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## The practices of principals in implementing inclusion in their schools

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**THE PRACTICES OF PRINCIPALS IN  
IMPLEMENTING INCLUSION  
IN THEIR SCHOOLS**

by

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## Dissertation Approval

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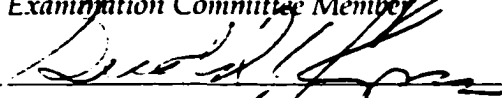
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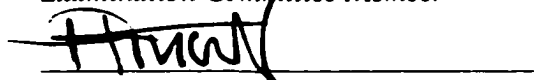
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **The Practices of Principals in Implementing Inclusion in Their Schools**

by

**Wendi C. Hawk**  
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Court cases and federal mandates are telling schools to move toward including students with disabilities into the general education setting. This has created an increased hardship for school site administrators as they take on the burden of preparing their schools for a conducive learning environment for all of the students at their schools.

This case study was designed to gather data about the practices of the high school principal in the implementation of inclusion. The principal's role in the change process was analyzed through classroom observations, document analysis, and interviews with various staff members.

The study included one high school in a Western state to gather information that assessed the practices of the administrator in implementing inclusion. The Western States have been affected by federal mandates from the Reauthorization of the



Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997, and the court case between Rachael Holland and the Sacramento City School District that established the precedent for inclusion within the Ninth Circuit legal system to which the Western states are bound. This move toward inclusion increased the pressures of principals to be creative in how they deal with curriculum issues, personnel training, and staff development for inclusion.

With three different principals, with three separate styles of leadership, the inclusion program was created, maintained, and altered through the different eras of the administrators. The first principal had the direction to get the inclusion program working and the support of his teachers to keep it running. The second principal had a negative impact on the overall school climate, yet chose not to become directly involved. This lack of involvement resulted in a stable program primarily due to the supportive staff members who maintained the integrity of the program. The third principal worked to improve the climate of the school, yet losing the confidence of some of his staff for neglecting to inform them of his intentions for inclusion and altering way inclusion had been done for ten years.

The three principals had different styles of leadership and how they implemented change. These changes were sometimes positive and sometimes negative. One principal was intentional in his process to create change, the second created change simply by forcing teachers to comply with district mandates, and the third created change by trying to improve other areas, but neglecting inclusion. The practices of each principal were traced over a ten-year time period that explained one school's story on how inclusion was implemented.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background of Study**

The population of the United States will see an increase in the number of students in need of special services due to the surge of environmental impacts on children. These impacts include an increase in students being raised in poverty, low birth weights from poor prenatal care, substance abuse, and AIDS effected children. Parrish (1996) noted the numbers of students who are economically and medically at-risk are a growing part of the students qualifying for special education services.

As it stands today, at least “80% of all school children in America could qualify as learning disabled according to one or more of the various definitions used by the states” (Parrish, 1995, p. 8). Parrish (1996) said that the number of students who receive services from special education is growing at an alarming rate, and with that growth rate comes an overwhelming financial hardship and increasing pressures on school site administrators. The financial burden has been estimated to have increased federally from \$1 billion in 1975 to over \$32 billion in 1996. The Federal government had initially pledged at least 40 percent of federal funds to the states to support special education mandates; however, only about seven to eight percent of the federal funds reached the states (p. 6).

With this huge financial burden being placed on the schools, the states must be innovative in the way they deal with funding special education. Many states, such as Arizona, Indiana, Mississippi, and Oregon had a resource-bases or pupil weight funding formula that encouraged placing students with disabilities in more restrictive settings to obtain more federal money based on the financial needs of educating the children. Parrish (1996) said that these states have been ruled to be out of compliance because of implementing funding formulas that encourage restrictive placements for students with disabilities. Funding formulas that encourage placing students into a more restrictive setting are in direct violation of federal regulations. These regulations call for students with disabilities to be included with the regular population.

The principal cannot determine the funding formulas for special education at his school, but he has increased pressure to comply with the requirements of the law. The responsibility for dealing with this problem has been placed on local school administrators. School principals must deal with the financial issues of educating all students and meet federal regulations to create an inclusive educational setting that would foster learning for students with disabilities.

There were also people who believed that inclusion was not an appropriate placement for students with disabilities. On the contrary, supporters for full inclusion claimed that inclusion was a way to help disabled students learn social skills by developing those skills with general education students as role models (Shanker, 1994, p. 18).

Shanker (1994) claimed that legislatures, school boards, and state departments see inclusion as a way to save money on special education services. "These services have become a crushing financial burden, especially because Congress has never appropriated



funding at the level promised by P.L. 94-142, leaving states and local school boards to shoulder most of those costs” (p. 18). Congress created laws for special education; however, they never fully funded the mandates that were required by law. As a result, some school administrators saw inclusion as a way to combine classes and resources.

Supporters for full inclusion insisted that support from special education services should follow the students into the regular classroom. Shanker (1994) argued that this support for full inclusion was an ideal situation; however, he claimed that it was not likely for administrators looking at inclusion as a way to save money (p. 19). These issues of inclusion and the level of inclusion are ones that administrators will need to analyze. They will need to determine a balance between the financial benefits versus the students’ benefits.

Dyal, Flynt, and Bennett-Walker (1996) contradicted Shanker (1994) with respect to funding because they claimed that principals cited funding as a difficulty in developing an inclusive school. About half (54 percent) of the principals they surveyed said, “more money was needed to create a successfully inclusive school” (Dyal et. al, 1996, p. 33).

Shanker (1994) also used the separate but equal clause to argue against inclusion. People who supported inclusion felt that separate facilities were not equal. Shanker (1994) argued that the range of academic abilities was not justification for separating black and white students. African-American students had no difference in ability levels; therefore, they should not be separated from white students. He added that special needs students do not have the same functioning levels and should not be pushed into regular classes (p. 20). Skin color, he said, “is quite different from putting a blind youngster into

a special class so he or she can learn Braille, or from excluding a youngster who is emotionally disturbed because he or she will disrupt the education of others while deriving little benefit" (p. 20).

Shanker's (1994) argument was an important one for administrators to take into consideration when dealing with inclusion issues. Shanker claimed that there should be differences in education due to the needs and disabilities of the students (p. 20). Wang, Reynolds, and Walberg (1995) brought up a point that made the issue of inclusion more difficult for administrators. They noted that many special education students were members of racial and ethnic minorities. Wang et al. stated that "two or three times as many African-American students as white students are labeled as retarded or behaviorally disturbed" (Wang, Reynolds, and Walberg, 1995, p. 12).

The decision-making authority in a school district ultimately lies in the hands of the Board of Education. Under the authority of the board is that of the superintendent and then the assistant superintendent. The principal has the direct authority over individual schools followed by the assistant principal (Podemski, Price, Smith, and Marsh, 1984, p. 2). The principal is the one who makes the site decisions at a school as the school leader.

Podemski, Price, Smith, and Marsh (1984) noted, "many school districts have no supervisor or director of special education" (p. 2). This again increased the burden on the school principal to make decisions about special education issues. The support and guidance from the principal is essential to the success of any program at a school, including special education. Chaiken and Harper (1979) said, "Principal support is necessary to provide an atmosphere of support, cooperation, and optimism among staff members" (p. 12). The support from principals is important when attempting to make the

programs for special education work. "Lack of strong principal commitment to making these administrative adjustments will likely subvert the best instructional attempts to assist teachers in adjusting their teaching to the learning disabled student" (Chaiken and Harper, 1979, p. 77). Further, Burrello and Sage (1979) emphasized the importance of the site administrator in gaining knowledge about special education. "Many regular education leadership personnel have shown that increasing their awareness of handicapped children has increased their knowledge and concern for many other children who are in need of an alternative educational arrangement" (p. 219).

Podemski, Price, Smith, and Marsh (1984) noted that special education and general education have been separated for a long time and that the integration of programs needs careful planning and leadership (p. 1). Moving toward more inclusive settings for the learning disabled will take leadership from the site administrators, and they must be competent in matters of special education. According to Podemski, Price, Smith, and Marsh (1984), principals should keep the staff informed of issues in special education. Principals should involve special education staff in scheduling and remember them when distributing materials. They need to ensure the integration of special education and general education curriculums within the classrooms. They need to support special education staff due to the higher stress levels they may encounter. Finally, principals need to inservice the entire staff on special education issues (p. 4).

Podemski, Price, Smith, and Marsh (1984) listed seven areas of competencies that are necessary for principals in regard to special education issues and implementation. First, the principals must ensure due process; second, they must interpret federal and state laws; third, they must apply appropriate leadership styles; fourth, they must ensure the records

comply with the rules of confidentiality and due process; fifth, they must resolve conflicts among program personnel; sixth, they must use evaluation data to make program revisions; and finally, they must determine staff functions and qualifications (p. 3). This emphasized the need for principals to be aware of issues in special education and their roles as leaders in the schools.

### **Background of the Topic**

School administrators have to deal with many issues concerning special needs students. One issue that is becoming a part of an administrator's daily concern is that of inclusion. Inclusion is an educational placement for students with disabilities as a result of the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act, P.L. 94-142 (Shanker, 1994, p.18). P.L. 94-142 was a law that said, "Youngsters with disabilities have a right to a 'free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment'" (p.18).

Conard and Whitaker (1997) said that inclusion was placing special education students with the rest of the school population. "According to that approach, all students, regardless of the severity of their disabilities or their needs for related services, receive their individualized education within a regular classroom in the same school they would have attended if they were not disabled, and special education support is provided in the context of the general program" (p. 207). This essentially meant that special education students would be educated at their home schools.

With the federal law mandating inclusion, principals have been faced with the responsibility of making it work in their schools. Conard and Whitaker (1997) stressed the importance of principals understanding inclusion, creating a plan for successful

implementation in the schools, and helping the faculty understand inclusion. They also stated that principals needed to be familiar with the support options that the schools and school districts have to help students with disabilities in the general education setting. After these options have been fully exploited and interventions have been documented, then action could be taken to remove students from the regular educational setting. Schools must prove that a child was not successful and did not receive any academic or social benefits in a regular educational setting even after modifications and special education services were implemented.

Principals have been faced with the responsibility to know the components of the law regarding special education and the mandate to include students with disabilities in the regular setting. The most current federal act regarding special education is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA. IDEA was re-authorized by Congress in 1997 (Individual with Disabilities Education Act of 1997). The new amendments to the act mandated several key aspects of special education. The reauthorization called for more parental and general educator involvement in the Individualized Educational Plan or IEP. This statute outlined the details of the proper components of an IEP. There was to be more formalized monitoring of students with disabilities, which made the district more accountable for student success. It created alternatives for students with behavior problems, and it encouraged resolving disputes between schools and parents to meet the needs of the student. Lastly, it outlined the components of placing students with disabilities into the least restrictive setting or more inclusive setting.

### **Problem Statement**

**In what ways did a principal's leadership affect the change process for the implementation of inclusion?**

### **Purpose of the Study**

**The increasing identification and growth of students into special education, along with court cases and legislative mandates prompted a move towards inclusion. This has placed an increased burden on school site administrators as they attempted to guide schools through these changes to create educational environments that were conducive to educating students with disabilities in the regular setting. The school principal was an important component for completing change within schools; however, the literature and research for the implementation of inclusion was primarily focused on the teacher. As Mayer (1982) noted, "very little information can be found in the professional literature concerning the principal's role for special education. This area is wide open for research" (p. 127).**

**This study analyzed how principals were creating change to facilitate the learning of students with disabilities in the regular classroom setting. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected from participant interviews, document analysis, and program observation. This study was designed to assess an inclusive school program and the role of the principal as a leader for creating change. This study added to the literature by determining the leadership characteristics that created change for an inclusive school.**

## **Research Questions**

Questions were answered from the information gathered by this study. The answers to these questions helped build the knowledge base of the implementation of inclusion and the influence of principals on inclusion programs. The following questions guided the study:

1. What were the various perspectives from teachers of the principal's role in the change process?
2. In what ways did the principal act as a change agent for creating inclusive programs in their schools?
3. What was the process of change used in a high school identified as an inclusive school?
4. How did school climate, principal's support, and staff development program themes emerge out of the change process in the schools?

