack 21 for Windows for analysis. Hypotheses were analyzed using chi-square test of equal percentages, one sample *t* test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Pearson correlation coefficients.

Organization of the Study

This study is comprised of five chapters. Chapter one detailed the introduction and rationale for the study, background, problem statement, purpose, significance of the study, delimitations, assumptions, research questions, definition of terms, and an overview of the methods used during research. Chapter two includes a review of literature regarding the history of special education law, important legal cases that shaped special education as it is today, principles of IDEA, and an overview of current academic research regarding principals' knowledge of special education law. Chapter three includes the research design; population and sample; sampling procedures; instrumentation, including its reliability and validity; data collection procedures; data analysis of the hypotheses; and limitations of the study. Chapter four presents the results of the research study, descriptive statistics, and hypotheses testing. Chapter five includes the study summary, findings related to the literature, implications, recommendations for future studies, and concluding remarks.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over time, Federal courts have passed several legislative measures in order to increase the academic outcomes of all children. Current special education laws are more thorough than ever, but what exactly is “special education?” The word conjures up different meanings based on a person’s experiences or perceptions. According to Heward (2000), special education consists of purposeful intervention efforts at three different levels: preventative, remedial, and compensatory.

Special education is an important part of society’s responses to the needs of exceptional children, and the rights of individuals with disabilities, a response brought about by parental advocacy, litigation, legislation, and increasingly, self-advocacy by disabled persons themselves. At another level, special education is a profession with its own history, cultural practices, tools, and research base focused on the learning needs of exceptional children and adults. Specifically, special education can be defined as “individually planned, specialized, intensive, goal-directed instruction. (p. 37)

Chapter two contains a review of research and literature related to principals’ knowledge of special education law. The review of literature is divided into sections including the history of special education, six principles of IDEA, and research on principals’ knowledge of special education law, and finally the summary.

History of Special Education

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, thousands of impoverished, non-English speaking, racial and ethnic minorities immigrated to the United States. Established “citizens were fearful that these immigrants would bring class hatred, religious intolerance, crime, and violence to America” (Wright, 2007, p. 1). According to Wright (2007), “the first special education programs were delinquency prevention programs for “at risk” children living in urban slums” (p. 1), and functioned as manual training classes. Hundreds of thousands of children were trained to carpentry; metalwork; and sewing, cooking and drawing, along with social values. African American children were also the target of early special education programs, as they received what was then called “moral training.” Unfortunately, in the 19th century, neither special schools nor special classes existed for students with disabilities, especially those with deafness, blindness, or mental retardation; however, special programs slowly increased in number during the 20th century. In the 1940s, programs for addressing children with specific learning disabilities become more common; however, many of these programs were private or residential, and the quality of programs available varied between and within states. Accessibility to good special education programs was very difficult, and for most children with disabilities, quality education was not available (Wright, 2007).

In 1970, there were around eight million children with disabilities in the United States, and three million of these students were not receiving an appropriate education. Another one million were excluded from public schools altogether (Imber & Geel, 2000). At that time, exclusion of children with disabilities was legal, and many states’ laws

excused children with disabilities from compliance of required education laws while some state courts upheld policies excluding children with disabilities from attending public schools (Imber & Geel, 2000).

Special Education Prior to 1990

Many court cases have ultimately shaped special education legislation to what it is today. One landmark case, *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* (1954), challenged the notion that educating children segregated by race was not only legal, but for some, socially acceptable. *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* was comprised of four cases from the states of Kansas, South Carolina, Virginia, and Delaware. Though specifics of the cases were different, each case ultimately sought the same ideal: “obtaining admission to the public schools of their community on a non-segregated basis” (Imber & Geel, 2000, p. 189). Plaintiffs in the case argued that segregated public schools were not equal, nor could they become equal and hence “they are deprived of equal protection of the laws” (*Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, 1954). In May 1954, the Supreme Court of the United States unanimously voted that it was indeed unconstitutional to educate White and African-American children separately. In delivering the ruling, Chief Justice Warren stated,

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to

cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms. (*Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, 1954, p. 5)

Chief Justice Warren also stated that there is no place for the doctrine of “separate but equal” in the field of public education, and that the separation of educational facilities are “inherently unequal” (*Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, 1954, p. 7). Therefore, the “separate but equal” ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson* was overturned.

According to the Leadership Conference (2013), after *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, the nation made sufficient progress toward opening the doors of education to all students, regardless of race. Progress continued toward integrated schools throughout the 1980s, with the help of numerous court orders and active enforcement of civil right laws. “The Brown case served as a catalyst for the modern civil rights movement, inspiring education reform everywhere and forming the legal means of challenging segregation in all areas of society” (Leadership Conference, 2013). One such case, *PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (PARC) (1971), challenged the practice of excluding special education students from some educational programs. PARC was a class action suit brought forth by the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children challenging a state law that denied public education to those students “unable to profit from public school attendance” (Heward, 2000, p. 16). Lawyers and parent advocates for PARC argued that despite intellectual disabilities, it was irrational to assume that their children

were uneducable. In fact, according to Heward (2000), the state was unable to prove the children were uneducable, nor could they provide a rational for excluding them from public school programs; therefore, the court determined that the students were entitled to receive a free, public education (Heward, 2000). The court also maintained that parents of special education students have the right to be notified prior to any change in their child's educational programming (Heward, 2000). In summary, PARC set the precedent that children between 6 and 12 years old with mental retardation receive free public education, and required their educational programming be similar to those programs offered to their non-disabled peers (Yell, Rogers, & Rogers, 1998).

Similar to PARC, *Mills v. Board of Education of District Columbia* (1972) was a civil action lawsuit by several parents of students, who felt their children's right to a free appropriate public education was being denied by the district. The District of Columbia Board of Education claimed that these seven "exceptional" students were unable to be educated in public schools, and argued that the cost of providing private educational services was too high. Therefore, the seven students were banned, expelled, suspended, and excluded from school without educational access (*Mills v. Board of Education of District Columbia*, 1972). The court found in favor of the plaintiffs, and issued the decree that all students are entitled access to a free public education, or the district is responsible for providing the student with private educational services, regardless of the cost. The Courts ruled, "The District of Columbia's interest in educating the excluded children clearly must outweigh its interest in preserving its financial resources" (p. 9). The court went on to state that the "inadequacies of the school district, whether occasioned by insufficient funding or administrative inefficiency, cannot be permitted to

bear more heavily on the "exceptional" or handicapped child than on the normal child” (*Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia*, 1972, p. 9).

In November 1975, Congress passed and President Ford signed into law Public Law 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975. The intent behind this law was to provide children with disabilities access to education and to “establish a process by which state and local educational agencies may be held accountable for providing education services for all handicapped children” (Wright, 2007, p. 4). This early special education legislation included the first “procedural safeguards,” or a system of checks and balances intended to protect the rights of identified children and their parents. Prior to Public Law 94-142, children with disabilities were overwhelmingly denied an education solely based on their disability (Peterson, 2007).

The first case to reach the Supreme Court after the establishment of PL 94-142 was an appeal brought to the Courts by a school district regarding the special education services of a first grade student named Amy Rowley. In the 1982 case of *Board of Education of Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley*, the lower courts had ruled that the school district was required to pay for a sign language interpreter for Amy, a deaf student, so that she could participate fully and profit from her educational programming (Sage & Burrello, 1994). According to Sage and Burrello (1994), “There was no argument over access or provision of various special support services. The contention was over *how much* service was required and *how far* Amy was to progress” (p. 87). Justice Rehnquist delivered the opinion that since the service provided to Amy

was in fact allowing her to achieve at a rate commensurate with her peers, the law required no additional services (sign language interpreter). Justice Rehnquist stated

If personalized instruction is being provided with sufficient supportive services to permit the child to benefit from the instruction, and the other items on the definitional checklist are satisfied, the child is receiving “free appropriate public education” as defined by the Act. (*Board of Education of Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley*, 1992, p. 2)

Special Education from 1990 to Present

In 1990, 15 years after the signing of PL-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act was amended, and along with those amendments came a new name, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Along with changing language of the law, the 1990 amendment required that IEPs included “the addition of transition services for students with disabilities. School Districts would now be required to assist students with disabilities in transitioning from high school to postsecondary endeavors” (Peterson, 2007, p. 2).

In June 1997, President Clinton signed the amended IDEA bill, which became Public Law 105-17, or the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997. Many changes occurred in the update, including the participation of students with disabilities in districtwide and state assessments, including alternate assessments. Parents of students with disabilities were afforded more rights and responsibilities in the 1997 bill, such as increased parent participation in eligibility and placement determinations. Additionally, parents were given access to all records pertaining to their child. Also included was the mandate for increased documentation of general education participation

and the involvement of general educators in developing the IEP. The option of streamlining evaluations and reevaluations, allowing the IEP team to determine areas that data are either needed or not needed, was written into the bill, as was the requirement to document transition services beginning at age 14, mediation services, disciplinary procedures, and increasing the age requirement for children to be identified as developmentally delayed (Knoblauch & ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education, R. A., 1998).

On December 3, 2004, President George W. Bush signed into law the newly reformed Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, officially known as Public Law 108-446 (Klotz & Nealis, 2005). Several changes were included in this updated bill, including the call for more accountability regarding the outcomes of special education students at the state and local levels. Another notable change involved the requirement for school districts to provide appropriate instruction and intervention in order to keep students out of special education (Peterson, 2007).

Although not designated as special education law, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) significantly impacted the education of students with disabilities who receive special education services. Boscardin (2002) indicated that

With the passage of No Child Left Behind, there will be an even greater need for building principals to have more than just a passing understanding of special education. Principals will need to have a working knowledge of the law as it relates to special education and of the accommodations that make the curriculum accessible to students with disabilities. (p. 42)

NCLB is the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), and requires that all public schools prepare every student to be proficient in reading and math by the 2013-2014 school year. Also included in this law are sanctions for schools whose students fail to make acceptable progress (Wright, Wright, & Heath, 2004). Signed by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002, only three days after taking office, NCLB was his administration's solution to the 68% of fourth graders who, after 40 years of ESEA and 321 billion dollars to help educate disadvantaged children, could read proficiently at grade level (Wright et al., 2004). President Bush stated, "These reforms express my deep belief in our public schools and their mission to build the mind and character of every child, from every background, in every part of America" (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 1). The goal of President Bush's administration was to improve the performance of public schools across America, while ensuring that no child is trapped attending a failing school.