## **Discussion of Research Design and Methodology**

This study used qualitative methods of obtaining data. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) wrote, "qualitative research methods are ideally suited to examining the world from different points of view" (p. 19). Rice and Ezzy (1999) said, "Qualitative research aims to elicit the contextualized nature of experiences and action, and attempts to generate analysis that are detailed, 'thick' and integrated" (p. 1). Crabtree and Miller (1999) added, "Qualitative methods are usually used for identification, description, and explanation generation" (p. 6). Crabtree and Miller (1999) continued, "Qualitative

description, using qualitative methods, explores the meanings, variations, and perceptual experiences of phenomena and will often seek to capture their holistic or interconnected nature” (p. 6).

### Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study the following definitions apply:

**Inclusion** – defined by the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) “to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled” (IDEA 1997, 300.550).

**Change Agent** – An individual whose task is to alter the structure and functioning of a school system (Duncan, 1972, p. 2).

**Cooperative Teaching** – a team-taught class with a general education teacher and a special education teacher.

**Principal** – the head of a school; the school’s organizational leader.

**Disability** – “The term ‘child with a disability’ means a child – (i) with mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbances (hereinafter referred to as emotional disturbance), orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities; and (ii) who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services” (the Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1997).



### **Limitations**

One limitation was the ability to generalize the findings of this case study to other schools. Another limitation was that the findings of the change process for inclusion may not be applicable to other program changes. The researcher was also a limitation. Researcher novice and lack of experience in the field created limitations for the study.

### **Delimitations**

The study was limited to a high school in a Western state.

### **Significance of the Study**

Court decisions and the implementation of the law have demanded that students with disabilities be placed into more inclusive settings with their non-disabled peers. These mandates have created more pressure for principals to properly and legally implement inclusive programs that would place students with disabilities into the general classroom setting with their non-disabled peers.

The principals, as the school leaders, are responsible for the actions of the school in regard to special education. With inclusion at the forefront of the special education movement and the education of students with disabilities with non-disabled peers, it is important that principals take an active role in implementing more inclusive programs in their schools.

This study gathered data that assessed the principal as an implementer of change for inclusion. This will help state and district administrators evaluate the roles of the principals in the schools so that improvements could be made to help with professional

development and program implementation for the schools. This information will be a tool for assessing programs and servicing students with disabilities with more appropriate and legal means.

### Summary

This chapter discussed the background information of inclusion with the growth of special education and the problems associated with the increasing need for funding. It addressed the importance for principals to be involved in implementing change within their schools toward a more inclusive setting to optimize the learning of students with disabilities. This chapter also created an outline of the entire study by identifying the themes present in the related literature and the procedures to be followed throughout the study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

The review of related literature traced the past development of special education legislative mandates; review the primary court case that established the guidelines for inclusion within the Ninth Circuit; provided an overview of change theory; note the principals' roles as a change agent for implementing inclusion; and highlight other related studies.

#### **Legislative History of Special Education and the Ninth Circuit Precedent**

The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 made it clear that an education could not be denied to people based on racial or religious differences. Supporters of special education used the Brown decision to back their defense to get special education students the right to an adequate education. Before 1960, there were no federally mandated support systems for special education. Verstegen (1998) said that there was some support from individual states; however, the basis of the education was more of a caretaker role with two thirds of the special education population waiting to turn the legal age to be able to drop out of school.

In 1931, the U.S. Office of Education established the Section on Exceptional Children and Youth. This was the first step toward creating the Division of Handicapped Children

and Youth and the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (Gearheart, 1974, p. 59). The next major advancement for the benefit of students with disabilities was in 1958. PL 85-926 was "the most significant of the early enactments on behalf of the handicapped, both in relation to its original content and to later amendments (Gearheart, 1974, p. 60). Podemski, Price, Smith, and Marsh (1984) added, "this legislation, passed in 1958, provided funds for the training of college instructors who would then instruct teachers of the mentally retarded" (p. 5).

Gearheart (1974) noted the "crowning accomplishment, the culmination of all their earlier efforts" (p. 61) was PL 88-164. This act amended the earlier PL 85-926 to include training in areas for the handicapped other than just mental retardation (Podemski, Price, Smith, and Marsh, 1984, p. 5). President John F. Kennedy signed this act into law. This legislation gave special education its own division (Gearheart, 1974, p. 61). Dr. Samuel Kirk, considered to be the country's top expert on special education, led the passage of this act. Kirk emphasized two primary foci, (a) the training of professionals and (b) research and demonstration projects for the handicapped (Gearheart, 1974, p. 62 and Podemski, Price, Smith, and Marsh, 1984, p. 5). In 1966, Title VI, which assisted states with special education students, was added to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (P.L. 89-750). Title VI created the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, provided preschool programs for the handicapped, and started a national advisory committee (Podemski, Price, Smith, and Marsh, 1984).

The Education of Handicapped Children Act (EHA) of 1971 consolidated separate federal programs for special education and became the first federal law solely for special education. This act mandated financial support for students with disabilities and

authorized special programs for these students. This act was amended in 1975 with the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142), which required educating the disabled with the general population (Verstegen, 1998). In practice, however, educators kept students segregated from general education students in their classrooms. The Least Restricted Environment (LRE) was the term used to describe the setting where a student could be closest to the general education setting. Podemski, Price, Smith, and Marsh (1984) described the purpose of P.L. 94-142 with respect to placing students in the least restrictive environment. "A continuum of services should be made available for disabled children, and each child's placement should be carefully considered so that it is as close to the regular class placement as is appropriate for that child's needs and abilities (p. 7). Podemski, Price, Smith, and Marsh also noted that both physical and social integration were important.

In 1990, EHA was re-authorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (PL 101-176). IDEA "clarified the settings in which special education services could be delivered to include instruction in settings other than schools and traditional classrooms" (Verstegen, 1999, p. 15). Notable changes occurred in 1997 with the re-authorization of IDEA, 1997 (P.L. 105-17). This act called for changes in funding formulas to states that did not encourage the placement of students into a more restrictive setting (300.130), so that states that paid more for students who were in a more restricted setting would be penalized. It also required the move of students into the general classroom setting. Section 300.347 of IDEA 1997 called for educators to justify the extent to which disabled children will or will not participate with their nondisabled peers.

The LRE (300.550) in IDEA 1997 clarified and mandated the placement of students with disabilities into the regular classroom setting. The LRE section of IDEA 1997 said that students should be educated “to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled” (300.550). The act also said “that special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily” (300.550).

Section 300.552 of IDEA 1997 said, “in selecting the LRE, consideration is given to any potential harmful effect on the child or on the quality of services that he or she needs; and a child with a disability is not removed from education in age-appropriate regular classrooms solely because of needed modifications in the general curriculum.” This meant that it was the school’s responsibility to ensure that students with disabilities were placed in general education classes by creating modifications for the students to ensure their success.

Bartlett, Weisenstein, and Etscheidt (2002) defined the LRE as:

Under the LRE principle, as defined in the regulations implementing the IDEA, each school must ensure that:

1. To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private facilities, are educated with children without disabilities.

2. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.
3. Each child with a disability participates with non-disabled children in nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities to the maximum extent appropriate (p. 108).

The reauthorization of IDEA 1997 created dramatic changes in special education. It mandated that students with disabilities be placed in the general classroom setting with support and modifications unless this placement was proved to be harmful to the student. This act placed increased pressure on school principals to create settings and placements to accommodate for students with disabilities in the general classroom setting.

The State Department of Education (1996) stated that the state's "policy also embraces the availability of a continuum of placements to meet student's needs, as required by state and federal law. This continuum included instruction in general classes, special classes, special schools, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions (p. 10). The report continued by adding the state's "commitment to individualized decision-making and to the continuum of placements distinguishes (the state's) policy from one which calls for 'full inclusion,' where virtually all students are to be educated in general education classes" (p. 10).

In 1994, a Ninth Circuit court decision, *Sacramento City School District v. Rachael H.*, 14 F.3d 1398 (9th Circuit, 1994) ruled on a case that established a precedent for the

LRE that clarified inclusion for all states within its jurisdiction, including Nevada.

Rachael Holland was a second grade, mentally retarded student in the Sacramento City School District whose parents wanted her to be included with her non-disabled peers in a general education classroom. The district refused the parent's request and wanted to place her in part-time general education classes such as music, art, lunch, and recess.

The court ruled in favor of Rachel's parents based on four factors that later established the precedent for inclusion in the Ninth Circuit. These included: the student's educational benefits; social benefits; classroom disruption; and, cost of the program. The educational benefits were that Rachael improved in her general education class by modeling her peers and reaching the goals in her IEP. Rachael improved socially by interacting with non-disabled peers. Rachael was also not a distraction to the teacher or the other students in her class. She was a well-behaved student who did not take up extra time from the teacher at the expense of the non-disabled students. The financial standard was added when the district used the cost to educate Rachael in the general classroom as an excuse for restricting her placement.

The district had overestimated the costs of including Rachael in the general setting. Therefore, it was not enough justification for her to be removed from the general education setting. The decision of the court left a Ninth Circuit precedent that established a checklist for including disabled children in the general setting. This again included the educational benefits for a student in the general classroom setting, the social, non-academic benefits, the effect on the teacher and non-disabled students, and the costs of mainstreaming.



One of the difficulties of this decision was that the court did not determine the weight that each point had when determining the placement of a student. For example, if a student received educational and social benefits from a general education placement, but was so disruptive that he took away the learning experience from other students, there was nothing to determine the weight of his disruption to his personal benefits. It, therefore, became difficult to justify his appropriate placement.

The Rachael H. decision left school districts and school site administrators with a framework in which to place students into the general classroom setting. The state in which the study took place was included in the Ninth Circuit decision and the school that was studied was bound by its decision. This decision had an effect on school principals, as they were required to justify restricting the placement of disabled students in their schools. For many principals, it meant an entire change was necessary in the school structure to accommodate students with special needs.

The Holland case was later applied in the Ninth Circuit in the *Clyde K. v. Puyallup School District*. No. 3. 35 F.3d 1396 (9th Circuit, 1994). A child, Ryan, had Tourette's Syndrome and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Ryan did not receive any educational or social benefits from being on a comprehensive school campus. Ryan was so disruptive that the other students suffered educationally from Ryan's placement on the campus. Ryan had physically assaulted students at the school. Ryan's parents did not agree with an expulsion that Ryan had received or the school's recommended placement at an alternative school. After applying the Holland standard to the Clyde case, the courts agreed that it was not appropriate for Ryan to be on the campus and should be placed at a more restrictive school.

## Change in Schools

Change in schools is inevitable. It was how change was utilized and understood that helped positively affect schools. Goodlad (1975) noted, "The short history of planned change in schooling suggests that we tend to reject alternative concepts when strategies developed from them supposedly fail, without checking the adequacy of either the interpretation or implementation" (p. 19). Goodlad's warning of not properly utilizing change was backed by other authors. Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (1996) added, "A proposed change in any part of an organization must be carefully assessed in terms of its likely impact on the rest of the organization" (p. 501). Proposed change must be assessed and planned for before being implemented to ensure the success of positive change.

Change needed to be understood before it could be properly implemented. Hopkins, Ainscow, and West (1994) identified two forms of organizational change. The first form of organizational change was incremental. Incremental change is "a gradual, often subtle transition from one state to another" (p. 21). Lindblom (1990) discussed incremental change by suggesting, "that people think alike because on complex issues they think incrementally, that is, about small changes in existing policies, and that they must do so because the political system can ordinarily cope with no more than incremental policy proposals" (p. 122). According to Hopkins, Ainscow, and West, the second form of organizational change was defined as planned change. Planned change "seeks to interpret the natural development of events, and often on a given day, to break with previous practice to establish a new order" (p. 21). One form of change, according to Hopkins, Ainscow, and West, was an unnoticed natural occurrence while the other was a prompted, intentional act. Hopkins, Ainscow, and West also noted two sources of

change. The first was internal change, which was a more natural change for individuals or systems. The other source of change was the external force, which “is what others would do to us, to our schools” (p. 21).