The NCLB Act incorporated principles and strategies for the greater success of public schools by increasing accountability for results by States and school districts. States were required to implement accountability systems based on state standards in reading and mathematics, including annual testing for every student in grades 3-8, and annual statewide progress objectives in order to ensure that all groups of children reached proficiency. States were also required to break down assessment results into categories, including poverty, race, ethnicity, disability, and students with limited English proficiency to make sure all groups met standards. School districts or schools that failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) would be subject to corrective action in order to get them back on course to meet state standards. The schools that met or exceeded AYP

standards or closed achievement gaps within their schools, were eligible for State Academic Achievement Awards (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Another substantial change implemented by NCLB provided students and families with a significant increase of options for those attending failing schools. Under this law, Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) are required to give students attending schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, the opportunity to attend successful public schools, including public charter schools, within the school district. The school district also bears the obligation of providing the identified student with transportation to the new school of choice. In order to provide LEAs with viable options for alternative and successful schools, NCLB required school districts to spend up to 20% of their Title 1 provisions to supplemental educational services and school choice to eligible students (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

A significant change that came with NCLB was the flexibility given to states and school districts in the use of Federal funding. This allowed states to move from the former limited flexibility given to states and school districts, and move towards more flexibility of reallocating Federal funding in exchange for strong accountability for results (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

In order to accomplish President Bush's "unequivocal commitment" (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 3) ensuring every third grade student proficiently read at grade level by 3rd grade, the Reading First initiative was implemented in NCLB. Reading First increased the nation's investment in utilizing scientifically-based reading instruction in early elementary years, and subsequently reducing the amount of children identified for special education services due to a lack of reading instruction in a student's

early years. NCLB fully implemented the Reading First State grant, and made grants available to states, which made subgrants available to local communities. Recipients of the grants were able to receive professional development regarding scientifically-based reading interventions in order to help young students learn the skills and knowledge needed for optimal reading development (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Another change that occurred with the signing of the NCLB Act allowed states and LEAs to select for themselves the strategies that best met their particular needs for improved teaching in order to enhance achievement in core academic areas. In exchange for flexibility in this area, LEAs were mandated to demonstrate annual progress in assuring that teachers teaching in core academic subjects were highly qualified (U.S. Department of Education, 2002, p. 4). Requiring teachers of core academic subjects to be highly qualified was beneficial to disabled and non-disabled students alike, as it ensured that students received instruction from content experts.

No Child Left Behind arguable poses some dilemmas when it comes to educating students with disabilities. “NCLB requires principals to analyze the performance of special education students, teachers, and programs” (Wakeman, Browder, Flowers, & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2006, p. 154); however, not all students, especially those with disabilities or cognitive impairments, are able to meet the proficient assessment levels and state standards set by NCLB (Schrag, 2003). If students with disabilities do not meet proficiency levels, school administrators may feel pressured to place students in a more restrictive learning environment, which contradicts IDEA (Schrag, 2003). A staffing concern also exists with the expectations of NCLB influencing special education. Not only does NCLB require special educators to be certified in special education, at the

secondary level, special educators must also be certified or demonstrate knowledge in the subject matter. According to Schrag (2003), “While these requirements reflect worthy goals, they will no doubt exacerbate already existing personnel shortages in special education” (p. 11). In order to achieve proficiency of state standards, special education students will need to have access to the general education curriculum (Schrag, 2003) and thus it is essential for principals to be knowledgeable of the needs of students with disabilities, as “more general education teachers will need guidance and support for teaching all students” (Wakeman et al., 2006, p. 154).

Six Principles of IDEA

Six important principles provide the framework of special education legislation, and provide the guarantee that children with disabilities are able to attend school each day and have their individual education needs determined and addressed. These principles include “1) Free Appropriate Education (FAPE), 2) Appropriate Evaluation, 3) Individualized Education Program (IEP), 4) Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), 5) Parent and Student Participation in Decision Making, and 6) Procedural Safeguards” (Parents Reaching Out, 2011, p. 1). These six principles of IDEA are the flagship for the current study. The following section provides information and important aspects of each of the six principles that, according to the Learning Disabilities Association of America (2011), “embody the underlying spirit and intent of IDEA and provide framework around which special education services are designed and provided to students with disabilities” (p. 1).

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is “one of the most misunderstood concepts of IDEA” (National Center for Learning Disabilities Editorial Staff, 2009, p. 1). FAPE is an IDEA guarantee that every student who is eligible for special education will receive a free appropriate public education. “Incidental fees normally charged to non-disabled students as part of a regular education program may also be charged to students with disabilities;” however, the education of each student who qualifies for special education must be provided at no cost to the child’s parents or guardians (Learning Disabilities Association of America, 2011, p. 1). “Appropriate” education is determined on an individual basis, and based on the specific needs of the child with a disability. “Public” simply refers to the public school system. Regardless of the severity of disability, public schools must provide education to students with disabilities to the same extent as their non-disabled peers. “Education” refers to a public education that includes special education and related services as directed by a student’s IEP (Learning Disabilities Association of America, 2011).

According to Heward (2000), zero reject refers to the requirement that “schools must educate all children with disabilities. No matter the severity of the disability, no child with a disability may be excluded from receiving a public education” (p. 17). The process of locating, identifying, and evaluating children, from birth to age 21 who are suspected of having a disability is referred to as “Child Find” (Heward, 2000). “Child Find” applies to all children, even children who have yet to enter the public school setting due to their age (Parents Reaching Out, 2011). “IDEA requires all states to have a ‘comprehensive Child Find system’ to assure that all children who are in need of early

intervention or special education services are located, identified, and referred” (U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, 2013, p. 1).

Appropriate Evaluation

According to Learning Disabilities Association of America (2011), IDEA mandates that “children suspected of having a disability receive an appropriate evaluation, conducted by a team of evaluators knowledgeable and trained in the use of tests and other evaluation materials” (p. 2), using a variety of evaluation procedures and materials, in all areas of suspected disability. The evaluation must not subject a child to unnecessary tests or assessments, must include relevant information from multiple sources, and must have instructional relevance for planning the child’s education (Learning Disabilities Association of America, 2011). The purpose of the evaluation is to determine if a child meets eligibility for special education and related services, and to help determine how to meet the educational needs of the child (Parents Reaching Out, 2011).

According to Bateman and Bateman (2001), related services are those special services or interventions that a student requires in order to benefit from general education. Examples of special services could include special transportation, physical therapy services, occupational therapy services, and speech therapy services.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

According to Bateman and Bateman (2001), “The individualized education program (IEP) is the most important document that exists for a student with a disability” (p. 17). An IEP is a written legal agreement between the school district and the student’s parents or guardians. The IEP “formalizes the student’s educational needs and specifies

goals and objectives for the student for the academic year, as well as the services the school will provide” (Bateman & Bateman, 2001, p. 17). Many components are required to be included in the IEP. For example, “a statement of the child’s present levels of academic achievement and functional performance as well as a statement of measurable annual goals and how and when the student’s progress toward meeting the annual goal is measured” must be indicated (Bateman & Bateman, 2001, p. 28). The IEPs of students who participate in alternate assessments must include a description of benchmarks and short-term objectives. A statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services as well as a statement of necessary accommodations are also required (U.S. Department of Education, 2013b). A description of the extent to which the student with a disability will participate with students without disabilities must also be included, and if the student is 14 years or older, the IEP must contain transition services (Bateman & Bateman, 2001).

Not only did the reauthorization of IDEA set regulatory standards to the content of the physical IEP document, it also set specific regulations regarding the IEP Team, and procedures for changing the IEP. According to IDEA, the IEP team must include the parents of the disabled child, a general education teacher, and a special education teacher. Additionally, a person who can interpret evaluative results, a representative of the public agency, and if possible, the student with the disability should attend. In the case that the purpose of the IEP meeting is to discuss secondary goals and transition services, the student must be invited. Other experts or related service providers as deemed appropriate by either the parents or local agency may also be involved (U.S. Department of Education, 2013a).

There are some instances when an IEP team member is not required to attend a meeting. If a team member's curricular area or related service is not being discussed or modified, then with written parental consent, that IEP team member may be excused from participating. A team member whose curricular or related service is being discussed or modified may also be excused from an IEP meeting if the parent gives written consent for the excusal, and the member submits written input to the IEP development prior to the IEP meeting (U.S. Department of Education, 2013a).

U.S. Department of Education (2013a) indicates that parents must be notified of all IEP team members who will be attending the IEP meeting, and the IEP must be assessable to those teachers and others who are responsible for carrying out the implementation of the IEP. Each teacher of the student with a disability must be informed of the child's IEP and specific accommodations, modifications, and supports required by the IEP. If a student with an IEP transfers to another school district within the same state, the new public agency must provide comparable special education services as described in the student's IEP until the new school receives parental consent to either adopt the child's IEP or implement a new IEP. If a student with a disability with an IEP moves out of state and enrolls in a new school within the same year, the new public agency must provide FAPE, including services comparable to those described in the student's IEP, until the new school team conducts an evaluation (if necessary), and develops, adopts, and implements a new IEP.

With the reauthorization of IDEA, the U.S. Department of Education (2013a) mandated that IEPs are reviewed and updated as appropriate, annually. At the annual review of the IEP, the IEP team should address progress, or lack of progress toward

annual goals, the results of any new evaluations, anticipated needs of the child, and any other matter regarding the student's educational programming. If the student's IEP needs to be modified or amended between annual reviews, the IEP team can either call a meeting, or with permission from the parent, amend the current IEP without holding a meeting.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

The phrase "least restrictive environment" or "LRE" can often be a confusing term to educators and parents alike. According to IDEA, whenever appropriate, a disabled student must be educated in the general education classroom. Prior to moving a child to a more restrictive placement, the school is required to consider modifications in the general education classroom. At times, a general education classroom teacher may need special training in order to support a child's specific behavioral or academic needs. "IDEA requires state educational agencies develop plans for professional development and requires school districts to provide such training, and does not allow a school to use the excuse of not having qualified staff" in order to move a student to a more restrictive environment (Martin, Martin, & Terman, 2006, p. 35). If the IEP team determines that a student's needs cannot be met in the general education classroom, even with modifications, accommodations, and supplementary aids, the team may then consider placements outside the general education classroom. The least restrictive environment may vary for each child and is based on the child's unique individual needs (Learning Disabilities Association of America, 2011).

Parent and Student Participation in Decision Making

Another requirement of IDEA is the participation and shared decision-making by students and parents. Schools must work collaboratively with parents and the student with disabilities to implement the student's special education services. The parent's input must be considered when writing IEP goals, objectives, related services, and placement decisions (Hewerd, 2000). "Shared decision making protects the rights of students by ensuring that there is someone involved in the process who has a long-term interest in the child" (Bateman & Bateman, 2001, p. 14). Along with participating in the actual IEP, parents must also provide consent for initial evaluation, eligibility, the IEP, annual reviews, and triennial evaluations (Bateman & Bateman, 2001). IDEA requires that when appropriate, the student is an active participant of the IEP process; however, if transition services are being discussed at an IEP team meeting, the student must be invited to participate (Learning Disabilities Association of America, 2011).

Procedural Safeguards

According to the Kansas State Department of Education (2013a), IDEA has maintained important safeguards used when IEP teams evaluate students for special education eligibility, when teams develop the IEP, or when disputes arise between parents and schools regarding issues surrounding special education. Sometimes referred to as "parent rights, procedural safeguards specified in the IDEA were primarily designed to help schools and parents work together to develop effective educational programs for children with disabilities" (KSDE, 2013a, p. 1).

Research on Principals' Knowledge of Special Education Law

Principals, as the instructional leaders in their buildings, must have an understanding of special education, as they are responsible for implementing programs in their buildings in order to meet the standard of educating every child (Bravenec, 1998). The importance of the building principal having a firm understanding of special education law has never been more pressing. In order to determine the knowledge principals have of special education law, numerous studies have been conducted (Cypress, 2003; Copenhaver, 2005; Duncan, 2010; Grasso, 2008; Hines, 2001; Hirth, 1998; Ivey, 2008; Jesteadt, 2012; Leal-Georgetti, 2012; Power, 2007; Smith Collins, 2008).