Ogawa, Crowson, and Goldring (1999) added to the definition of internal and external change. Internal change was broken into four dilemmas including: a. goals; b. task structure; c. professionalism; and, d. hierarchy. These dilemmas are at odds with each other because they are a contradiction of individual needs and the organizational goals. External change was broken into three dilemmas including: a. persistence; b. boundaries; and, c. compliance. Ogawa, Crowson, and Goldring (1999) said, “These dilemmas begin with the fundamental tension between maintaining the integrity of organization, or persistence, and adapting to changes in the environment” (p. 285). External conflict is a contradiction between organizational boundaries and environmental demands.

Goodlad (1975) also discussed internal and external change. External change was the source of changes that directly and immediately affected the schools. The outside or external forces have influence on schools. Goodlad (1975) added to this concept of external and internal change by discussing inner- and outer-directed approaches to change. Goodlad (1975) warned, “change will be combined into change strategies which are inadequately conceived and executed” (p. 19). He further noted, “Change arising from without usually is foreign to the system for which it is intended and is rejected like an unsuitable transplanted kidney” (Goodlad, 1975, p. 19).

Goodlad did warn about the influence of external or outside change without suggesting its usefulness. “Whether productive change is likely to come more from without than from within, or the reverse, depends on whether one has in mind aims,

goals, functions, or regularities” (Goodlad, 1975, p. 13). Jung (1967) continued by adding, “In many instances, the most rational strategy for change may involve the combined efforts of external and internal change agents working together to affect some desired result” (p. 89).

Not only do internal and external forces have an effect on change, but the way it is implemented has an effect on the change process as well. The way change was implemented had an effect on its success. Hoy and Miskel (1996) said, “There is no quick and simple way to change the culture of schools” (p. 162). “Long-term systematic effort is more likely to produce change than short-term fads” (Hoy and Miskel, 1996, p. 162). Owens (1995) argued that changing the power relationships in the school would be the way to create effective change (p. 208).

Hopkins, Ainscow, and West (1994) noted change “manifests only in the way that teachers and pupils interact” (p. 24). “Change, if it is to mean anything at all, has to have an impact at the classroom level – on the hearts and minds of teachers and students” (p. 24). Hopkins, Ainscow, and West saw the effectiveness of change in schools taking place directly with the teachers and students. McKenzie (1987) added, “Lasting change requires that leaders establish and maintain intimacy with those who will create and sustain the changes” (p. 139).

Hopkins, Ainscow, and West (1994) also identified three steps for change implementation, which included initiation, implementation, and institutionalization. The initiation stage was the point at which the change agent decided to start a new innovation or new process. The implementation stage was the stage where the innovation was put into action. The final stage was the institutionalization stage, which was when the new

innovation or program became a part of the normal procedures of the organization (p. 36). Owens (1995) had a similar view about change becoming part of the organization. He said, "Change is likely to be stabilized and maintained in the organization over time, when the new, more efficient level of performance can be maintained without coercion and without continuous expenditures of administrative energy and vigilance to keep it going" (p. 234).

Change in schools is often difficult to accomplish for several reasons. Clausen (1985) wrote, "This disparity between the rate of change in education and in other institutions may be explained in part by the facts of education's reliance on people for change and of people's intuitive resistance to change" (p. 11). Chauvin and Ellett (1993) noted that strong leadership was important and stated that, "proactive and strategic leadership style may be an essential key to altering organizational norms and values to ensure long-lasting change that is incorporated into everyday life in schools". Havelock and Havelock (1973) said that in order to respond to resistance the change agent should elicit the training and experience of trainees as resources (p. 55).

The influence of strong leadership is an important element in the change process. Sergiovanni (2000) noted, "Leadership should not block poorly conceived and potentially harmful change, but leadership should turn things around" (p. 27). He added, "Poor leadership is helpful when trying to implement programs not worth implementing" (p. 31). Sergiovanni was making the point that poor leadership skills will not likely lead to implementation of change.

Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) noted that, "change may come about either because it is imposed on us or because we voluntarily participate in, or even initiate, change when

we find dissatisfaction, inconsistency, or intolerability in our current situation” (p. 31). Hopkins (1991) furthered the concept of change by suggesting how leaders should deal with it; observing that leaders should understand that change takes place over a period of time. Hopkins, Ainscow, and West (1994) added that leaders needed to embrace many different perspectives and invest in teachers and schools. Another reminder that Hopkins, Ainscow, and West added was that leaders needed to understand the process of change and be self-conscious about their role in the process (p. 40).

The issue of resistance was evident throughout the literature. Janas (1999) said, “staff developers need to play pivotal roles in recognizing, understanding and minimizing resistance before it evolved into a barrier to progress” (p. 15). Janas (1999) contended that resistance to change was normal, but that it created a barrier for change to occur. Janas (1999) also added that a problem with resistance was that it was the gap between vision and reality for the expectations of the change (p. 13). Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) warned that an obstacle to change was bureaucracy (p. 94). Janas (1999) warned, “be aware of resistance, identify sources and types of resistance and develop and apply proactive strategies for managing resistance” (p. 14). Evans (1996) encouraged the aspect of resistance stating, “Advocates of reform do not want perpetual openness to change if this means shifting like a weather vane” (p. 27). Evans argued that resistance helped create a more sustained end result.

Rossman, Corbett, and Firestone (1988) commented that, “the prescription for overcoming resistance to change was participation” (p. 19). Duncan (1972) added that resistance should be found and that it needed to be reduced in several different ways (p. 7). Duncan and Hopkins, Ainscow, and West (1994) suggested that leaders should

anticipate resistance. Once this was accomplished leaders needed to find out the problems of resisters to see if there were other misunderstandings. Members needed to be involved in the change process, and long-term benefits needed to be clear to everyone involved in the change process.

Janas (1999) identified three types of resistance; including, aggressive, passive-aggressive, and passive. Aggressive resistance was identified by an overt refusal to participate. In other words, there was no disguise in the emotions and feelings of the aggressive resister. The aggressive resister simply would refuse to act. The passive-aggressive would create excuses to avoid participation but would not directly refuse. Other work would have to come before they would participate, and that other work would never get done. The last and most difficult to identify was the passive resister. This person appeared as though he would be a whole-hearted participator in the change process but would simply never get around to doing it.

Chauvin and Ellett (1993) characterized three elements of planned organizational change in schools and the principal's role. The first element of planned organizational change said that principals needed to be aware of and sensitive to teachers' needs and reservations about change. The second was that professional development for teachers should focus on the awareness of their role and the principal's role in the change process. The third element described how a generic and prescriptive process was not successful for the implementation of planned organizational change in schools. He added, "There is no singular and best way to successfully achieve planned change in schools" (p. 31).

Janas (1999) made suggestions on what to do about change. First, Janas said that leaders should acknowledge change as a process. They needed to empower and

encourage stakeholders and make them decision makers and active, invested participants. Owens (1995) also noted the importance of participative decision-making. He said that decision-making required the power and influence of the administrator and the other people in the organization.

Janas (1999) added that there needed to be concrete goals. The leaders needed to show sensitivity by managing conflict and valuing each member. Leaders should teach through modeling skills and developing strategies for dealing with emotions of loss or anxiety due to change. Leaders needed to manage conflict by inviting people to negotiate resistance and communicate. Finally, the leader needed to monitor the process of dynamics and adjust (p. 14).

### **The Principal as an Agent of Change**

With all these definitions and aspects of change, it is important to define what type of person would create the change. There were several words that described this person in the literature including the change agent and the change facilitator, but for the purpose of this research the terms will be used interchangeably. Smith (1981) defined a change agent as, "a power external to the individual school, a power which seeks to effect change through influencing the people in that school" (p. 5). Duncan (1972) defined a change agent as, "an individual whose task is to alter the structure and functioning of a school system" (p. 2). Duncan did not delineate between external or internal agents. Havelock (1982) defined the change agent as "A person who facilitates planned change or planned innovation" (p. 5). "A change agent is an individual who influences clients' innovation decisions in a direction deemed desirable by a change agency" (Rogers, 1983, p. 28).



Havelock (1982) identified four roles of a change agent: (a) the catalyst, (b) the solution giver, (c) the process helper, and (d) the resource linker. A change agent acts as a catalyst when, dissatisfied with the status quo, he/she energizes those who are not necessarily interested in making a change into making one. As a catalyst, the change agent “get[s] things started.” In role of the solution giver, the change agent encourages others to adopt the specific ideas to solve problems. As a process helper change agents assist others by offering their expertise and guiding others through a problem-solving process. When a change agent acts as a resource linker, he/she brings together the organization’s needs and resources. Resources might include finances, people, expertise, solutions, time, energy, or motivation (p. 8-9).

Havelock’s conceptualization of the roles played by the change agent corresponds to roles and behaviors identified in other leadership theories. For example, Yukl (1994) identified leadership practices or behaviors based on thirty years of leadership studies. His integrated taxonomy included the following fourteen behavior categories:

- a. **Planning and organizing:** Determining strategies, objectives, prioritizing resources, and improving productivity.
- b. **Problem solving:** Identifying and analyzing problems to establish solutions.
- c. **Clarifying roles and objectives:** Communicating job responsibilities, tasks, and expectations.
- d. **Informing:** Disseminating information that people need to accomplish their work.
- e. **Monitoring:** Checking on the work and evaluating performances.
- f. **Motivating and inspiring:** Creating enthusiasm and commitment to work.

- g. **Consulting:** Talking to the workers and soliciting input from them when making decisions.
- h. **Delegating:** Giving the responsibility to others to make decisions.
- i. **Supporting:** Being friendly, considerate, and showing sympathy for others.
- j. **Developing and mentoring:** Doing things to enhance the skills of others.
- k. **Managing conflict and team building:** Conflict resolution, and encouraging teamwork.
- l. **Networking:** Developing and maintaining contacts with others.
- m. **Recognizing:** Acknowledging others for achievements and efforts.
- n. **Rewarding:** Providing tangible rewards for performance (p. 69).

The change agent needed to be acknowledged by, express his expectations to, and be given power by the change target or client system (Duncan, 1972, p. 3). Duncan (1972) said that the change agent needed to establish a relationship with the client (p. 3). Smith (1981) defined change agent as a status quo supporter or someone who fights external change from hindering the school's function (p. 7). Duncan (1972) defined the role of the change agent as the expert, catalyst, or the process consultant. The expert provided direct solutions. The catalyst pressured others to change. The process consultant worked with clients to help them interpret feedback (p. 6). Haynes and Blomstedt (1986) defined other roles for change agents. The change agent's role was to promote, "positive attitudes for high teacher morale," effectively communicate, have "strong effective leadership," and give "efficient and impartial evaluation strategies" (p. 3).

Duncan (1972) noted that change agents needed to gather information and data from a sample representing all members of an organization. Observations, interviews, or

questionnaires could gather the information (p. 4). Baldrige and Deal (1975) added, "Principals should assess the staff through discussion and questionnaires to determine commitments, values and social pressures" before progression with a new innovation (p. 326). Clausen (1988) compared the principal as a change agent to the manager. Change agents could be an initiator or someone who listened to his or her teachers and set high expectations, and the manager was perceived by teachers to have a good work climate and kept the organization running smoothly (p. 26).

The change agent has the responsibility of creating change within the organization, which can be difficult for several reasons. Fullan and Stiegelbauer described problems faced by many principals as they were forced to implement changes. "The expectation that principals should be leaders in the implementation of changes that they had no hand in developing and may not understand is especially troublesome. Amidst the conflicting demands and problems described by principals and researchers, taking on a change agent's role seems most problematic, especially as it is not clear exactly what that means" (Fullan and Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 152). Olson (2000) continued this idea of a misunderstanding of identification of roles by adding, "it is by no means clear precisely what is meant by 'instructional leadership'" (p. 4). Thus, furthering some of the confusion faced by principals as they take on the role of implementers of change.

Keyes (1999) noted, "creating schools that are inclusive often requires administrators to engender an environment in which members begin to question the status quo" (p. 19). Hall and Hord (1987) added, "the research on principals as change agents consistently reports that principals can make a difference and that there are some distinguishable ways in which they behave that determines their effectiveness" (p. 48). Clausen (1985)

continued, “effective principals need two kinds of vision: (1) a vision of their schools and their role within these schools, and (2) a vision of the change process” (p. 21).

“The effective principal must be both a leader and a manager” (DuFour and Eaker, 1992, p. 47). Binda (1991) added the principal was, “a crucial person in the curriculum change process, contrary to research findings that showed the principal being occupied with managerial tasks” (p. 25). Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) said, “Change is only one small part of the forces competing for the principal’s attention, and usually not the most compelling one. Yet, some principals are actively engaged as initiators or facilitators of continuous improvements in their schools” (p. 144).

Hall and Hord (1987) reiterated that the principal has a role of change facilitator. “The principal who manages change must never stand still – must never stop learning” (Tomkins, 1969, p. 17). Dufour and Eaker (1992) established four roles of the principal as an agent of change. These included the principal as the empowerer of teachers; promoter and protector of values; instructional leader; and manager of climate (p. 47).

Tompkins and Trump (1968) said, “the complex problems which the United States faces today – technological innovations, the explosion of knowledge and population, urbanization and changing societal relationships – profoundly affect the schools of this country. To cope with these problems, the secondary school principal must become the manager of change” (p. 1). Smith (1981) noted the importance of the principal in the change process (p. 4). “Clearly, the principal is a key leader as the titular head of the school, holding whatever power and authority that accompanies the position. The

principal, regardless of traits, style, or familiarity with change models, is thus perceived as the best situated leader in the school for making school improvements" (Hall and Hord, 1987, p. 51).

Hall and Hord (1987) continued to define the role of the principal in the schools, "the studies of principals, whether in the leadership studies, the studies of effective principals, or the studies of principals as change facilitators, show that the principal is considered to be a prime factor in the process of change and school improvement" (p. 50). Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (1996) followed the same example, "The effective leader can assist followers through the change process by managing rumors, communicating concrete information, and providing symbols to demonstrate what is important to the organization" (p. 484).

"In his role of managing change, the principal is responsible for selecting new programs and procedures, enlisting teacher aid in that selection, resolving staff resistance to change within the school, identifying those staff members best equipped to act as 'change agents', and working with them to implement change" (Tompkins and Trump, 1968, p. 1). Hall and Hord (1987) continued to emphasize the principal's role of facilitator by stating that principals with more facilitative styles of leadership had more success implementing new programs than did the managerial style leader (p. 47).

Smith (1981) noted, "Principals need to recognize change as a recurrent theme" (p. 6). Hall and Hord (1987) added that before a change was implemented the principal needed to agree with the project, take an active role in selling it, be a problem solver, and continue to commit and provide resources once it was implemented (p. 46). Chauvin and Ellett (1993) continued, "As a measure of proactive/strategic leadership, three distinct

aspects of effective principal leadership seem to be evident: 1) task structure; 2) consideration for people; and, 3) strategic sense or vision" (p. 34).

Jung (1967) said that not only the principal, but any person could be the change agent. "Any person within a system has the potential as a change agent, or has some potential as a force maintaining the equilibrium of the current operational system" (p. 89). Clausen (1985) concurred, "Change is a process for principals as well as teachers – it is not an event" (p. 42).

Sparks (1999) noted that it was important to get principals and superintendents to understand the power of beliefs, how to communicate beliefs, and how to get people to understand how their beliefs affect the nature of the school and how the students learn. The lack of resources made accomplishing change difficult. Huling (1982) argued, "Principals do not have the opportunities and resources which can be used to bring about change in their schools" (p. 2). Binda (1991) added that overcoming the limited resources could be achieved:

Making choices with limited resources, but having a deep commitment to curriculum change, utilizing quite adeptly the expertise of other change facilitators, providing for professional development and instructional leadership, or demonstrating initiative, and providing the conditions for harmonious climate through negotiations, collegial, participatory planning and decision making, principals in this study were able to achieve high levels of implementation success (p. 26).

Clausen (1985) not only added to the concept of necessary resources, but he also discussed staff development for principals. This staff development for principals included

obtaining good skills developed through good training, and that effective training must consider the individual concerns of the facilitator (p. 42).

The principal's effect on teachers was an important part of the change process. Haynes and Blomstedt (1986) said, "The principal who functions as a successful change agent and who uses top leadership skills will be able to have a positive influence upon the overall quality of instruction" (p. 11). Perez (1999) added, "A principal's words, actions, and decisions demonstrate a pledge to turn the school into a better place for learning and a better place to work. A principal can make the reform agenda a priority through a variety of initiatives" (p. 62). Baldrige and Deal (1975) noted the importance of communicating to the staff by stating, "staff must be aware of the priority that the principal places on the improvement of classroom teaching" (p. 325).

Hall and Hord (1987) did not simply give suggestions for principals to promote learning, they developed a way to monitor the different stages of concern during the implementation of a new innovation. Research has demonstrated that at different points in the change process, different Stages of Concern will be more intense" (Hall and Hord, 1987, p. 13). The Concerns-Based Approach or CBAM (Concerns-Based Adoptions Model) was the model developed by Hall and Hord (1987). Hall and Hord noted, "One particularly important precondition in the concerns-based approach is that the effective change facilitator understand how his or her clients perceive change and adjust what he or she does accordingly" (p. 5).

**Hall and Hord (1987) noted several assumptions of CBAM.**

- 1. Understanding the point of view of the participants in the change process is critical**
- 2. Change is a process, not an event**
- 3. It is possible to anticipate much that will occur during a change process**
- 4. Innovations come in all sizes and shapes**
- 5. Innovation and implementation are two sides of the change process coin**
- 6. To change something, someone has to change first**
- 7. Everyone can be a change facilitator (p. 9).**

**According to Burrello and Sage (1979), “The effects of many changes in the field, as well as the pressing need for still more changes, places a high demand on leadership from those persons who hold administrative positions in special education” (p. 201). Burrello and Sage added that leaders must be aware of and recognize elements of change, and they must be seen as change facilitators and promoters of change.**

**Podemski, Price, Smith, and Marsh (1984) contributed “perhaps the greatest task for the administrator is to adopt a new role as a ‘change agent’ who is an advocate for handicapped students and exhibits supporting attitudes for the faculty. Thus, leadership becomes a process of behaving rather than merely complying with the letter of the law” (p. 2). Coley, Cradler, and Engel (1997), stressed the role of the administrator in creating change by adding, “Research on the adoption of innovations in schools consistently points to the key role of administrators in successful implementation” (p.5).**

**Gearheart (1974) clarified the role of administrators by stating, “The administrator can be a living example of one who keeps abreast of new developments, and by his**



examples encourage others to do the same” (p.146). Scott (1999) identified the aspects of an effective leader by stating, “the most effective leaders and managers of ongoing change like the people occupying all the roles in an educational service, need to possess a wide range of performance skills specifically relevant to their particular role an context” (163). Gearheart (1974) also added, “He can demonstrate his open-mindedness and his desire to innovate, thus encouraging the use of new ideas and materials” (p.146). The principal’s role as a facilitator of change is an important duty as a leader of his schools.

Principals should plan for improvement of the programs and focus on staff development that encourages quality education. Finally, principals should continually evaluate programs after reviewing collected data (p. 129).

Mayer (1982) also focused on the principal’s role of managing special education programs by implementing and maintaining a special education program and participating in IEP procedures such as communicating the law and procedures to parents and staff (p. 129-130). Mayer also said that the principal should establish procedures to maintain confidentiality, record keeping, and special education access to rooms.

Mayer (1982) specified seven assumptions of the school principal’s roles.

1. The principals should perceive the value inherent in special education programs and provide beneficial and meaningful services.
2. The principals felt that special education helps regular education teachers because it relieves them of full responsibility.
3. The principals were “in charge of any program placed in their building” (p. 128).
4. The principals were uncomfortable with their knowledge of special education law, curriculum, and handicapping condition.

5. **Principals were overwhelmed with time commitments for compliance, such as, “IEP meetings, notices to parents, annual reviews, record keeping, and reporting” (p. 128).**
6. **The assumption was that principals should “have a genuine desire to implement and maintain quality special education programs in their building” (128).**
7. **Principals must provide leadership and a positive attitude regarding education in the least restrictive environment.**

### **Climate**

Owens (2001) said, “many different terms have been used to identify that sense of the unique characteristics that the organizations have. People sometimes use such terms as ‘atmosphere,’ ‘personality,’ ‘tone,’ or ‘ethos’ when speaking of this unique characteristic of a school” (p. 139). Owens continued, “climate refers to perceptions of persons in the organization that reflect those norms, assumptions, and beliefs” (p. 145). Owens added, “Organizational climate is the study of perceptions that individuals have of various aspects of the environment in the organization” (p. 150). Owens’s definitions of climate were useful in understanding the principal’s role as a change agent for creating a climate that is conducive for educating students with disabilities in the regular classroom setting.

Owens (1995) created a social systems model out of Tagiuri’s description of an organizational model. Owens wrote about organizational dimensions and how they influenced school climate. These dimensions included the school culture or the norms of

the school, ecology or the physical make-up of the school and technology, milieu or morale, and the decision-making aspect of the school or the organization. Each dimension has an effect on the overall school climate.

At the school level, the principal's role as the change agent was evident. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) wrote, "nearly all school district role descriptions stress the instructional leadership responsibilities of the principal – facilitating change, helping teachers work together, assessing and furthering school improvement, and so on" (p. 145). Fullan and Stiegelbauer continued, "The principal's change agent role has come front and center. Over the last decade, research has progressed from examining the principal's role in implementing specific innovations to her or his role in changing the very culture of the school" (p. 152-153).

Smith (1981) said that principals who were confident did not feel threatened by change, while other principals may have felt out of control when change occurred and took a negative position on it. Smith continued, "The proactive or reactive stance of the principal will determine the success or failure of changes that are initiated" (p. 8). Smith added that the school climate is changed by whether a principal embraces the change or resists it. Smith also commented that the principal perceived change and the action that was taken determined the tone or "climate" of the school (p. 4).

Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) warned that some principals were too quick to implement change, "failing to appreciate that even small changes can transgress sacred elements of the school culture" (p. 85). Smith (1999) continued to warn principals of the effect they have on the culture, "Leaders must acquire the ability to see the myriad of

connections between their actions as change agents and the incredibly complex ripple effect on the system as a whole” (p. 603).

Huling (1982) continued, “Interventions made by the principal did have an effect on teachers and their use of instructional innovation” (p. 27). Haynes and Blomstedt (1986) added, “teacher morale and, consequently, teacher effectiveness and the effectiveness of the entire school operation may be significantly impacted by the effectiveness of the principal as change agent” (p. 4). Rossman, Firestone, and Corbett (1988) said, “Both teachers and other members of the school community are likely to respond to a change in terms of its fit with the existing culture” (p. 21).

Mayer (1982) also noted the importance of the advocate role for the principal indicating that principals should create an open climate in their schools for experimentation and change by being informed of other programs and utilizing other ideas, assisting teachers with implementation of new teaching techniques and curriculum development. Mayer further stressed the importance of involving the students, staff, and community in the educational experience.

Janney, Snell, Beers, and Raynes (1995) recommended that principals should not force change. Principals should start small and build to include more people (p. 434). They needed to create an environment that enabled teachers to build ownership in the program by asking for volunteers who were willing to be part of developing an inclusive program. The idea was that other teachers would see the success and would want to become a part of it; experienced teachers in the program would encourage others to become involved (p. 433).