Prior to the revision of IDEA, Hirth (1998) conducted a study to measure the levels of knowledge Tennessee principals had of Public Law 94-142, targeting the areas of procedural safeguards and the provision of educational services. More specifically, this study was conducted in order to identify possible relationships that existed between characteristics of schools, school districts, and principals' knowledge. Hirth (1998) developed a 30-item survey heavily based upon the areas of procedural safeguards and the provision of educational services required by P.L. 94-142. The survey instrument was sent to 568 principals throughout the state of Tennessee, with a response rate of 50%. Results of the study indicated that when principals were grouped by school and school district characteristics, principals were more knowledgeable of procedural safeguards than about the provision of educational services. Results also revealed that when grouped by individual characteristics, principals were more knowledgeable of procedural safeguards than the provision of educational services. Finally, principals with 3-5 years

of experience as a teacher demonstrated more knowledge overall than principals with sixteen or more years of experience as a teacher.

Hirth (1998) provided many recommendations as a result of the findings of her study. She stressed the importance of principals in the state of Tennessee becoming more aware of the requirements of P.L. 94-142. She recommended that areas of deficiency identified in the study be made known to local school districts, universities, and the State Department of Education, and encouraged the Tennessee State Department to update the leadership manual provided to principals throughout the state. Hirth (1998) also encouraged the state of Tennessee to revisit certification criteria for special education administrators and consider requiring courses on special education law. She also suggested that school law courses emphasize legal issues in special education at state universities.

In her 2001 study, Hines sought to determine the perceptions and amount of knowledge of special education law held by Mississippi building administrators. She utilized a three-part survey to elicit responses by principals. The first section of her survey measured principals' perceptions of their knowledge and preparation in the area of special education policies and procedures, the second part included 21 scenarios based on the provisions of special education law, and the third part of the survey was designed to determine demographic information. Through this study, Hines (2001) found that most building administrators perceived themselves to have sufficient knowledge of special education law; however, they did not believe that they had received adequate training in the area special education. Results indicated that building leaders in the state of Mississippi had insufficient levels of knowledge of IDEA.

Cypress (2003) conducted a study similar to Hirth (1998) and Hines (2001) to determine the perceptions of principals' knowledge of special education law; however, Cypress's study was limited to one school district in southwest Tennessee. Cypress used a survey to determine the perceptions of principals' level of knowledge of special education law, principals' self-rating of their knowledge of special education policies and procedures in the principle areas of IDEA, the sources most used by principals to gain knowledge, and the extent principals provide support for teachers in the implementation of special education programs.

Cypress (2003) found that 76% of responding principals agreed or strongly agreed to have sufficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures. Overall, Cypress found that principals were knowledgeable of special education policies and procedures in all categories, with the exception of the category of inclusion. Principals scored highest in the categories of evaluation, procedural safeguards, and least restrictive environment. Principals were least knowledgeable in the areas of discipline, the IEP, related services, and inclusion. Responding principals indicated that they received most of their knowledge of special education law from in-services, followed by workshops. Finally, results revealed that 64.1% of principals indicated that their practice included providing four or more days of professional development for special education staff in their buildings.

Copenhaver (2005) sought to learn principals' knowledge of the procedural safeguards and educational services provided through special education in North Carolina. In North Carolina, the majority of principal leadership programs do not require that principals complete a course in special education or obtain knowledge of special

education law. Copenhaver utilized Hirth's (1998) survey to assess North Carolina principals' knowledge of special education procedural safeguards and educational services. Participants earned credit for each item answered correctly, and earned no credit for items answered incorrectly or *not sure*. Three hundred forty-eight respondents participated in her study, and according to Copenhaver (2005), the results revealed that "principals were significantly weaker in their knowledge of educational services than procedural safeguards" and "no significant differences were found in principals' knowledge due to school or district size characteristics" (p. ix).

Copenhaver (2005) also determined there was no statistically significant difference in the overall knowledge of principals regarding procedural safeguards and education services when grouped by individual characteristics such as gender, age, years of experience as a teacher, concentration of graduate work, and number of courses taken in special education. Conversely, there was a statistically significant difference within the characteristic of experience and knowledge of special education law. The results of this study revealed that principals with 6-10 years of experience and more than 16 years of experience scored significantly higher than did those with less than 5 years of experience. Additionally, principals with doctorate degrees scored statistically significantly higher on overall knowledge than those with a master's degree. Findings suggested no statistically significant difference in the overall knowledge of principals regarding procedural safeguards and educational services when classified by sources principals accessed for information regarding special education law. This included district's special education manual, colleagues (other principals/teachers), university experts, or trial and error. There was a statistically significant difference when principals

accessed the school district attorney and state department of special education, as these individuals scored higher in their overall knowledge of special education law.

Interestingly, those who accessed their special education director (or central office special education leader) scored statistically significantly lower (Copenhaver, 2005).

Wakeman, et al. (2006) conducted a study in order to determine the amount of knowledge of special education held by secondary principals. Two research questions were asked to determine the level of understanding of fundamental and current special education issues held by secondary principals, and to determine if a relationship existed between the level of understanding and key demographics, such as experience, training, school performance, and their beliefs and practices. One thousand participants, who were all members of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), were randomly selected to participate in completing a four-part survey. The first part included demographic items, the second section had items regarding the principals' training and experience, and the third section included items about the principals' beliefs and practices. The final section of the survey included 28 items regarding either fundamental knowledge or current issue knowledge of special education

The survey yielded a 36% return rate. Results indicated that the majority of respondents, 57.1%, had never taken a single course in special education as undergraduates. Additionally, 45.9% of respondents did not complete a special education course during their administrative training program. Regarding the amount of knowledge held by secondary principals, a difference was found in the amount of fundamental knowledge of special education as opposed to knowledge of current issues. The areas that principals held the most knowledge were collaboration with teachers, collaboration

with parents, and discipline. The areas that principals held the least amount of knowledge were in the areas of training teachers how to develop universally designed lessons, training teachers to conduct functional behavioral assessments, and training teachers to include self-determination practices into instruction.

Power (2007) conducted similar research in the state of Virginia, developing a hypothetical scenario web-based survey addressing areas under IDEA including FAPE, due process, IEP, LRE, related services, student discipline, and liability for reimbursement of parents. Power asked similar research questions as Copenhaver (2005), in order to determine relationships between building leaders and their knowledge of special education law. Participants in this study included 236 K-12 principals who represented 27% of the state's principals. Findings revealed no relationship of principals' knowledge regarding special education law and grade level or size of school, and the number of college courses taken in the area of special education did not affect the difference in the overall knowledge of principals regarding special education law. Finally, whether the principal had been involved in special education litigation did not affect the differences among principals' knowledge of special education law. The 37 principals who were involved in special education litigation only had a slightly higher test mean than the 198 respondents who had not been involved in litigation. This study identified two significant areas of weakness: related services and FAPE (Power, 2007).

In order to determine the level of knowledge of special education law held by newly licensed principals in Wisconsin, Overturf (2007) developed a 42-item survey addressing content of IDEA in the areas of zero reject, nondiscriminatory testing, appropriate education, LRE, due process, and parent participation. Of the 122

respondents who participated in the study, 98% had obtained their principal licensure within the previous 2 years. In the analysis of their perceptions of knowledge in the area of special education law, 68% of the participants believed that their level of knowledge of special education was average or above. Yet the majority of respondents did not have a class that focused on special education law as part of their licensure requirements and indicated that their knowledge of special education law was derived from information they gleaned from other principal courses or sources outside of their programs. In the analysis of the principals' actual knowledge of special education law, only 2.46% of respondents scored within the proficient to advanced range of knowledge held. Years of teaching experience, years of principal experience, and school size did not affect the principals' levels of knowledge. Respondents whose licensure was in the area of special education or school psychology scored higher statistically than other demographic groups measured (Overturf, 2007).

According to Bateman and Bateman, it is imperative that principals have "at least basic knowledge of special education procedures and special education law in order to provide programs and services for students with disabilities" (as cited in Smith Collins, 2008, p. 5). According to Smith Collins (2008), previous research indicated "what principals know about special education is reflected in their attitude about providing special services for students with disabilities" (pp. 5-6). Smith Collins's correlational study not only focused on determining principals' amount of knowledge of IDEA, but also on determining if a relationship existed between a principals' knowledge of IDEA and their beliefs and practices of special education services. This study also served to determine whether a relationship existed between principals' knowledge of IDEA and

their implementation of special education services. Two surveys were administered as part of this correlational study. The Principal Survey sections were used to collect demographic data, data on training and experience, and data on beliefs and practices. The second survey was A Knowledge Survey of Special Education, developed by Hirth (1988) and revised by Copenhaver (2005).

Seventy-five K-12 principals from New Orleans area schools participated in Smith Collins's (2008) study. Results indicated that the level of principals' knowledge regarding special education law and type of district varied, and a statistically significant difference in knowledge of IDEA between the types of school districts was found. The researcher also found that the relationship between principals' knowledge of IDEA and their implementation of services for students with disabilities varied throughout the district; principals whose positions were in state operated schools held the greatest amount of knowledge. The relationship between principals' beliefs and practices and knowledge of law was not statistically significant. No statistically significant difference existed in principals' knowledge of special education law between age, gender, percentage of school's enrollment of students with disabilities, or self-reported experience and training (Smith Collins, 2008).

Special education directors and those in charge of special education programs bear tremendous responsibility in ensuring the provision of special education services throughout their dominion (Ivey, 2008). According to Ivey (2008), "Few studies have focused exclusively on special education directors' or division designees' knowledge of special education law" (p. 57). In order to determine Virginia special education directors' or division designees' knowledge of special education law, Ivey (2008)

surveyed the 129 special education directors or division designees in the state. Ivey utilized instrumentation based on the work of Power (2007) which consisted of 22 hypothetical scenarios representing the areas of FAPE, due process, IEP, LRE, related services, student discipline, and liability for reimbursement to parents. Not only did the study seek to assess special directors' and division designees' knowledge of special education law, but also the relationship between the amount of knowledge and the characteristics of a school division (number of schools, general and special education, and enrollment). Ivey also examined the relationship between the amount of knowledge held and individual characteristics of the study subjects, such as number of years as a special education director, previous special education teacher experience, and highest degree attained. Results revealed a range of scores from 62% to 90.5% correct, indicating "some special education directors or division designees in Virginia lack sufficient knowledge of special education law" (Ivey, 2008, p. 59). "Directors and designees were most knowledgeable in the areas of least restrictive environment, IEP and due process" (Ivey, 2008, p. 59). They were less knowledgeable in the areas of FAPE, related services, student discipline, and liability for reimbursement of parents. Ivey found no statistically significant difference between Virginia directors' or designee's knowledge and school characteristics, nor was there a statistically significant relationship between knowledge and "previous special education experience, number of years as a special education director or division designee, highest degree attained, percentage of time devoted to special education responsibilities and attendance to special education law workshops" (Ivy, 2008, p. ii). One variable that did statistically relate to the directors' or designees' amount of knowledge was membership in professional organizations.

In order to compare the perceptions and knowledge of special education law of building administrators, Grasso (2008) conducted a research study in the state of Georgia. Grasso's target population was those principals, assistant principals, and assistant administrators in a Metro-Atlanta school district. Grasso sought to determine if a difference in the level of knowledge of special education law existed in the areas of zero reject, related services, appropriate evaluation, least restrictive environment, procedural safeguards, IEP, and parent participation. Furthermore, Grasso sought to determine if a difference existed between principals and assistant principals on their levels of knowledge of special education law, and the relationships between the building administrators' level of knowledge of special education law and their perceptions of their level of knowledge. Grasso adapted the Building Administrator Data Profile (BADP) developed by Hines (2001). The survey instrument, along with a cover letter, was mailed to each identified school selected to participate in the study. Out of the 99 administrators selected to participate in the study, 33 responses were fully completed and utilized for data analysis. Results indicated that with regards to the provisions of IDEA, administrators held more knowledge in the areas of IEP and least restrictive environment, and the least amount of knowledge in the areas of zero reject and procedural safeguards. Results also indicated that there was no significant difference in the amount of knowledge between principals and assistant principals. No statistically significant correlation was found between administrators' knowledge and perceptions of knowledge of provisions of special education law, and finally, results did not yield a statistically significant difference in the amount of knowledge or perceived knowledge of IDEA and the years of classroom teaching or administrative experience (Grasso, 2008).

Duncan (2010) conducted an investigation to identify how leaders of special education programs (principals and special education directors) in North Carolina perceived the effectiveness of principals in various leadership categories, what factors contributed to principal effectiveness in each category, and the supports that principals suggested would assist them in increasing their leadership abilities for special education in the identified categories. Categories measured included: understanding law and policy, using data to improve teacher performance, using data to improve student performance, creating an inclusive culture, collaborating with families, participating in the IEP process, scheduling and service delivery, differentiated practices, allocating resources, and hiring and supporting qualified personnel.

Duncan (2010) created two survey instruments containing rating items (measured on a 5-point Liker-type scale) and open-ended items. Out of 2,553 possible respondents, 196 fully completed the surveys. Results suggested that special education directors viewed themselves as more prepared and perhaps more effective in all 10 leadership areas than did the principals. Findings also revealed that principals reportedly needed more professional development in the same areas that they self-reported to have had the most professional development.

Recently, Jesteadt (2012) conducted research regarding the amount of special education knowledge held by principals in the state of Florida. Not only did she measure the amount of knowledge of the six principles of IDEA, she sought to determine the methods by which the principals learned the majority of knowledge pertaining to special education law. Jesteadt utilized a two-part survey including 12 hypothetical scenarios based on principles of special education law, and questions regarding each individual

participant's background and school demographic information. The questionnaire was sent to every public school principal across Florida's 66 school districts, and 176 participants completed the survey. Jesteadt's research revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures and the amount of formal education training received by the principals. No statistically significant difference was found between principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures and the method of knowledge acquisition. Jesteadt's research also revealed no statistically significant difference in the overall knowledge of special education policies and procedures among principals across rural, suburban, and urban school districts within the state of Florida.

As stated by Leal-Georgetti (2012), "An administrator's role is pivotal in the special education process; however, few school administrative leaders are well prepared for this responsibility" (p. iii). In order to determine the level of knowledge of special education law held by licensed administrators in an urban school district in Ohio, Leal-Georgetti conducted a study using an adapted survey originally created by Overturf (2007). The survey was emailed to 321 administrators in the urban district, and results indicated that respondents did not have fundamental knowledge of special education law; in fact, none of the respondents scored within the proficiency level (70-79% correct) established by the author. A gap also existed between administrators' perceived knowledge and actual knowledge of special education law, with results revealing 100% of respondents rating their knowledge higher than the level they actually achieved on the survey of special education knowledge (Leal-Georgetti, 2012).

Summary

Chapter two began with the legislative history of special education law, including Supreme Court cases that led to the creation and amendments of current special education policy, IDEA. Next, the six main principles of IDEA were discussed and finally, past research on the amount of special education knowledge held by school administrators was reviewed. Chapter three includes the research design, population and sample, sampling procedures, instrumentation, measurement, validity, data collection procedures, data analysis and hypothesis testing, and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

This research study was conducted in order to determine the amount of knowledge of special education policies and procedures of Kansas public school principals, and to determine to what extent a relationship existed between principals' knowledge of special education and their relationship with specific school staff. This study was also designed to determine if the knowledge of principals was affected by the grade level of schools they serve. Chapter three includes the research design; population and sample; sampling procedures; instrumentation, including its reliability and validity; data collection procedures; research questions and corresponding hypotheses and data analysis; and limitations of the study.

Research Design

This quantitative study was correlational and non-experimental in its research design. Using survey research, public school administrators in the state of Kansas were surveyed in order to determine their knowledge regarding special education policies and procedures. Dependent variables included perception of special education law and knowledge of special education law, while school level, frequency of contact with special education director, and frequency of contact with school psychologist served as independent variables.

Population and Sample

The population chosen for this study was public school administrators practicing in the state of Kansas. The sample included principals who participated in the study by completing the survey online between October 2012 and December 2012. One thousand

three hundred thirty-one principals were sent a link to complete the online survey, with 334 principals thoroughly completing the survey.

Sampling Procedures

There were 1,331 public elementary, middle or junior high, and high schools throughout the state of Kansas during the 2012-2013 school year (KSDE, 2012a). This study used purposive sampling of administrators listed in the *2012-2013 Kansas Educational Directory* (KSDE, 2012a). The directory was accessed online, and an email was sent out to all public school principals in the directory. Each principal received a link to the online survey that included demographic information and knowledge based statements. The sample for this study was those principals who completed the survey in its entirety.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire utilized in this study was modified by the researcher from an instrument developed by Cypress (2003) after consent was received to modify the survey (see Appendix A). The original survey (see Appendix B) contained 44 items; however, for the purposes of this research, the questionnaire was modified by removing and adding items pertinent to this study. Items removed include 14 demographic items not related to this study as well as items about special education law that did not fall under one of the six categories utilized for this study. Three items regarding FAPE and two items regarding the working relationship of the principal and the school psychologist and the principal and the district special education administrator were added to the survey, resulting in 26 survey items (see Appendix C).

Measurement.

The following survey items were used to address research question one regarding the self-perceptions of Kansas public school principals regarding their knowledge of special education policies and procedures. The format for items 1 and 2 was a 5-point Likert-type scale with the response options of *Strongly Agree*, *Agree*, *Neutral*, *Disagree*, and *Strongly Disagree*.

1. I believe I have proficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures as mandated under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004.
2. I believe my administrative training provided adequate preparation in special education policies and procedures for managing special education programs for exceptional children.

The following survey items were used to measure Kansas public school principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures. These items were used for research questions two, four, five, and six. Items 3 through 19 were true/false statements. Participants were awarded 1 point for every correct answer and 0 points for incorrect answers in the true/false knowledge section in order to obtain an overall knowledge score.

3. IDEA requires a comprehensive evaluation of a student's educational needs conducted by an assessment team prior to placing the student in special education.
4. Prior to an initial comprehensive evaluation by an assessment team, parents must give their consent, be notified of their procedural rights, and be provided

with an explanation of what has and will take place, including a descriptor of each proposed evaluation activity.

5. Non-discriminatory assessment is a requirement under IDEA's due process safeguards.
6. Written permission from the parent is required to change the educational placement of a student receiving special education and related services.
7. A "due process" hearing under IDEA is an administrative hearing.
8. If a private school student qualifies for services under IDEA, the public school district is obligated to provide appropriate special education services.
9. As part of the "least restrictive environment" clause, IDEA mandated that students with disabilities and non-disabled students be educated together unless the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classrooms cannot be achieved satisfactorily.
10. Unless a student with disabilities' Individual Education Program (IEP) requires some other arrangement, the student is educated in the school he or she would attend if not disabled.
11. "Inclusion" is required by IDEA.
12. Following the "least restrictive environment" concept, an IEP team may move a special education student from a full time special education class to a residential school.
13. Children with disabilities must receive support free of charge as is provided to non-disabled peers.

14. Goals and objectives from a special education student's regular teachers are included in the IEP.
15. An IEP meeting may be held without the parents in attendance if the LEA is unable to convince the parents that they should attend and have documented their attempts to do so.
16. An IEP meeting is required before placing a student with disabilities that has moved in from another LEA.
17. The US Supreme Court ruled that school districts are required, under IDEA, to guarantee that individualized instruction will maximize the potential of each special needs student commensurate with the opportunities provided non-disabled students.
18. FAPE applies only to students with a disability who are 6-18 years of age.
19. Under IDEA, special education students must not participate in state and district wide assessments of achievement.

Items 20 and 21 included a 6-point Likert-type scale with the response options of *Very Frequently, Frequently, Occasionally, Rarely, Very Rarely, and Never*. The following survey item was used to address research question three to measure how frequently the Kansas public school principals work with their assigned school psychologists.

20. How frequently do you work with the school psychologist appointed to your building?

The following survey item was used to address research question four to measure how frequently Kansas public school principals work with their district special education administrators.

21. How frequently do you work with your district special education administrator?

The following multiple choice survey item was used for research question five to obtain the level of education of Kansas principals' public schools. Item 22 included the response options of *Elementary*, *Middle School/Junior High*, and *High School*.

22. What level of education do you serve?

Validity and reliability.

The majority of survey items regarding special education policies and procedures were validated by the original author of the survey instrument, who adapted previous instruments by Hirth (1988) and Hines (2001). After seeking permission from Hirth and Hines, Cypress (2003) adapted the survey items and called upon a panel of experts to scrutinize the questionnaire. The panel of experts included two special education professors, a special education teacher, a former school principal and professor of educational leadership and administration, a research analyst, and a professor of educational research methodology (Cypress, 2003, p. 51). These experts were sent a preliminary survey, and they provided feedback in order to validate the survey. After the suggested changes were made to provide clarification, the survey items were determined to be valid.

The author of this study modified the survey by deleting items pertaining to the funding of special education, which were not pertinent to this study. Also added to the survey were three special education knowledge items regarding free and appropriate public education. In order to validate the new items, the author of this study provided the items to a local special education director, a public school principal, a special education teacher, and two school psychologists. It was determined that the survey items were valid. Also included were items about the frequency of contact principals have with both their district school psychologist and special education administrator, as it relates to this study.

The Kuder-Richardson 20 (KR-20) formula was used to conduct reliability analysis on the responses to the 17 true/false items for the current study. The KR-20 result was $r = .95$ which indicates the test items were homogeneous and evidence of reliability is strong.

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to conducting this study, the researcher sought permission to conduct the study from the Institutional Review Board of Baker University. An application, which included permission from Cypress (2003) to use her survey instrument, was submitted to the Institutional Review Board of Baker University (see Appendix D). After permission was established (see Appendix E), the Kansas Educational Directory was downloaded to obtain the email addresses of K-12 public school principals throughout the state. The researcher then utilized SurveyMonkey, an online survey generator, to create and electronically distribute the survey. Included in the distribution were an informed consent letter and the link to the survey (see Appendix F). Four weeks after the original

email was sent, a reminder email was sent to all principals (see Appendix G). When the survey period closed, the researcher used the online survey generator capabilities to download the data to an Excel spreadsheet. To complete the process, data was uploaded to IBM® SPSS® Statistics Faculty Pack 21 for Windows for data analysis.

Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Five research questions guided this study, of which each is paired with an associated hypothesis and statistical analysis.

RQ1: What are the self-perceptions of Kansas public school principals regarding their knowledge and training of special education policies and procedures?

H1: Principals in the state of Kansas perceive themselves to have proficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures.

H2: Principals in the state of Kansas perceive themselves to have proficient training of special education policies and procedures.

A chi-square test of equal percentages were utilized to test both hypothesis one and hypothesis two with the significance level of $\alpha = .05$. Both hypotheses were tested to determine if the observed frequencies of the response options were significantly different from what was expected. Variables included knowledge of special education policies and procedures and training of special education policies and procedures.

RQ2: What are Kansas public school principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures?

H3: Principals in the state of Kansas have proficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures.

A one-sample t test was utilized to test this hypothesis with the significance level of $\alpha = .05$, with proficiency defined as answering knowledge items with 80% accuracy, or answering at least 13 items correctly. The t test was conducted to test principals' average score on items 3-19 against a null value of 13.

RQ3: To what extent is there a relationship between Kansas public school principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures and how frequently they work with their assigned school psychologist?

H4: There is a relationship between Kansas principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures and their frequency of working with their assigned school psychologist.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was used to test this hypothesis with the significance level of $\alpha = .05$. This analysis was used to determine the extent and direction of the relationship between knowledge of special education policies and procedures and frequency of working with an assigned school psychologist.

RQ4: To what extent is there a relationship between Kansas public school principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures and how frequently they work with their district special education administrators?

H5: There is a relationship between Kansas principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures and the frequency of working with their district special education administrators.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was used to test this hypothesis with the significance level of $\alpha = .05$. This analysis was used to determine the extent and

direction of the relationship between knowledge of special education policies and procedures and frequency of working with their district special education administrators.

RQ5: To what extent are there differences in the knowledge of special education policies and procedures among high school, middle school/junior high, and elementary principals?

H6: There is a difference in the knowledge of special education policies and procedures among elementary, middle/junior high, and high school principals.

A one-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test this hypothesis with the significance level of $\alpha = .05$ to determine if a difference existed among the three groups. The dependent variable measured was knowledge, while the independent variable included the level of education served by the principal: elementary, middle/junior high, or high school.

Limitations

According to Lunenburg and Irby (2008), limitations of a study are those factors that may have an effect on the interpretation of the findings or generalizability of the results, and are not under the control of the researcher. Potential limitations existing in this study included the sample response rate and the response rate of individual survey items. Limitations could also include the respondents' ability to understand and follow survey directions.

Summary

This quantitative research study was designed to measure the amount of knowledge of special education policies and procedures held by principals in the state of Kansas. The author modified a survey previously used by Cypress (2003) in order to

sample principals throughout the state. The survey was delivered to principals via electronic mail. Five research questions were posed by the author. Research questions one and two were analyzed using the chi-square tests of equal percentages, and research questions three and four were analyzed utilizing Pearson correlation coefficients. Research question five was analyzed using a one-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA). Chapter four provides results of the hypothesis testing.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine the amount of knowledge of special education policies and procedures of Kansas principals. In addition, the author sought to determine self-perceptions of Kansas public school principals regarding their knowledge and training of special education policies and procedures. A further purpose of the study was to examine how closely building administrators worked with district special education administrators and school psychologists to determine whether the frequency of working together affected the amount of knowledge held. The final purpose of this study was to determine if a difference in knowledge existed between high school, middle school/junior high school, and elementary school principals. Chapter four includes the results from the quantitative data analysis used to address the five research questions. The findings are presented beginning with an explanation of the descriptive statistics.

Descriptive Statistics

A SurveyMonkey link to the Principals' Knowledge of Special Education Survey was sent to 1,331 public school principals in the state of Kansas. Of those sent, 203 were no longer valid email addresses, or were filtered out by the school servers, leaving 1,128 potential respondents. Four hundred twenty-five principals responded to the survey; however, 91 surveys were not fully completed, and therefore were not included in the data analyses. Three hundred thirty-four completed surveys were included in the study, resulting in a response rate of 29.6%.

The highest level of education completed by participating principals is depicted in Table 1. Half of responding principals ($n = 167$) indicated they have earned a Master's

Degree plus additional hours. One hundred ten principals have earned a Master's Degree, 34 principals hold a Specialist degree, and 20 principals have earned a Doctorate Degree. Three principals did not provide a response for their highest degree obtained.

Table 1

Highest Level of Degree Attained by Principal Respondents

Degree Completed	<i>N</i>	%
Masters	110	32.9
Masters +	167	50.0
Specialist	34	10.2
Doctorate	20	6.0
No Response	3	0.9
Total	334	100.0

Table 2 delineates the curricular area in which participating principals hold their obtained degree. The overwhelming majority ($n = 305$) hold degrees in Educational and Administrative Supervision or Leadership. The next most widely held degree was in the content area of Curriculum and Instruction, where 15 principals responded accordingly. Seven principals hold degrees in Special Education, three principals noted "other" as the content area of degree, while two principals indicated they held degrees in Guidance and Counseling. Two participants did not respond to this item.

Table 2

Curricular Area of Degree Held by Respondents

Degree	<i>N</i>	%
Curriculum and Instruction	15	4.5
Educational and Administrative Supervision or Leadership	305	91.3
Guidance and Counseling	2	.6
Special Education	7	2.1
Other	3	.9
No Response	2	.6
Total	334	100.0

Three hundred thirty-one participants responded to the item regarding the amount of special education classes taken throughout their degree programs (see Table 3). One hundred one principals had taken two classes in special education. One hundred eleven participants indicated they had taken three or more classes in special education, followed by 82 participants who indicated they had taken only one special education course. Seventeen principals had never taken a class in special education, and three principals did not respond to the item.

Table 3

Number of Special Education Courses Taken by Principal Respondents

Number of Classes	<i>N</i>	%
None	17	5.1
One	82	24.6
Two	121	36.2
Three or More	111	33.2
No Response	3	.9
Total	334	100.0

The school level served by each principal is illustrated in Table 4. Over half of the principals ($n = 187$) represented elementary schools. Sixty-three principals served middle or junior high schools, 81 principals served high schools, and three principals did not respond to this survey item.

Table 4

School Level Served by Principal Respondents

Level Served by Principal	<i>N</i>	%
Elementary	187	55.98
Middle School/Junior High	63	18.86
High School	81	24.25
No Response	3	.91
Total	334	100.00

Principals responded to 17 true/false items based on the six principles of IDEA in order to determine their overall amount of knowledge. Table 5 illustrates amount of knowledge by categorical area. While participants performed best in the areas of evaluation ($M = 2.93$) and FAPE ($M = 2.73$), they answered the fewest items correctly in the category of procedural safeguards ($M = 2.16$) and IEP ($M = 1.01$).

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations by IDEA Category

Category	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Proficiency (%)
FAPE (Items 8, 18, 13)	2.73	.504	91
Parent/Student Participation (Items 6, 15)	1.73	.474	87
Procedural Safeguards (Items 5, 7, 11)	2.16	.706	72
IEP (Items 14, 16, 17)	1.01	.749	34
LRE (Items 9, 10, 12)	2.60	.544	87
Evaluation (Items 3, 4, 19)	2.93	.264	98

Hypothesis Testing

The results of the hypothesis testing to address the five research questions presented in this study are discussed in this section. Each research question is followed by its corresponding hypothesis statement. The method used to test each hypothesis is described along with the results of each test. The significance level of .05 was utilized for all statistical analyses. The survey, including the correct answers to the true/false items, can be found in Appendix G.

RQ1: What are the self-perceptions of Kansas public school principals regarding their knowledge and training of special education policies and procedures?

H1: Principals in the state of Kansas perceive themselves to have proficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures.

The results of the chi-square test of equal percentages indicated a significant difference between the observed and expected frequency values: $\chi^2 = 472.108$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$. The observed frequencies for *Agree* ($n = 218$) and *Strongly Agree* ($n = 71$) were higher than the expected frequency ($n = 66.8$) (see Table 6). Additionally, the observed frequencies for *Disagree* ($n = 7$) and *Strongly Disagree* ($n = 3$) were lower than the expected frequency ($n = 66.8$). These results are indicative of participants perceiving themselves to have proficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures, which supports hypothesis one.

H2: Principals in the state of Kansas perceive themselves to have proficient training of special education policies and procedures.

The results of the chi-square test of equal percentages indicated a significant difference between the observed and expected frequency values: $\chi^2 = 170.341$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$. The observed frequencies for *Agree* ($n = 120$) and *Disagree* ($n = 111$) were higher than the expected frequency ($n = 66.8$) (see Table 6). Additionally, the observed frequencies for *Strongly Agree* ($n = 14$) and *Strongly Disagree* ($n = 7$) were lower than the expected frequency ($n = 66.8$). These results are indicative of participants perceiving themselves not to have proficient training of special education policies and procedures.

This result does not support hypothesis two, as the number of participants who *Strongly Disagree* or *Disagree* are too similar to those who *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* (see Table 6).

Table 6

Perceptions of Proficient Knowledge and Proficient Training by Respondents

Level of Agreement	Outcome	Knowledge	Training
Strongly Disagree	Observed	3	7
	Expected	66.8	66.8
Disagree	Observed	7	111
	Expected	66.8	66.8
Neutral	Observed	35	82
	Expected	66.8	66.8
Agree	Observed	218	120
	Expected	66.8	66.8
Strongly Agree	Observed	71	14
	Expected	66.8	66.8
Total		334	334

RQ2: What are Kansas public school principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures?

H3: Principals in the state of Kansas have proficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures.

A one-sample *t* test was utilized to test this hypothesis with proficiency defined as answering knowledge items with 80% accuracy, or answering at least 13 items correctly on items 3-19. Two-hundred thirty-three principals demonstrated proficiency on the

items; 101 principals did not demonstrate proficiency. The results of the one-sample t test indicated there was a statistically significant difference between the sample mean and null value (13): $t = 1.742$, $df = 333$, $p = .041$. The mean of principals' total scores ($M = 13.13$, $SD = 1.413$) was greater than the null value (13). On average, principals have proficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures. These results are indicative of participants demonstrating proficiency of special education policies and procedures, which supports hypothesis 3.

RQ3: To what extent is there a relationship between Kansas public school principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures and how frequently they work with their assigned school psychologist?

H4: There is a relationship between Kansas principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures and their frequency of working with their assigned school psychologist.

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to test this hypothesis, revealing a marginally statistically significant relationship, although weak, between the knowledge of special education policies and procedures and the frequency of working with their assigned school psychologist, $r = .099$, $p = .072$. This does not support hypothesis 4.

RQ4: To what extent is there a relationship between Kansas public school principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures and how frequently they work with their district special education administrators?

H5: There is a relationship between Kansas principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures and the frequency of working with their district special education administrators.