Dyal, Flynt, and Bennet-Walker (1996) also determined that the school principal was important in creating an educational climate for inclusion. "If inclusive policies are implemented in schools the success or failure of these policies will depend in large part on the principal" (p. 33). They determined principals created the successful transition toward inclusion. One way they promoted a successful transition towards inclusion was through shared leadership.

Anderson and Decker (1993) emphasized the necessity for principals to create a positive climate. Specifically, Anderson and Decker (1993) talked about creating this environment in a small setting; nevertheless, it could carry over into the school and the overall principal's attitude. Some of their suggestions included creating a relaxed, comfortable atmosphere that was honest, yet positive. They said that the principal should allow for equal input and practice good listening skills. They stressed the importance of good interpersonal skills, and they stressed the idea that the principal should always keep the needs of the students as the focus (p. 5)

Dyal, Flynt, and Bennett-Walker (1996) reiterated the fact that principals created the school climate that supported inclusion. They stated that in order to do this, principals needed to share responsibility with others in the school by creating flexible schedules and organizing teams of involved people to work on inclusion and problem solving issues (p. 32).

### Support

Lasky, Karge, Robb and McCabe (1995) said that to help principals accommodate teachers they needed to take into account the rate of teachers leaving the field. The large

attrition rate among special education teachers was a pressing issue for administrators. Teachers often blamed the principal for increasing their stress. "Teachers report that administrators' and supervisors' incompetence, unavailability, lack of support, and poor communication skills increase their stress and burnout levels" (Lasky, Karge, Robb, and McCabe, 1995, p. 2). According to Lasky Karge and Robb (1995) beginning teachers also obtained no professional guidance, support, or supervision from their principals (p. 2).

Teachers who found their principals to be supportive and competent tended to have less stress (p. 2). Lasky, Karge, Robb and McCabe (1995) suggested that principals needed to familiarize themselves with special education issues to help not only the special education staff but also the staff as a whole to become successful in their duties (p. 13).

Janney, Snell, Beers, and Raynes (1995) noted that in past studies most of the general education teachers who were not familiar with inclusion of special needs students had negative feelings about having these students placed in their classes. General education teachers who had no experience with working in inclusive classrooms were not as open minded and willing to support inclusion. Teachers who had support from administrators and special education teachers had a different and positive experience. These studies were successful in promoting inclusion and creating change that produced positive results for students and schools (p. 426).

Sires and Tonnensen (1993) created suggestions for principals after they noted that several studies concluded that administrators were not offering the needed support to educators. Principals' decisions caused increased stress levels among the staff as well as

low morale. "Several respondents to our survey noted that principals actively opposed central office decisions to place special education classes in their schools. Such actions may well set the stage for a poor working relationship" (Sires & Tonnensen, 1993, p. 10).

Villa, Thousand, Meyers, and Nevin (1996) reported that administrators were necessary for the "implementation of exemplary practices" of inclusion (p. 41). They noted that along with the collaboration of the regular and special education students, administrative support was the most powerful predictor of attitudes towards inclusion.

There were many difficulties for administrators to overcome when dealing with inclusion, and many researchers were willing to offer suggestions to facilitate a successful experience. One of the most frequently suggested tactics for inclusion was administrative support. Villa, Thousand, Meyers, and Nevin (1996) stressed the importance of administrative support. Lasky, Karge, Robb, and McCabe (1995) added that supportive principals were critical to the success of the beginning special education teacher. Teachers whose principals showed support and appreciation had less stress and more success in their jobs (p. 2).

Janney, Snell, Beers, and Raynes (1995) found that principals were the focus of administrative support for inclusion. They stated that principals had the "responsibility for getting access to resources, including staff, materials, and inservice training and for handling logistics such as scheduling and transportation" (p. 432). These items were noted as a principal's duty, however, developing a positive school climate was also important for the principal.

Janney, Snell, Beers, and Raynes (1995) noted that principals created the environments in which collaboration and team problem-solving interaction was

successful. They said that principals needed to treat teachers as professionals and understand that creating change can be difficult.

Conard and Whitaker (1997) reiterated the importance of the principal and a successful transition to an inclusive school. The principal was the one person responsible for creating a building plan for implementing inclusion. Once again the emphasis was on in-service training and creating positive teaching models. Principals had the duty to ensure that the staff was fully aware of the IEPs and the legal issues related to special education (p. 209). The principal could help meet the needs of everyone in the school if he fully understood the law concerning inclusion and created a plan for its success.

Gameros (1995) stated that principals had an important role in creating an inclusive school. He added, "Inclusive principals have a vision of what their schools can be. They translate, structure, and implement their vision to create an inclusive environment. The principals in this study believe that their leadership and vision play an important role in providing services to students with disabilities" (p. 18).

Gameros (1995) noted that principals who supported inclusion accepted the responsibility to educate all students. These administrators created a positive environment for students to learn (p. 18). They also ensured that the educators at their schools accepted the responsibility of promoting inclusion.

Podemski, Price, Smith and Marsh (1984) added that the alienation of the special education teacher was exacerbated, because they could not go to the principal for leadership or support like the other teachers. The principal would allow other specialists to make decisions and recommendations due to their own lack of knowledge (p. 9).

Podemski (1984) further added that due to lack of experience and knowledge, some



principals did not want to evaluate their special education teachers as they did other members of the staff in a variety of curriculum areas (p. 2).

Tomkins (1968) listed four basic changes that a principal could implement to promote learning and professionalization of teaching. First, principals needed to devote three-fourths of their time to instruction. Second, teachers needed to work to improve their own teaching, and it is the principal's role to make the time for them to do so. Third, there needed to be release time for students to work on independent study. Fourth, there needed to be an increase in material needs like building equipment, supplies and money.

One difficulty was obtaining, training, and keeping special education teachers. Special education teachers were important for the success of an inclusion program. There was a shortage of special education teachers across the country. Lasky, Karge, Robb, and McCabe (1995) said, "principals play a critical role in the success or failure of beginning special education teachers" (p. 2).

In addition to keeping teachers, it was shown that unqualified teachers were in the classrooms. In California, for example, a study showed that "30 percent or more of teachers serving students with disabilities are not certified in their area of teaching" (Podemski, Price, Smith and Marsh, 1984, p. 3). Since there was such a teacher shortage, many classes were being taught with non-certified teachers.

Dyal, Flynt, and Bennett-Walker (1996) noted that regular education teachers had little to no training with special needs students, therefore they suggested that the principal provide opportunities for professional development. Likewise, only 3.5 percent of

administrators felt that they had excellent training in special education inclusion issues (p. 33). Dyal et al. (1996) also stated that principals needed to provide professional development opportunities for their staff.

### **Staff Development**

Burrello and Sage (1979) pointed out that PL 94-142 called for personnel development to train and educate teachers and administrators to fulfill requirements of the law (p. 49). Chaiken and Harper (1979) said, "Staff development activities should involve entire staff – principals, counselors and teachers. Both administrative and instructional adjustments must be made" (p. 31). The importance of administrators' involvement was emphasized by Burrello and Sage (1979), "the administrator must be more heavily involved in staff development" (p. 186).

Hall and Hord (1987) said, "The most significant way to improve schools is through improving the instructional performance of the teachers. Changing a teacher's practices and improving instruction is the bottom line, but teachers need assistance to change and develop" (p. 4). "Failure to realize the need for staff development both at the beginning of a reform initiative and during the implementation phase is a common problem" (Moffett, 2000, p. 37).

Sage and Burrello (1986) noted the difference between three forms of personnel development. The first form of development is in-service or continuing education. The second form is that of supervision, and the third is consultation and networking of staff resources (p. 164).

Principals needed to also make sure that they understand the law with respect to special education, and they should be sure that their staff does as well (Conrad and Whitaker, 1997, p.209). Conrad and Whitaker (1997) pointed out that administrators needed to create a plan for how they could successfully implement inclusion in their schools (p. 209).

Principals and school administrators have faced many difficult decisions with respect to inclusion. There were many factors that had to be taken into consideration before a principal decided to create an inclusive school. The principal had to gain knowledge and understanding of the law, and he should help his staff understand the law through the creation of in-services and time for teacher collaboration.

The actions of principals influence the staff. Perez (1999) said principals needed to support and “encourage faculty to try new approaches and value experimentation” (p. 63). “Principals need to communicate that failure and mistakes are supported” (Perez, 1999, p. 63). Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) added teachers are key to implementing change within a school. “But where leadership and school environments are particularly and persistently unsupportive, the success of teacher efforts will be slim, short-lived or non-existent, and teachers will quickly learn not to make them” (p. 84).

Evans and Mohr (1999) noted seven core beliefs for professional development for principals.

1. Principals’ learning is personal and yet takes place most effectively while working in groups.
2. Principals foster more powerful faculty and student learning by focusing on their own learning.

3. While we honor principals' thinking and voices, we want to push them to move beyond their assumptions.
4. Focused reflection takes time away from doing work; yet it is essential.
5. It takes strong leadership in order to have truly democratic learning.
6. Rigorous planning is necessary for flexible and responsive implementation.
7. New learning depends on protected dissonance (p. 530-532).

McKenzie (1987) noted the need for the principal to create an environment for teachers to take risks. "Teachers need to practice new skills before they try them in their classrooms" (p. 99). Baldrige and Deal (1975) added that the principal should show support of teachers implementing new ideas and that their research showed that "a principal's sensitivity is related positively to his staff's tendency to innovate" (p. 325). Baldrige and Deal continued by saying "the principal may encourage an atmosphere where the entire staff publicly supports innovation" (p. 324). Keyes and Udvari-Solner (1999) added that teachers and students needed to feel safe so they could express their feelings. Trust was needed to promote "acceptance, encourage risk-taking and fostering confirmation of self" (p. 19).

Gearheart (1974) stated that competent personnel were necessary for a good program and that knowledge, training and experience were needed for enhancement (p. 21). Gearheart (1974) continued by stating, "If the administrator is sufficiently motivated the attitude will be contagious; the resultant better teaching will make boys and girls the final beneficiaries of this chain of events. This is the major goal of professional development efforts" (p. 146). He advised administrators on staff development by encourage them to participate and encourage others to participate in training, make staff development

training more interesting, and to advise teachers to participate in professional organizations and personal growth activities (Gearheart, 1974, p. 146).

### Recent Studies

There have been studies geared toward researching leadership and special education. The first study done by Hooper (1996) utilized CBAM for determining superintendents' concern toward serving children with disabilities. Hooper (1996) concluded the school district size and the proportion of special needs students made "no significant difference regarding the superintendents' concerns about inclusion" (p. 86-87). Hooper (1996) also found that superintendents that reported being in the planning stages of implementation were more interested in learning about inclusion, implementation requirements, and the impact on students (p. 87). In contrast, the superintendents in the planning stage, those who reported full implementation, were less concerned about management problems of seeking alternatives to inclusion (p. 87).

Another conclusion that Hooper (1996) found was that, "Superintendents do not perceive themselves as facilitators regarding the implementation of inclusion (p. 87). However, "Superintendents see themselves playing a significant role when the district is planning for the implementation of inclusion" (p. 88). Superintendents report that they are involved in the implementation of inclusion with the planning and discussion of its implementation (p. 88). Hooper (1996) found that "Superintendents are uncertain whether inclusion is the preferred or most effective method for serving special needs children" (p. 88).

A second study conducted by Miller (2000) looked at the high school administrator in the implementation of inclusion for the severely disabled. Miller (2000) found that there was no significant difference between administrators who had taken zero to one in-service workshops on inclusion and more than one workshop when measuring the role taken by the administrator, their concerns about inclusion, or their perceptions of necessary modifications. From this study, Miller (2000) found that the training an administrator receives is not significant in implementing inclusion. Miller also concluded, "school administrators do not extend themselves much beyond the role they typically play" (p. 99).

Miller's (2000) study found that there was no guarantee that there will be enough funding or resources to implement inclusion. Miller (2000) concluded, "There is a strong relationship between the perceived projected success of an included student and the amount of classroom disruption caused by that student and/or the amount of teacher time needed to educate that student" (p. 100). And, Miller (2000) found that there is similarity on the roles of high school and elementary school administrators when working with inclusion. One of the recommendations for further study given by Miller (2000) was to investigate, "the support that teachers perceive they receive from their district and site administrator" (p. 104).

Morton (2000) wrote another study that collected data on special education teachers' perceptions of leadership characteristics:

Special education teachers perceive inclusive principals as being very instrumental in the way inclusive education is accepted in the school building. The principal must provide a supportive environment for teachers to work. As the

review of the literature indicates, teachers are more satisfied and productive when receiving support for the principal. Special education teachers also believe the inclusive principal's knowledge and skill are essential to leadership effectiveness. Principals must become knowledgeable about current trends and practices inclusive education. Principals must also be aware of the specific scheduling and planning needs of the teaching staff. Finally, the inclusive principal must demonstrate a concern for the success of all students, regardless of a label or disability (p. 86).

### State Studies

The State Department of Education (1996) obtained information from a survey that it had sent to teachers and administrators in the state. Some of the concerns regarding the past staff development programs in the state included limits in the number of days for training, access to experts and University course work, and funding.

In the study conducted by the Nevada Department of Education (1996), it was also concluded from survey results that, "A majority of special and general education teachers who were surveyed reported that they have not had recent training on inclusion that would give them specific strategies they can use in the classroom" (p. i). It was also found that forty percent of the school personnel did not know that their local districts had created policies that followed federal regulations (p. i). This survey caused concern regarding staff development for general education and special education teachers. There were many other difficulties were related to staff development.

The Equity Team conducted a study and noted that administrators had a different perception on the usefulness of the state's training programs. "Administrators; however, tended to agree that recent training in using successful techniques had been provided"

(The State Department of Education, 1996, p. 30). This differed from the general and special educators, because they felt that the training did not give them information or techniques that they could use in the classroom (p. 30). The state's conclusions to the study on staff development stated that additional training was needed to support inclusion in the areas of behavior management, curriculum adaptations, and consultation/collaboration skills (p. 31). The State Department of Education Educational Equity Team added "... there is a need to enhance training for general educators who teach students with disabilities in their classrooms; and there is a further need for training teachers and school administrators in fulfilling the legal requirements of state and federal law" (p. 9).

A report conducted by the State Department of Education Educational Equity Team (2001) concluded that learning disabilities, speech/language and health impairments made up 79% of the state's special education population. As the study noted, "more than half of these students spend more than 80% of their school day in regular classrooms" (p. 1). In general, "77% of (the state's) students with disabilities spend more than 40% of their school day in the regular education environments; as a result, costs associated with general education programs are included in the average special education expenditure per student" (p.4). The average expenditure per special education student is 2.5 times the average for general education students, which is consistent with the national average. The state's funding for special education has been cut fifty percent over the past twelve years (p. 6); therefore, decisions about programs became more difficult for administrators in the state. This report added that the state's special education population ranked in the lowest quartile in the nation by at least 1.5% fewer students than the national average (p.



2). The growth rate of special education students compared to general education students was 6.4% to 4.6% over the past two years (p. 3).

### Conclusion

In conclusion, there were many suggestions to help principals move toward inclusion. Sires and Tonnensen (1993) gave suggestions to help alleviate some of the problems, which included ensuring that special education classes were included with the school. They said that principals should give special education teachers equal consideration when appointing people to projects. They said that principals should not forget the special education teachers when giving out supplies or assigning rooms within the school building. They should encourage teachers to be a part of meetings and organizations. Principals should be visible in the special education department and seek their assistance when certain issues arise where the teachers' expertise could be of help. And finally, principals should try to help cut back on the amount of paper work.

Sires and Tonnensen (1993) continued by discussing the principal's consideration of the staff. The principal should consider the needs and benefits of the students and the staff. The principal should recognize funding issues and the most effective way to administer special education funding to benefit students and staff. The principal should create a supportive environment for the program that he felt could be the most successful. And most of all, the principal needed to create a plan that would implement all of these concerns in an effective way.

There were many issues that principals needed to take into consideration when they create inclusive schools. These considerations include the legal aspects of inclusion,

**school culture, staff development, and showing support for the staff while implementing inclusion. Principals need to take into account and plan when creating change within their school towards inclusion.**

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

Over the past twenty years, educators have struggled with the issue of appropriate placement of students with disabilities. The legal and social movement to place students into less restrictive regular classroom settings has continued to place pressure on school leaders to create changes that made educating students with disabilities in a less restrictive setting more advantageous for all students. One of the most demanding responsibilities for the principal at the school level was the obstacle of challenging the cultural assumptions and beliefs of the school staff who may have been shown to harbor preconceived ideas of educating students with disabilities in their classrooms. To overcome these challenges the principal will need to have strong leadership skills, as well as a solid understanding of change and how the process of change occurs within schools. This study focused on the principal's process for leading his school to adapt to accommodate for the needs of students with disabilities.

#### **Problem Statement**

In what ways did a principal's leadership affect the change process for the implementation of inclusion?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The increasing identification and growth of students into special education, along with court cases and legislative mandates, prompted a move toward inclusion. This has placed an increased burden on school site administrators as they attempted to guide schools through these changes to create educational environments that are conducive to educating students with disabilities in the regular setting. The school principal is an important component for completing change within schools; however, the literature and research for the implementation of inclusion is primarily focused on the teacher. As Mayer (1982) noted, "very little information can be found in the professional literature concerning the principal's role for special education. This area is wide open for research" (p. 127).

This study determined the degree to which principals were creating change to facilitate the learning of students with disabilities in the regular classroom setting. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected from participant interviews, document analysis and program observation. This study was designed to assess an inclusive school program and the role of the principal as a leader for creating change. This study added to the literature by determining the leadership characteristics that create change for an inclusive school.

### **Research Questions**

There were many questions that were solved from the information gathered by this survey study. The answers to these questions helped build the knowledge base of the

implementation of inclusion and the influence of principals on inclusion programs. The following questions guided the study:

1. What were the various perspectives from teachers of the principal's role in the change process?
2. In what ways did the principal act as a change agent for creating inclusive programs in their schools?
3. What was the process of change used in a high school identified as an inclusive school?
4. How did school climate, principal's support, and staff development program themes emerge out of the change process in the schools?

### Methodology

This study utilized a case study approach to analyze one principal's role in a high school that was recognized as being an inclusive high school. A case study was chosen in order to describe the various contextual factors that contribute to the change process including the social and cultural factors of the school.

This study used qualitative methods of obtaining data. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) said, "qualitative research methods are ideally suited to examining the world from different points of view" (p. 19). Rice and Ezzy (1999) noted, "Qualitative research aims to elicit the contextualized nature of experiences and action, and attempts to generate analyses that are detailed, 'thick' and integrated" (p. 1). Crabtree and Miller (1999) added, "Qualitative methods are usually used for identification, description, and explanation generation" (p. 6). Crabtree and Miller (1999) continued, "Qualitative

description, using qualitative methods, explores the meanings, variations, and perceptual experiences of phenomena and will often seek to capture their holistic or interconnected nature” (p. 6).

“A good qualitative study combines an in-depth understanding of the particular settings investigated with the general theoretical insights that transcend that particular type of setting” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p. 26). Rice and Ezzy (1999) suggested triangulation as a source of obtaining data from multiple resources, stating that “use of multiple methods, involves using a combination of methods, researchers, data sources, and theories in a research project” (p. 38). They further noted, “triangulation allows the research to develop a complex picture of the phenomena being studied, which might otherwise be unavailable if only one method were utilized” (p. 38). Taylor and Bogdan (1998) described triangulation as a way to obtain various information from differing sources of data. This study will incorporate triangulation by utilizing interviews of school personnel, observations of inclusive classrooms, and collecting data sources such as memos pertaining to inclusion, staff development documents, and Individualized Educational Plans.

### Case Selection

The case selected for this study was a high school in a western state, and it was selected for its reputation of being an inclusive school by the State Department of Education, Support Student Service Division. The head of the department was asked to give the name of the high school that had a reputation of being an inclusive school within the state. The head of the department held a conference with all the special education

directors from each of the school districts in the state and had them self-identify schools in their districts that were inclusive.

Two schools were identified through this process, and of these, one was randomly selected. The special education director and the superintendent were contacted to obtain their input regarding the reputation of the school as being an inclusive high school. The principal of the school was contacted by phone to obtain further information about his programs. The superintendent, the special education director and the principal all concurred that the school was inclusive and agreed to have the study conducted at their site. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) noted, "The ideal research setting is one in which the observer obtains easy access, establishes immediate rapport with informants, and gathers data directly related to the research interests" (p. 27).

Preliminary contact was made with the superintendent of the district and the principal of the school. Documents necessary for research were also requested from the school principal prior to the initial observations. The school principal and teachers interviewed were kept confidential with the exception of knowing that it is a high school in the western part of the United States. The state in which the study took place was deleted from the bibliography and the research to ensure confidentiality. The name of the state was replaced with the word "state".

### **Data Collection**

Interviews and classroom observations were conducted to obtain information regarding the nature of inclusion at the school and the principal's role as an agent of

change for inclusion. Certain documents were requested per telephone contact and formal letter after the approval of the research was obtained from the site.

Field notes “are the backbone of collecting and analyzing field data”(Bailey, 1996, p. 80). Taylor and Bogdan (1998) also discussed the use of field notes (p. 35). When documenting observations, Bailey (1996) described thick descriptions. “Thick descriptions are highly detailed accounts of what was experienced in the field” (Bailey, 1996, p. 4). Thick description was utilized during the observation portion of the data collection. The researcher took detailed notes of classrooms that included students with disabilities. The interactions of the teachers and students were noted as well as co-teachers and support staff when they were present in the class.

Bailey (1996) explained the importance of mental notes and jotted notes. Mental notes were taking a conscious note of your setting, like who was there or “how you felt when the person left” (p. 80). Jotted notes were the way a researcher documents her thoughts and ideas through observations as they come to mind (p. 80). Jotted notes take mental notes from a thought to documenting the thought or reaction. These thoughts can assist the researcher in remembering important data that may be forgotten, but with a cue can be remembered to give valuable insight to the research (p. 80-81).

Taylor and Bodgen (1998) said, “What the qualitative researcher is interested in is not truth per se, but rather perspectives. Thus the interviewer tries to elicit a more or less honest rendering of how informants actually view themselves and their experiences” (p. 109). Interviews were conducted with the principal, general education teachers, and special education teachers to gain further data. Each person was asked to recall the past events that led to inclusion being started at their school to collect an oral history of the



change process (Bailey, 1996, p. 78). Rice and Ezzy (1999) said, "although in-depth interviews are 'open' and often exploratory, the list or inventory of important topics is typically used" (p. 59). They continued, "This ensures that all relevant issues are discussed and that the interviewed is free to concentrate on the ongoing interaction" (Rice and Ezzy, 1999, p. 59).

"Qualitative researchers typically define their samples on an ongoing basis as the study progresses" (Taylor and Bogdan, 1999, p. 26). As the research progresses, other people or areas of interest regarding the topic may develop when conducting qualitative research. These new insights were explored as they arose.

The interview questions were derived from recurring themes obtained from the literature related to change process and inclusion with respect to the following topics:

- a) staff development
- b) the climate of the school
- c) process of implementation
- d) perceptions of inclusion and the change process
- e) support from the principal

Taylor and Bogdan (1998) also noted the use of open-ended interviews and participant observations to collect data and document interactions and data (p. 42-43). Seidman (1998) said, "The interaction between the data gatherers and the participants is inherent in the nature of interviewing" (p. 16). A qualitative research methods professor from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, reviewed the interview questions and interview protocol.