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to test this hypothesis, revealing a statistically significant relationship, although weak, between the level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures and the frequency of working with a district special education administrator, $r = .129$, $p = .021$. As a result, hypothesis five was supported, but this result should be interpreted with caution, as the relationship was weak.

RQ5: To what extent are there differences in the knowledge of special education policies and procedures among high school, middle school/junior high, and elementary principals?

H6: There are differences in the levels of knowledge of special education policies and procedures among elementary, middle/junior high, and high school principals.

The results of a one-factor ANOVA indicated there was not a statistically significant difference among the grade levels: $F = 1.028$, $df = 2, 330$, $p = .359$.

Therefore, no follow-up post hoc tests were warranted. Hypothesis 6 was not supported, as there was not a significant difference in knowledge among the grade levels served by the principals.

Summary

Chapter four included the descriptive statistics and hypothesis testing of this study. Chapter five contains interpretation of study results and recommendations for

future studies. Components include an overview of the conducted study, overview of the problem, purpose statement, research questions, methodology review, and major findings

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to provide appropriate services to children with disabilities and avoid expensive legal intervention, it is imperative that principals are knowledgeable of special education policies and procedures. The purpose of this study was to determine the amount of special education law knowledge held by Kansas principals. Chapter five is a review of the conducted study by providing an overview of the problem, purpose statement and research questions, review of methodology, and major findings. Additionally, the findings related to the literature, implications for action, recommendations for future research, and concluding remarks are included.

Study Summary

The current study focused on the amount of knowledge of special education policies and procedures held by Kansas principals. Perceptions of amount of knowledge and perceptions of adequate preparation in the area of special education law were also examined. Also considered were the principals' relationships with district school psychologists and special education administrators and the effect on the amount of knowledge held. Included in this section is an overview of the importance of a principal's knowledge of special education policies and procedures. Next, the purpose statement and research questions will be addressed, followed by a brief review of the methodology used. Finally, major findings will be discussed.

Overview of the Problem

Ensuring that students with disabilities receive an appropriate education is ultimately the responsibility of a building principal. In order for schools to meet the

needs of students with disabilities and provide services that comply with IDEA, principals must have proficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures. Understanding special education law assists principals in the provision of special education programs in schools across the nation (Bateman & Bateman, 2001).

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to determine the knowledge of special education policies and procedures of Kansas principals. The relationship between amount of knowledge held and the extent of a relationship with district special education administrators and school psychologists was also examined. Lastly, this research was conducted to determine whether a difference in knowledge existed among high school, middle school/junior high school, and elementary school principals.

Five research questions guided this study. The first research question asked what were the self-perceptions of Kansas public school principals regarding their knowledge and training of special education policies and procedures. The second research question posed was used to determine the overall knowledge of special education policies and procedures held by Kansas principals. Research questions three and four were related to determining the extent of the relationships between Kansas public school principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures and how frequently they work with their assigned school psychologist and district special education administrators. The fifth and final question was used to determine to what extent a difference existed in the knowledge of special education policies and procedures among Kansas public high school, middle school or junior high school, and elementary school principals.

Review of the Methodology

This quantitative study was correlational and non-experimental in its research design. A survey originally created by Cyprus (2003) was modified by the author and included in a linked email to public school principals across the state of Kansas. Data were downloaded to IBM® SPSS® Statistics Faculty Pack 21 for Windows for analyses. Hypotheses were analyzed using a chi-square test of equal percentages, a *t* test, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Pearson correlation coefficients.

Major Findings

The chi-square tests of equal percentages allowed the researcher to determine if what is observed in a distribution of frequencies would be what is expected to occur by chance, or if the response distribution of frequencies indicated particular response tendencies. This analysis revealed that Kansas principals perceive themselves to have proficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures; however, participants revealed that they do not perceive themselves to have received adequate training in special education policies and procedures. This study produced a limited response rate, and results may have varied based on the participation of a larger sample.

To analyze research question two, a one-sample *t* test was used to test the hypothesis with proficiency defined as answering knowledge items with 80% accuracy. According to the *t* test result, principals have proficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures. Despite that fact that principals do not perceive themselves to have had adequate training in special education policies, the results of the hypothesis testing showed them to have proficient knowledge. Categorical areas in which principals were most knowledgeable include evaluation, FAPE, LRE, and parent and student

participation. Areas in which principals scored the lowest included procedural safeguards and IEP.

For research question three, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient revealed a marginally significant relationship, although weak, between the knowledge of special education policies and procedures and the frequency of working with their assigned school psychologist. With regards to question four, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient did reveal a statistically significant relationship, although weak, between the knowledge of special education policies and procedures and the frequency of working with a district special education administrator.

A one-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to address research question five. The result revealed no significant difference in the knowledge held by principals among grade levels served. There was not a difference in the amount of knowledge held by principals in high school, middle or junior high, or elementary school.

Findings Related to the Literature

Laws regulating the provisions of special education have continued to evolve throughout the decades. Knowing and understanding special education policies ensure that principals are providing students with disabilities services and supports guaranteed to these students under IDEA. However, many recent studies suggest that principals may not have received the training needed to acquire the knowledge necessary to comply with special education regulations. Multiple studies have been conducted to determine the amount of knowledge held by building principals. Research question one of this study focused on the self-perceptions of Kansas public school principals regarding their knowledge and training of special education policies and procedures. In Hines' (2001)

study of Mississippi principals, 70% of principals perceived themselves to have proficient special education law knowledge; however, the majority of participants did not perceive themselves to have received adequate training of special education policies and procedures. Cypress (2003) found that 77% of respondents perceived themselves to have proficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures; however, again, most participants did not perceive their training in special education law to be adequate. In Overturf's (2007) study, 68% of participants believed that their level of knowledge of special education law was average or above. The current study concurs with the results of previous research studies, in that principals in the state of Kansas perceived themselves to have proficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures; however, they did not perceive themselves to have received adequate training in the same area.

The current researcher examined the amount of knowledge held by Kansas principals in the six principle areas of special education law. In previous studies, Hirth (1998) and Hines (2001) found discrepancies in participants' knowledge of special education law. In Overturf's (2007) study, only 2.46% of participants scored within the proficient to advanced levels of knowledge held. In Smith Collin's (2008) study, knowledge held by principals varied greatly by the type of district served by principals, with 45.3% of principals in state-operated schools having proficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures. Participants in Cypress's (2003) study demonstrated their knowledge of special education law, with acceptable means being determined on 19 of the 23 knowledge items posed. The results of the current study found that Kansas principals have proficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures, which

supports the findings of Cypress and is in contrast to the findings of Overturf and Smith Collins.

Research questions three and four of this study focused on the extent of the relationships between principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures and how frequently they work with their assigned school psychologist and district special education administrators respectively. Although not much research has been conducted in this specific area, Copenhaver (2005) determined no difference in overall knowledge by sources the principal accessed for information regarding special education law, including other colleagues. In fact, Copenhaver found that those principals who accessed their special education director scored significantly lower in knowledge. The results of the current study determined that a marginally statistically significant relationship, although weak, existed between the knowledge of special education policies and procedures and the frequency of working with principals' assigned school psychologist. Additionally, a statistically significant relationship, although weak, was found between the knowledge of special education policies and procedures and the frequency of working with a district special education administrator.

Research question five of this study sought to determine the extent of the difference in the knowledge held among high school, middle/junior high and elementary school principals. In previous research, Power (2007) found no relationship between principals' knowledge of special education law and the level in which they worked. The results of the current study also revealed no difference in the amount of knowledge held by principals among the level of building in which they serve.

The findings of this research provided inconsistent support of previous research. While principals in Kansas perceived themselves to have proficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures, they did not believe to have received sufficient training in the area. Kansas principals were in fact knowledgeable of the six principles of IDEA, and this study found that there was a slight relationship between Kansas principals' knowledge and their relationship with their assigned special education administrator and school psychologists. Kansas principals' knowledge of special education policies and procedures was not impacted by their relationships with assigned school psychologists or by the level of school in which they serve.

Conclusions

As indicated throughout chapter one, principals are ultimately responsible for the provision of special education services in their schools. It is of utmost importance that principals are knowledgeable of special education policies and procedures outlined in IDEA. The findings of this study could affect school districts across the state, as well as graduate schools and programs that prepare candidates to become building leaders. The following section provides implications for action and recommendations for future research based on the findings of this study.

Implications for Action

It is imperative that principals have a strong understanding of special education policies and procedures in order to provide appropriate special education programming to the many students with disabilities attending public schools. Principals at all levels may find this study helpful in determining their own level of special education knowledge. Because study results indicated that principals do not believe they received adequate

training in the area of special education law, district administration may be inclined to provide more opportunities for professional development in this area. The Kansas State Department of Education should consider providing statewide professional development for building principals in order to prepare and update principals on the fundamentals of special education law. District special education administration, including school psychologists, may want to build upon collaborative relationships with building principals in order to increase knowledge of special education policies and procedures and IDEA compliance. Lastly, graduate schools and school leadership licensure programs should consider adding coursework in the area of special education law as part of their requirements for graduation.

Recommendations for Future Research

Principals are ultimately responsible for the provision of special education programming within their buildings. It is of utmost importance that they operate within the parameters of IDEA. Further research is recommended in the following areas.

- A correlational study could be conducted to determine if a relationship exists between the amount of knowledge of special education policies and procedures held by principals, and the achievement of special education students on state assessments.
- The current study could be replicated within a specific school district. Analysis of the study survey results could be used for district professional development.

- This study could be revised by researchers to determine what sources principals rely on for training and professional development in the area of special education law.
- A future study could be conducted to determine if differences in knowledge of special education policies and procedures exists between students who completed a degree in school leadership versus those who completed licensure programs.
- This study could be replicated to include private and parochial school principals to determine if a difference exists between the public school principals knowledge, and that of private/parochial school principals.
- This study could be replicated using additional principal variables, such as years of experience as a building administrator, being an administrator of a center-based program, or involvement in mediation or a due process hearing.

Concluding Remarks

It is imperative that principals are knowledgeable of the requirements of IDEA in order to provide students with disabilities an appropriate education and to avoid costly litigation. Past research has shown discrepancies in the amount of special education knowledge held by principals, as well as the differences in the amount of knowledge by category. This study found that Kansas principals are knowledgeable of special education law, and are most proficient in the areas of evaluation, FAPE, and LRE. Principals who are knowledgeable of special education policies and procedures are able to provide appropriate special education programming to children with disabilities,

thereby providing a meaningful educational experience to these children, and increasing the success of all students throughout their schools.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PERMISSION TO MODIFY SURVEY

Hello Jennifer,

I'd be honored for you to use my survey. I actually didn't think the thing was still in publication. Feel free use and do whatever you have to do. I hope that your study renders some good results. Feel free to contact me for further information if needed.

Karen

On Thu, Jul 21, 2011 at 3:05 PM, Dancer, Jennifer <JDancer@bluevalleyk12.org> wrote:
Dr. Cypress,

Greetings! My name is Jennifer Dancer and I am a doctoral candidate at Baker University in Overland Park, Kansas. I am in the beginning stages of developing my dissertation, measuring the knowledge of special education law of Kansas administrators. As I was conducting preliminary research, I found your study and was really interested in it. I was wondering if you would grant me permission to use your survey with a few modifications. I would like to add some questions about the extent of contact or collaboration that building leaders have with both school psychologists as well as special education directors.

Would you be willing to allow me to use and modify your survey? Please contact me with any questions or thoughts that you may have. Thank you so much!

Jennifer Dancer

APPENDIX B: CYPRESS SURVEY

A KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONNAIRE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION LAW

(Please use a pencil and completely shade all responses)

Part I – Opinions about special education

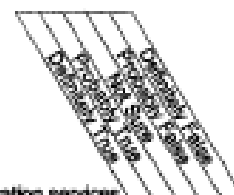
SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree D = Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree

1. I believe I have sufficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures as mandated under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)..... SA (A) (D) (SD)
2. I believe my administrative training provided adequate preparation in special education policies and procedures for managing special education programs for exceptional children..... SA (A) (D) (SD)

Part II – Shade in the letters that indicate your degree of certainty of the truth or falsity of the following statements regarding special education law using the following scale. In no way does this survey mean to imply that principals should interpret the law as stated in the questions, since some are true and some are false.



3. IDEA requires a comprehensive evaluation of a student's educational needs be conducted by an assessment team prior to placing the student in special education..... DT (T) (N) (F) (FD)
4. Prior to an initial comprehensive evaluation by an assessment team, parents must give their consent, be notified of their procedural rights, and be provided with an explanation of what has and will take place, including a description of each proposed evaluation activity..... DT (T) (N) (F) (FD)
5. Non-discriminatory assessment is a requirement under IDEA's due process safeguards..... DT (T) (N) (F) (FD)
6. Schools must enroll every child, regardless of the nature or severity of his or her disabilities..... DT (T) (N) (F) (FD)
7. Written permission from the parent is required to change the educational placement of a student receiving special education and related services..... DT (T) (N) (F) (FD)
8. A "due process" hearing under IDEA is an administrative hearing..... DT (T) (N) (F) (FD)
9. IDEA provides for an award of attorney's fees to parents who prevail in special education suits against school districts..... DT (T) (N) (F) (FD)
10. As part of the "least restrictive environment" clause, IDEA mandated that students with disabilities and non-disabled students be educated together unless the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classrooms cannot be achieved satisfactorily..... DT (T) (N) (F) (FD)
11. Unless a student with disabilities' Individualized Educational Program (IEP) requires some other arrangement, the student is educated in the school he or she would attend if not disabled..... DT (T) (N) (F) (FD)
12. "Inclusion" is required by IDEA..... DT (T) (N) (F) (FD)
13. Following the "least restrictive environment" concept, an IEP Team may move a special education student from a full time special class to a residential school..... DT (T) (N) (F) (FD)
14. At the present time, a special education student may be suspended for up to 10 days (cumulative) without being viewed as a "change of placement", triggering the procedural safeguards pursuant to IDEA..... DT (T) (N) (F) (FD)



15. The Local Education Association (LEA) is allowed to spend federal dollars for special education services that incidentally benefit non-disabled students..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☒ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
16. Goals and objectives from a special education student's regular teachers are included in the IEP..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☒ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
17. A special education student may be expelled from attending school and receive no educational services during the expulsion, if the IEP Team determines that both of the following conditions are met:
 a. The misbehavior was NOT caused by the disabling condition.
 b. The educational placement of the student was appropriate..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☒ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
18. An IEP meeting may be held without the parents in attendance if the LEA is unable to convince the parents that they should attend and have documented their attempts to do so..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☒ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
19. An IEP meeting is required before placing a student with disabilities that has moved in from another LEA ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☒ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
20. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that school districts are required, under IDEA, to guarantee that individualized instruction will maximize the potential of each special needs student commensurate with the opportunities provided non-disabled students..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☒ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
21. Special education and related services must be provided to all children with disabilities..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☒ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
22. An LEA is liable to pay for medical services provided by a licensed physician, if they are necessary to determine a medically related disabling condition, which results in the student's need for special education and related services..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☒ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
23. If a student requires the provision of Clean Intermittent Catheterization (CIC) in order to be able to attend school, a school district is not required to pay for the provision of this service..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☒ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
24. The provision of special transportation services for students with disabilities has been viewed by the courts to be part of a free appropriate education..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☒ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
25. Under IDEA special education students must not participate in state and district wide assessments of achievement..... ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☒ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Part III – For each of the following items, mark the choice that best describes you.

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 26. Gender: | 27. Age: | 28. Grade level of your school: | 29. Average daily membership of your school: |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Male | <input type="radio"/> 25-35 | <input type="radio"/> Elementary | <input type="radio"/> less than 300 |
| <input type="radio"/> Female | <input type="radio"/> 36-45 | <input type="radio"/> Junior High | <input type="radio"/> 300-599 |
| | <input type="radio"/> 46-59 | <input type="radio"/> Middle School | <input type="radio"/> 600-899 |
| | <input type="radio"/> 60+ | <input type="radio"/> High School | <input type="radio"/> 900-1199 |
| | | <input type="radio"/> Other | <input type="radio"/> 1200+ |



30. Current position in the public school system:

- ☐ Principal
☐ Assistant Principal
☐ Teacher
☐ Other

33. Highest degree obtained:

- ☐ Masters
☐ Masters + 30 Semester hrs. or 45 Quarter hrs.
☐ Specialist
☐ Doctorate
☐ Other (specify) _____

35. How many courses in special education have you taken at the college or university level?

- ☐ None
☐ One
☐ Two
☐ Three or more

37. From which institution did you receive your degree/licensure in administration?

39. What are the primary sources of your knowledge of special education law and practices. Check all that apply.

- ☐ Workshops
☐ Inservices
☐ Professional Literature
☐ Special Education Conference

40. Of the total time working in a typical month, estimate the percentage of time spent on the following special educational duties.

- | | |
|---|---|
| a. Participating in individual education planning (IEP) meetings..... | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| b. Filling out special education forms..... | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| c. Attending special education staff meetings inside/outside local school district..... | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| d. Preparing and monitoring the special education budget..... | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| e. Interviewing prospective special education personnel for employment purposes..... | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| f. Reviewing special education purchase orders, conference & field trip request, etc..... | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| g. Evaluating the special education staff..... | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| h. Arranging special education transportation..... | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| i. Attending to special education disciplinary issues..... | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |
| j. Providing support for special education teachers..... | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> |

31. Total years as a teacher:

- ☐ 0
☐ 1-5
☐ 6-10
☐ 11-15
☐ 16+

32. Total years as a principal:

- ☐ 0
☐ 1-5
☐ 6-10
☐ 11-15
☐ 16+

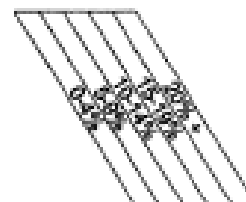
34. Major area of specialized study or area where you have the greatest concentration of graduate coursework:

- ☐ Special Education
☐ Educational Administration & Supervision
☐ Curriculum & Instruction
☐ Guidance & Counseling
☐ Other (specify) _____

36. In which of these areas would you desire more training in special education? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Characteristics and Needs
☐ Techniques & Strategies
☐ Special Education Law
☐ Discipline
☐ Budgeting/Funding

38. What year did you finish your degree/licensure? _____



41. Report the number of days that have been provided for professional development/staff development in special education for your special education teachers in the current school year.

- ☐ One day
- ☐ Two days
- ☐ Three days
- ☐ Four or more days

42. Indicate the type of professional development activities provided for special education teachers during the current year (mark all that apply).

- ☐ workshop
- ☐ inservice
- ☐ professional literature
- ☐ special education conference

43. Report the number of days that have been provided for professional development/staff development in special education for your general education teachers in the current school year.

- ☐ One day
- ☐ Two days
- ☐ Three days
- ☐ Four or more days

44. Indicate the type of professional development activities provided for general education teachers during the current year (mark all that apply).

- ☐ workshop
- ☐ inservice
- ☐ professional literature
- ☐ special education conference

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

APPENDIX C: DANCER SURVEY

A Knowledge Questionnaire of Special Education Law

Please provide a response to each question asked below.

Part I– Opinions about special education

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
-------------------	----------	---------	-------	----------------

1. I believe I have proficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures as mandated under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004.
2. I believe my administrative training provided adequate preparation in special education policies and procedures for managing special education programs for exceptional children.

Part II- Please answer the following questions TRUE or FALSE.

3. IDEA requires a comprehensive evaluation of a student's educational needs conducted by an assessment team prior to placing the student in special education.
4. Prior to an initial comprehensive evaluation by an assessment team, parents must give their consent, be notified of their procedural rights, and be provided with an explanation of what has and will take place, including a descriptor of each proposed evaluation activity.
5. Non-discriminatory assessment is a requirement under IDEA's due process safeguards.
6. Written permission from the parent is required to change the educational placement of a student receiving special education and related services.
7. A "due process" hearing under IDEA is an administrative hearing.
8. If a private school student qualifies for services under IDEA, the public school district is obligated to provide appropriate special education services.
9. As part of the "least restrictive environment" clause, IDEA mandated that students with disabilities and non-disabled students be educated together unless the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classrooms cannot be achieved satisfactorily.
10. Unless a student with disabilities' Individual Education Program (IEP) requires some other arrangement, the student is educated in the school he or she would attend if not disabled.

11. "Inclusion" is required by IDEA.
12. Following the "least restrictive environment" concept, an IEP team may move a special education student from a full time special education class to a residential school.
13. Children with disabilities must receive support free of charge as is provided to non-disabled peers.
14. Goals and objectives from a special education student's regular teachers are included in the IEP.
15. An IEP meeting may be held without the parents in attendance if the LEA is unable to convince the parents that they should attend and have documented their attempts to do so.
16. An IEP meeting is required before placing a student with disabilities that has moved in from another LEA.
17. The US Supreme Court ruled that school districts are required, under IDEA, to guarantee that individualized instruction will maximize the potential of each special needs student commensurate with the opportunities provided non-disabled students.
18. FAPE applies only to students with a disability who are 6-18 years of age.
19. Under IDEA, special education students must not participate in state and districtwide assessments of achievement.

Part III- For each of the following items; mark the choice that best describes you.

Very Frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Very Rarely	Never
--------------------	------------	--------------	--------	-------------	-------

20. How frequently do you work with the school psychologist appointed to your building?
21. How frequently do you work with your district special education administrator?