These interviews were taped with the permission of the person being interviewed. If a person being interviewed declined being recorded, then notes were taken of the interview. The recording was utilized to provide detail and accuracy and allow the researcher to maintain eye contact (Rice and Ezzy, 1999, p. 63). These recordings were transcribed and made available upon request (Rice and Ezzy, 1999, p. 63). According to Rice and Ezzy (1999), when transcribing, the person who was speaking was noted by writing the interviewers voice in all capitals, and all ums, pauses and laughs were recorded (p. 63).

### Validity, Reliability and Bias

“Validity can be defined as a concern with the questions: Does the instrument of measurement strategy actually measure what the evaluator purports to measure? Does it yield data that accurately represents ‘reality’?” (Rice and Ezzy, 1999, p. 30). Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) defined construct validity, external validity, and reliability. Construct validity was defined as, “the extent to which a measure used in a case study correctly operationalizes the concepts being studied” (p. 571). External validity “is the extent to which the findings of a case study can be generalized to similar cases” (p. 572).

Reliability “is the extent to which other researchers would arrive at similar results if they studied the same case using exactly the same procedures as the first researcher” (p. 572).

McMillan and Schumacher (1997) continued, “The usefulness of a qualitative study is enhanced to the degree to which the research design is adequately described so that the researchers may use the study to extend the findings to other studies” (p. 411). Taylor and Bogdan (1998) added, “it is not possible to achieve perfect reliability if we are to

produce meaningful studies of the real world” (p. 9). Seidman (1998) said:

What are needed are not formulaic approaches to enhancing either validity or trustworthiness but understanding of and respect for the issues that underlie those terms. We must grapple with them, doing our best to increase our ways of knowing and of avoiding ignorance, realizing that our efforts are quite small in the large scale of things (p. 20).

To insure validity, triangulation was practiced during this study. Triangulation is “the process of using multiple data-collection methods, data sources, analysts, or theories to check validity of case findings” (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996, p. 574). Gall Borg and Gall (1996) added, “Triangulation helps to eliminate biases that might result from relying exclusively on any one data-collection method, source, analyst, or theory” (p. 574). Data were gathered from a variety of sources including interviews, observations, and document analysis.

McMillan and Schumacher (1997) said, “data obtained from informants are valid even though they may represent a particular view or have been influenced by the researcher” (p. 409). Wolcott (1999) noted this effect by giving two suggestions to avoid such an influence. Over time, everyone involved in the study becomes more relaxed and a more natural state exists to observe. The second suggestion was that the people being observed are acting how they think they should act, thus giving an ideal behavior to observe (p. 49). McMillan and Schumacher (1997) noted that to diminish researcher effect, the researcher needed to “spend enough time in the field, conduct several ethnographic interviews, or thoroughly search for documents to obtain data from several perspectives and types of sources” (p. 409). Guba and Lincoln (1981) also supported

conducting observations repeatedly (p. 109). Goetz and LeCompte (1984) noted that to obtain relevant information the data need to be seen in a variety of ways (p. 223). The methodology of this study incorporates data collection from field observations, interviews, and document analysis; however, due to the limitations of the research observation times over a long period will not be possible. Two days were spent in the field. Phone contacts with people who arose out of the research and follow up contacts were made to clarify any questions on the part of the researcher.

McMillan and Schumacher (1997) gave another strategy to enhance validity called participant review. McMillan and Schumacher (1997) said:

Researchers who interview each person in depth or conduct a series of interviews with the same person may ask the person to review a transcript or synthesis of the data obtained from him or her. The participant is asked to modify any information or interpretation of the interview data. Then, the data obtained from each interviewee are analyzed for a comprehensive integration of findings (p. 407-408).

Participants were mailed the actual usage of their quotes or paraphrases for their review, and comments were solicited for clarification to be mailed back to the researcher in a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) noted observer effect. "An observer effect is any action by the observer that has a negative effect on the validity or reliability of the data they collect" (p. 340). To take steps to minimize observer effect, this researcher was visible around the school prior to the observations and was introduced by the assistant principal to the staff members participating in this study.

Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) discussed observer personal bias. "Observer personal bias refers to errors in observational data that are traceable to characteristics of the observer. One can argue that any observations made by human beings will contain some personal bias because all of us are influenced by our own experiences and beliefs" (p. 340).

This researcher was trained in a school that implemented inclusion and has been an advocate for inclusion. The researcher practiced inclusion from a special education teacher's position and from a general educator's position. Considering that this study was looking at the change process for implementing inclusion rather than the success of inclusive programs, this should not be a factor for creating observer personal bias. To avoid any bias toward the interaction of teacher and special education students, several classes were observed. A tour of the school also took place, documents were analyzed to gather further information about the school's climate, and interviews took place to triangulate later.

McMillan and Schumacher (1997) noted the importance of a field log, which is a log that chronologically records dates, times, places, and people while obtaining "access to sites and informants" (p. 409). "The log documents persistent field work essential for design validity" (McMillan and Schumacher, 1997, p. 409).

Another component McMillan and Schumacher (1997) suggested was the field journal to record "decisions made during the emergent design and the rationale at that time. Thus, the researcher can justify, based on the available information, the modifications and reformulations of the research problem and strategies" (p. 409). McMillan and Schumacher (1997) also noted the importance of documenting ethical

considerations. Should a decision need to be made regarding ethical considerations, it was noted in the field journal. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) added that it was important for “researchers to record their own feelings and assumptions in observer’s comments throughout their studies. Critical self-reflection is essential in this kind of research” (p. 161).

### Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using a variety of sources. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) discussed the importance of credibility in data analysis.

Credibility requires, however, that these dynamic processes be traced and justified so that readers may examine the inferences, comparisons, generalizations, predictions, or metaphors that contribute to the study findings. Processes of abstraction, units of analysis, formal and informal coding techniques, and methods used for enumeration, corroboration, and synthesis should be reported so that reviewers may determine and evaluate how descriptions, interpretations, and conclusions were composed (p. 241).

Wolcott (1999) used the word “multi-instrument” to describe using more than one source of data collection (p. 44). Guba and Lincoln (1981) used the term “triangulation” to describe the process of utilizing all the information gathered from a variety of sources (p. 319). Guba and Lincoln (1981) gave a detailed step-by step process for evaluating and analyzing data. The steps include initial data analysis, unitizing the interviews, categorizing, characterizing, assessing category set, preliminary adjustments, member checks, misinformation, recycling, and validating (p. 314). In short, these steps included

looking at the information, creating note cards, sorting the note cards, categorizing the note cards into related piles, re-examining the related piles, and adjusting and refining the categories. This type of coding process was utilized during the study.

Guba and Lincoln (1981) continued by discussing member checks, which involved checking the information collected from interviews and having the individuals who participated look at relevant information to obtain their input. Guba and Lincoln (1981) also discussed recycling, which is repeating the cycle they outlined more than once and validating, which is increasing the sample of informants if the original informants were not properly selected. The coding process described and the member checks, recycling, and validating were used for data analysis. Member checks and recycling the data were included in the data analysis process.

“Researchers intentionally immerse themselves in interviews and participant observation, and then in reading, and rereading the data. The aim is to discover, to understand, through immersion in the data” (Rice and Ezzy, 1999, p. 190). After the research data were collected, the researcher continually read the data before making any conclusions.

“The researcher must provide retrospective accounts of how data were synthesized and identify the general strategies of data analysis and interpretation” (McMillan and Schumacher, 1997, p. 413). Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) describe applying the grounded theory. “Case study researchers who use these principals derive their categories directly from their data rather than from theories developed by other researchers” (p. 564-564). Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) discussed studying the data to identify phenomena to look for similarities in the data. Each “segment” (Gall, Borg, and Gall, 1996, p. 564), or piece of

individual data, was reviewed and labeled according to the topic it addressed. These similar groupings of data became categories (p. 564). To begin this process, data collected during the study were entered into a computer database with five fields including: (a) an identification number, (b) categorical topic, (c) type of data, (d) the source of information, (e) and the noted information. This data were initially printed out according to the category label and separated into data clumps. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) define data clumps as being similar data that are grouped together. The segments were individually reviewed and then hand sorted. As each segment was read and reviewed, the researcher re-categorized information into different topics as needed, and the new categories were hand written onto the segments.

Notes from the observations, interviews, and documents were read, and the main topics were placed into the category fields. Through a sorting function on an electronic database, elements were grouped according to the identified categories in which over 30 categories emerged. The largest categories applied to school climate, testing, IEP process, instruction, institutionalization, and issues the school was facing. Each of these categories had at least seven data clumps with collaboration being the lowest and climate being the most frequent at 34.

There were categories including those themes that were obtained out of the literature such as staff development, school climate, principal support, people's perceptions, and the process of implementation. As explained by Glesne and Peshkin (1992), "By putting like-minded pieces together into data clumps, you create an organizational framework. It is progressive that you develop, out of the data, major code clumps by which to sort the data" (p. 133). The creation of the organizational framework was done when the data



were initially sorted. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) took the process further by adding. "Then you code the contents of each major code clump, thereby breaking down the major code clumps into numerous subcodes. Eventually, you can place the various data clumps into a meaningful sequence that contributes to the chapters or section of your manuscript" (p. 133). Each of the categories was looked at individually with each bit of information being analyzed to see if it actually fit in the category or where it was to be placed under each category set. The segments were organized and placed in sequential order within the category.

The researcher spent over one month away from the data to assure they were categorized appropriately. Data were then scrutinized to see if each data segment could be placed in another category or under more than one category. This process of re-categorizing increased the validity and reliability of the data segments being in the correct category. The most difficult data segments to place were the data that applied to two categories. For example, several data segments could have been applied to the school climate category while at the same time fitting under the testing category under the sub-code of competency exams. In effect, the implementation of the competency exams had an effect on the teacher morale, thus affecting the climate. Many of these types of double data clumps switched categories and were even used in more than one.

During the review of the data, it became clear that there were missing or unclear data, and it was necessary to contact two of the interviewees and two other people who were no longer at the school, yet were vital to the development of the study. These follow up interviews were conducted by telephone and the data were completed or clarified and sorted into the previous data.

As the researcher began to apply the data and began writing, the data still continued to be sorted and reanalyzed. As the categories were transformed into words, certain categories and subcodes did not fit into the flow of the information and had to be pulled and relocated into a more applicable section. This process also continued through the draft revisions of the document. Lincoln and Guba (1985) reinforced the idea that the categories need to be defined and redefined continually to establish category sets.

Also, to follow research protocol, the transcribed interviews, signed informed consent letters, field notes and all other confidential documentation will be kept in a locked file cabinet at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas for three years after the study.

### Summary

This chapter discussed the research method to be used during this study. Qualitative methods were utilized to help gain an overall perspective of the change process at a high school for implementing inclusion in their school and the principal's effect on that process. The data obtained included document analysis, classroom observations, and interviews. The researcher was submersed in data to code and categorize to find various themes that emerge out of the data collected. Based on the review of related literature, three themes developed including staff development, support from the principal, and the climate of the school.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

#### **Introduction**

Placing students with disabilities into classrooms with their non-disabled peers was a challenging process for high school principals. These changes are necessary to move the school toward a more inclusive setting to adhere to the mandates of the law and create an appropriate education setting for all students. There are many issues for principals to consider when moving the school to a more inclusive environment. These issues include dealing with the staff's resistance to change, preparing the staff for the changes, meeting the needs of the students and teachers, being compliant with the laws, and logistical problems such as scheduling and teaming teachers. With so many issues, it is understandable why it is necessary for the school principal to have a clear comprehension for creating change within a school.

#### **Problem Statement**

In what ways did a principal's leadership affect the change process for the implementation of inclusion?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The increasing identification and growth of students into special education, along with court cases and legislative mandates prompted a move towards inclusion. This has placed an increased burden on school site administrators as they attempt to guide schools through these changes to create educational environments that are conducive to educating students with disabilities in the regular setting. The school principal is an important component for completing change within schools; however, the literature and research for the implementation of inclusion is primarily focused on the teacher. As Mayer (1982) noted, "very little information can be found in the professional literature concerning the principal's role for special education. This area is wide open for research" (p. 127). Even though this statement was made twenty years ago, little research was found.