22. Highest degree obtained:

Masters Masters + Specialist Doctorate Other

23. Major area of specialized study or area where you have the greatest concentration of graduate coursework:

Special Education Educational and Administration Supervision or Leadership
Curriculum and Instruction Guidance and Counseling
Other

24. How many courses in special education have you taken at the college or university level?

None One Two Three or more

25. What are the primary sources of your knowledge of special education law and practices? Check all that apply.

Workshops In-services Professional Literature Special Education
Conferences

26. What level of education do you serve?

Elementary Middle School/Junior High High School

APPENDIX D: BAKER UNIVERSITY IRB REQUEST



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
GRADUATE DEPARTMENT

Date: 10/4/12
IRB PROTOCOL NUMBER _____
(IRB USE ONLY)

**IRB REQUEST
Proposal for Research
Submitted to the Baker University Institutional Review Board**

I. Research Investigator(s) (Students must list faculty sponsor first)

Department(s) **School of Education Graduate Department**

Name	Signature	
1. Dr. Susan Rogers	_____	Major Advisor
2. Katie Schoenhofer	_____	Research Analyst
3. Marc Carter	_____	University Committee Member
4.	_____	External Committee Member

Principal Investigator: Jennifer Dancer
Phone: 913-406-8068
Email: jenraed@hotmail.com
Mailing address: 7612 W 64th Terrace, Overland Park, KS 66202

Faculty sponsor: Dr. Susan Rogers
Phone: 913-344-1226
Email: srogers@bakeru.edu

Expected Category of Review: ____Exempt ____ Expedited _ __Full

II: Protocol: (Type the title of your study)

Kansas Principals' Knowledge of Special Education Policies and Procedures

Summary

In a sentence or two, please describe the background and purpose of the research.

In order for schools to meet the needs and expectations of students and parents, as well as to avoid judicial consequences, building-level administrators must possess a thorough understanding of special education school law and how it impacts them, their staff, and their students (Davidson & Algozzine, 2002). The purpose of this study is to determine the level of knowledge of special education policies and procedures of Kansas principals. An additional purpose is to determine how Kansas principals acquired their knowledge of special education law. Furthermore, this study will examine how closely administrators work with district special education administrators and school psychologists.

Briefly describe each condition or manipulation to be included within the study.

There will be no manipulation in this study.

What measures or observations will be taken in the study? If any questionnaire or other instruments are used, provide a brief description and attach a copy.

Participants will be asked to complete a survey that includes Likert Scale items, demographic information, and true/false statements.

Will the subjects encounter the risk of psychological, social, physical or legal risk? If so, please describe the nature of the risk and any measures designed to mitigate that risk.

Subjects will not encounter any risk of psychological, social, physical, or legal risk.

Will any stress to subjects be involved? If so, please describe.

Subjects will not be subjected to any stress.

Will the subjects be deceived or misled in any way? If so, include an outline or script of the debriefing.

Subjects of this study will not be deceived or misled in any way.

Will there be a request for information, which subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive? If so, please include a description.

Subjects will be asked their perception of their own knowledge of special education policies and procedures, as well as several knowledge based items relating to special education law. Subjects will also be asked about their working relationships with school psychologists and district special education administrators. Some demographic questions will be asked, including their highest degree obtained, major of specialized study, amount of special education coursework, and sources of professional development in the area of special education law.

Will the subjects be presented with materials, which might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading? If so, please describe.

The subjects in this study will not be presented with materials that might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading.

Approximately how much time will be demanded of each subject?

Participants will spend approximately 10 minutes completing the knowledge survey.

Who will be the subjects in this study? How will they be solicited or contacted? Provide an outline or script of the information which will be provided to subjects prior to their volunteering to participate. Include a copy of any written solicitation as well as an outline of any oral solicitation.

Subjects of this study will be principals throughout the state of Kansas. Each subject will be contacted via email (see letter attached).

What steps will be taken to insure that each subject's participation is voluntary? What if any inducements will be offered to the subjects for their participation?

Completion of the survey is strictly voluntary, with completion of the survey indicating willingness to participate. Subjects will be informed in the initial email of the opportunity to receive the results of this study.

How will you insure that the subjects give their consent prior to participating? Will a written consent form be used? If so, include the form. If not, explain why not.

Voluntary completion of the survey will indicate consent by the subject. Subjects will be notified of implied consent in the initial email.

Will any aspect of the data be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with the subject? If so, please explain the necessity.

Data gleaned from this study will not be made part of any permanent record.

Will the fact that a subject did or did not participate in a specific experiment or study be made part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher or employer? If so, explain.

No data, participation or otherwise, will be made part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher, or employer.

What steps will be taken to insure the confidentiality of the data? Where will it be stored? How long will it be stored? What will be done with it after the study is completed?

Survey results are strictly confidential. Subjects will not be identified, recorded, or reported in the results of this study. Anonymous data will be saved and stored in an external storage device and destroyed after 3 years.

If there are any risks involved in the study, are there any offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society?

There are no risks associated with the participation of this study. Benefits of this study include advancement in the field, and professional development opportunities.

Will any data from files or archival data be used? If so, please describe.

No archival data will be used in this study.

APPENDIX E: IRB APPROVAL



October 22, 2012

Jennifer Dancer
7612 W. 64th Terrace
Overland Park, KS 66202

Dear Ms. Dancer:

The Baker University IRB has reviewed your research project application (M-0153-1010-1022-G) and approved this project under Exempt Review. As described, the project complies with all the requirements and policies established by the University for protection of human subjects in research. Unless renewed, approval lapses one year after approval date.

The Baker University IRB requires that your consent form must include the date of approval and expiration date (one year from today). Please be aware of the following:

1. At designated intervals (usually annually) until the project is completed, a Project Status Report must be returned to the IRB.
2. Any significant change in the research protocol as described should be reviewed by this Committee prior to altering the project.
3. Notify the OIR about any new investigators not named in original application.
4. Any injury to a subject because of the research procedure must be reported to the IRB Chair or representative immediately.
5. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents for at least three years past completion of the research activity. If you use a signed consent form, provide a copy of the consent form to subjects at the time of consent.
6. If this is a funded project, keep a copy of this approval letter with your proposal/grant file.

Please inform Office of Institutional Research (OIR) or myself when this project is terminated. As noted above, you must also provide OIR with an annual status report and receive approval for maintaining your status. If your project receives funding which requests an annual update approval, you must request this from the IRB one month prior to the annual update. Thanks for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Doolittle, EdD
Chair, Baker University IRB

APPENDIX F: LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

October 24, 2012

Dear Principal,

Greetings! My name is Jennifer Dancer. I am a school psychologist in Overland Park, KS, and a doctoral student at Baker University. I am currently conducting a research study that investigates the extent of familiarity Kansas principals have of special education policies and procedures. I am surveying all principals in the state of Kansas. Since you have attained the position of principal at your current school, I would like to ask for your participation. I understand that this is a very busy time of year; the survey should take no more than 10 minutes of your time to complete. The survey is completely anonymous, and includes demographic information, Likert scale items, as well as true/false items pertaining to various provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Your privacy is important; your responses will be combined with other participants' responses and reported in summary form. Information reported will not indicate individual participants or school districts. There is no penalty should you choose not to participate or respond to all of the items. Your completion and submission of the survey will indicate your consent to participate and permission to use the information you have provided for my study. Please click on the link below to take the online survey.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GC3CBLJ>

If you have any questions or if you would like a copy of the results of this study, you may contact me via email at JenniferRDancer@stu.bakeru.edu.

Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Dancer

APPENDIX G: FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

November 18, 2012

Dear Principal,

I recently sent the following email, asking you to complete a survey regarding special education policies and procedures. If you have completed the survey, I offer my most sincere gratitude. If you have not completed the survey, I would like to ask you to please consider taking part in my research. The survey takes less than 10 minutes to complete, and I must collect at least 100 more responses for my research to be valid. Again, I would be most appreciative of your participation. Please see below the original email, or click on this link to take the survey:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx>

Thanks Again,
Jennifer

Greetings! My name is Jennifer Dancer. I am a school psychologist in Overland Park, KS, and a doctoral student at Baker University. I am currently conducting a research study that investigates the extent of familiarity Kansas principals have of special education policies and procedures. I am surveying all principals in the state of Kansas. Since you have attained the position of principal at your current school, I would like to ask for your participation. I understand that this is a very busy time of year; the survey should take no more than 10 minutes of your time to complete. The survey is completely anonymous, and includes demographic information, Likert scale items, as well as true/false items pertaining to various provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Your privacy is important; your responses will be combined with other participants' responses and reported in summary form. Information reported will not indicate individual participants or school districts. There is no penalty should you choose not to participate or respond to all of the items. Your completion and submission of the survey will indicate your consent to participate and permission to use the information you have provided for my study. Please click on the link below to take the online survey:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx>

If you have any questions or if you would like a copy of the results of this study, you may contact me via email at JenniferRDancer@stu.bakeru.edu.
Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Dancer

APPENDIX H: DANCER SURVEY WITH CORRECT RESPONSES

A Knowledge Questionnaire of Special Education Law

Please provide a response to each question asked below.

Part I– Opinions about special education

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
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1. I believe I have proficient knowledge of special education policies and procedures as mandated under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004.
2. I believe my administrative training provided adequate preparation in special education policies and procedures for managing special education programs for exceptional children.

Part II- Please answer the following questions TRUE or FALSE.

3. IDEA requires a comprehensive evaluation of a student's educational needs conducted by an assessment team prior to placing the student in special education. **T**
4. Prior to an initial comprehensive evaluation by an assessment team, parents must give their consent, be notified of their procedural rights, and be provided with an explanation of what has and will take place, including a descriptor of each proposed evaluation activity. **T**
5. Non-discriminatory assessment is a requirement under IDEA's due process safeguards. **T**
6. Written permission from the parent is required to change the educational placement of a student receiving special education and related services. **T**
7. A "due process" hearing under IDEA is an administrative hearing. **T**
8. If a private school student qualifies for services under IDEA, the public school district is obligated to provide appropriate special education services. **T**
9. As part of the "least restrictive environment" clause, IDEA mandated that students with disabilities and non-disabled students be educated together unless the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classrooms cannot be achieved satisfactorily. **T**

10. Unless a student with disabilities' Individual Education Program (IEP) requires some other arrangement, the student is educated in the school he or she would attend if not disabled. **T**
11. "Inclusion" is required by IDEA. **F**
12. Following the "least restrictive environment" concept, an IEP team may move a special education student from a full time special education class to a residential school. **T**
13. Children with disabilities must receive support free of charge as is provided to non-disabled peers. **T**
14. Goals and objectives from a special education student's regular teachers are included in the IEP. **T**
15. An IEP meeting may be held without the parents in attendance if the LEA is unable to convince the parents that they should attend and have documented their attempts to do so. **T**
16. An IEP meeting is required before placing a student with disabilities that has moved in from another LEA. **T**
17. The US Supreme Court ruled that school districts are required, under IDEA, to guarantee that individualized instruction will maximize the potential of each special needs student commensurate with the opportunities provided non-disabled students. **F**
18. FAPE applies only to students with a disability who are 6-18 years of age. **F**
19. Under IDEA, special education students must not participate in state and districtwide assessments of achievement. **F**

Part III- For each of the following items; mark the choice that best describes you.

Very Frequently	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Very Rarely	Never
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20. How frequently do you work with the school psychologist appointed to your building?

21. How frequently do you work with your district special education administrator?
22. Highest degree obtained:
Masters Masters + Specialist Doctorate Other
23. Major area of specialized study or area where you have the greatest concentration of graduate coursework:
Special Education Educational and Administration Supervision or Leadership
Curriculum and Instruction Guidance and Counseling
Other
24. How many courses in special education have you taken at the college or university level?
None One Two Three or more
25. What are the primary sources of your knowledge of special education law and practices? Check all that apply.
Workshops In-services Professional Literature Special Education
Conferences
26. What level of education do you serve?
Elementary Middle School/Junior High High School