This study investigated one school and the degree to which the principal created change to enhance the learning of students with disabilities in the regular classroom setting. The study used qualitative research design by collecting data from participant interviews, document analysis, and program observation. This study was designed to assess an inclusive school program and the role of the principal as a leader for creating change.

### **Research Questions**

Questions regarding the implementation of inclusion and the influence of principals on inclusion programs precipitated this research. The following questions served as a framework for guiding this case study:

1. What were the teachers' perspectives of the principal's role in the change process?

2. In what ways did the principal act as a change agent for creating inclusive programs in his/her school?
3. What was the process of change used in a high school identified as an inclusive school?
4. How did school climate, principal's support, and staff development program themes emerge out of the change process in the schools?

### **Population**

Selection of the school to be studied varied from the original selection process. The educational consultant who was originally going to recommend a school for the study had left her former position and did not feel comfortable making the recommendation. The Director of Special Education for the state, had a statewide conference with each of the state's district special education directors. The state director had the district directors self-identify schools in their districts that had a reputation for being inclusive. The director received two recommendations. The researcher randomly chose one of these sites and contacted the district superintendent and building principal, both of whom agreed to have the study conducted at their site.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected from a variety of sources. The sources included interviews, observations, and document analysis. The documents analyzed included student and staff handbooks, and documents compiled for accreditation including schedules, policies, background, statistics, school improvement plans, mission, and other data relevant to the

school. Data were also collected through interviews of participants. Dr. Putney, a qualitative research expert from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, reviewed the interview protocol. Trial interviews were conducted prior to the study with a school principal, special education facilitator, special education teacher, and general education teacher in order to solicit feedback and improve and clarify the interview questions. "Confidentiality is ensured by making certain that the data cannot be linked to individual subjects by name" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 195). McMillan and Schumacher (1997) noted that one way to ensure anonymity is by linking "names to data that can be destroyed" (p. 195). This type of confidentiality system was employed while conducting and writing conclusions for this research. In order to ensure the participants' identity in this study remained confidential, the school and all participants are identified with pseudonyms. The name of the state from which the study conducted was also eliminated from the bibliography and document to ensure that the state and therefore school could not be identified.

The collected data were entered into a computer database and assigned to an initial category. The data were then printed out and resorted by hand into themed categories. Each category was then sorted into smaller subcategories and placed into a semi-sequential order. Any data that did not fit into their initially assigned categories were placed into a category that was better suited for the topic or placed into a miscellaneous category for future use. After several weeks away from the data, the researcher reviewed the categories and subsequent data. Once again, any information that was misplaced was reorganized into the data categories. Data were continually reevaluated during the writing of the data analysis and through draft revisions.

### **Characteristics of the Community and School**

**The school, Hilldale High School, is located in Hilldale, a rural community in a Western state. The community traditionally has been an agricultural one; however, it has undergone many changes over the past few years as many of the ranchers have sold their properties to housing developments and businesses as the town has experienced substantial growth.**

**Hilldale High School has been in existence since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; however, it has been at its current location since 1975, and it underwent expansive additions to accommodate the fast growing community, including a new library, an additional science wing, and an entirely new building. Hilldale is one of two high schools in the school district. The distribution of students between the two schools is unequal due to geographical barriers, and the student population of Hilldale is at least double that of the smaller high school. According to the school accreditation report, the school had an enrollment of 1,465 in grades 10-12 for the 2000-2001 school year and received a per pupil funding of \$5,847, which was average for the state. Even though the community was growing, the school's student population decreased in its enrollment by 4.6% in two years. The ethnic breakdown of the school is 89% White, 1% Black, 2% Native American, 1% Asian, and 8% Hispanic. The school's Native American population decreased nearly 50% over the past four years while the Hispanic population increased nearly 50%. The transient rate is approximately 15-17%. The special education population has changed over the past years. Special education students currently account for 10% of the student population. Since the 1996-1997 school year, the total number of special education students increased from 88 students to 129 students in 2000-2001. The**

largest increases were in the categories of learning disabled (72 to 101 students), moderately retarded (6 to 11 students), and multiply impaired (2 to 6 students).

The school offers a varied curriculum to accommodate those students who are college-bound and employment-bound after graduation. The school has 18 occupational educational courses, which service 60 percent of the student body. The school also has Advanced Placement classes for students who want to take a test for college credit. The number of students taking these advanced tests increased 15% over the last year, and the number of students who earned passing grades of a three or better increased 35% in the same period. The school's mandatory state proficiency test scores in math, reading, and writing are equal to or better than the state's average, and according to the principal, the school has the highest first-time passing rate in the state for math.

The administration includes the school principal, Mr. Waters, two assistant principals, Ms. Hart and Mr. Moore, and a dean, Mr. Williams, who is responsible for athletics, and minor disciplinary actions. There are 75 teachers on staff of whom nine are special education teachers. Of the 75 teacher, many of the teachers have been at the school for their entire careers with 59% of the teachers having over ten years experience. Forty-six percent of the teachers have a master's degree while 1% hold a doctorate degree. Ninety-four percent of the instructional staff teach in their endorsed areas.

Hilldale High School utilizes a block schedule with three periods per day. Students attend classes 1, 3, and 5 one day and classes 2, 4, and 6 the next day. Thus, one week a student attends a specific class twice and the next week they attend the same class three times.



### **The Move Toward Inclusion**

Even though federal law mandated inclusion since 1975, Hilldale's move toward inclusion began ten years ago. Ms. Miller, a special education teacher, and now retired principal, Mr. Adams, were at the school when Hilldale first moved toward inclusion. Each described what the school was like before inclusion and after it was implemented. Mr. Adams described the special education program as being totally isolated from the school. "Students were placed into self-contained rooms instead of general education classes – even the learning disabled students." Ms. Miller described her role as a special education teacher thirteen years before the study. "There were 15 students in a self-contained resource room class. I was trying to teach the students content without having any content knowledge. With the lack of knowledge and skill in the content area, I spent most of my time dealing with kids who were off-task and had behavior issues rather than teaching the content." She reiterated that fact that the students were not receiving beneficial content knowledge in the resource classes. Both noted that special education students were totally segregated from the general student population and they were alienated from their peers. Before the changes took place, students with special needs were primarily located in segregated classrooms in one end of the building with lunch periods being their only opportunity for interaction with non-disabled peers.

Today, thirteen years later, students with disabilities of all developmental levels attend general education classes the majority of the day and go to resource rooms one to two times a day to obtain assistance for specific skills including: study skills, language arts, and math. Students of all ability levels and disabilities participate in school

activities and clubs, and their non-disabled peers accept them. The special education population is a normal, integrated part of the school's population.

### **Hilldale Today: A Snapshot of Inclusion**

To gain more understanding of the school and to obtain information for data collection, it was important for the researcher to obtain an overall impression of the school through a tour of the school. As the researcher toured the school two days before winter break, there was a positive impression of the school. The school was very clean and was decorated with posters encouraging school spirit and other posters for anti-smoking and drinking and driving. Other posters were for clubs and activities and school fund-raisers. Outside a study skills class, a teacher is observed in a conversation with a student about making better choices in the classroom. Other students in the halls walked around without passes, but they did not loiter or stand around talking. Doors were open to many of the teachers' classrooms where students were engaged in learning activities.

### **Non-Instructional Setting**

The students at Hilldale have a variety of opportunities to become involved in the school community. In order to gain an impression of how students with disabilities were accepted at the school, the various non-instructional settings were observed. Lunchtime offered an enlightening look at student life. The commons, which is a central location for Hilldale High School and serves as the school cafeteria, was full of students. It was decorated with posters supporting the school's coat drive and blood drive for charity, posters supporting different athletic teams, a Latin club poster, and posters with the

Winter Royalty participants. Clubs, activities, student government, and organizations were also listed in the student handbook and promoted through posters throughout the school. A fooseball table was set up for students to play during lunch as well, and several boys were teamed up to play.

Hilldale operates an open campus during lunch, so students can leave to go to their choice of various fast food restaurants in the area. Students are able to walk around the campus and eat in a variety of locations. For the most part, the commons appeared to be the eating location of choice. Several food service areas were around the commons to serve differing appetites of students including the regular school lunch line, snack line, student store, salad bar, and what appeared to be a second snack line. A student, who later identified himself to the researcher as being a student with a 504 plan, offered to assist in the student store. The store was not busy, and his services were declined. Across the commons, a student identified as special education by the assistant principal was selling items to students with her instructional assistant nearby. Other than the students with disabilities who were seen with adult instructional assistants, the researcher could not differentiate between general education students and special education students through her observations. Students were integrated into the large numbers of students at the school.

The researcher asked a teacher where most of the student with disabilities spend their lunchtime. A few tables were pointed out where some of the more severely disabled students eat with their instructional assistants, but tables where the rest of the special education students sat could not be identified.

For example, the special education department was holding a holiday luncheon where

students, parents, teachers, and administrators took part in a potluck. For the most part, it was more of the severely disabled students and their parents who participated in the luncheon, but many special education teachers and general education teachers attended. During both lunches, the principal, both assistant principals, and a school police officer were present, and were seen talking to each other, students, teachers, or leaving briefly to their offices to deal with other responsibilities.

After lunch, the researcher attended a talent show assembly in which a number of students performed. A plethora of acts and performers took part in the assembly, but two acts particularly impressed the researcher. The first was that of a jazz performance group with up to 40 dancers. Four of the girls dancing were severely disabled students, including students with mental retardation and Downs Syndrome. The assistant principal told the researcher that there were several learning disabled students in the group as well. Interactions among the student performers in this group were similar to the interaction among other student groups, which were wholly comprised of non-disabled students. The reaction from the audience was no different than when other students performed. Many other performers received positive, standing ovations from various members of the crowd, and this performance group was no different.

The second group to note was one in which five students danced. This group included four female students and the lead was a male student dressed "in drag". By talking with the staff, it was learned that he was a learning disabled student who was openly gay. This student had an outstanding performance that also finished to a standing ovation. After hearing more about this student from a teacher, it was learned that he had a difficult time at the school due to his sexual preference, not his learning disability. It

was reported that in the past, he had been harassed and physically assaulted by a female student, but that type of discrimination was not seen at the assembly. Students were positive and respectful at all times during the performances.

### **Instructional Setting**

A typical schedule for a special education student with a reading comprehension disability might include a resource room study skills class where she would receive extra help with homework and reading skills; a cooperative English and science classes where she would obtain special assistance from a special education teacher; a general education math class; physical education; and an elective. This placement would differ depending on a particular student's disabilities prescribed by the student's IEP.

In observations conducted during the study, several of the school's 15 elective classes were visited. One elective class was foods. Students in this class were watching a holiday themed movie before they were released for a talent show. During the movie, the researcher discussed the teacher's experience with students with disabilities. The teacher said that her class was one of the first classes that special education students were put into, even before the move for inclusion. She felt that she did not receive much support from the special education department, and she did not understand the role of the instructional assistants. In her view, the assistants would basically do all the work for the students and the students received no academic benefit. The teacher also ran a child care class which actually consisted of a fully operational daycare facility that the students ran

from creating lesson plans to budget and food purchasing. One student in the program had Downs Syndrome, and the teacher noted that the other students in class were quick to assist the student when she needed help.

In a cooperative teaching welding class, there was approximately 60-70% special education students. One student in the class was a disabled student who thrived on accomplishing the tasks set for him. The teacher reported that he would go to his station each day and complete each task as many times as necessary to meet the teacher's requirements. During this observation, he was in his station working on his assignment without being distracted by the others in class. Other students were observed working independently at their stations. The interactions with the student with a disability and the other students were the same. The teacher had to make modifications for him so that he did not have to accomplish the more dangerous tasks such as cutting.

During an observation of a cooperative teaching class, which is a team-taught class with a special education teacher and a special education teacher, the students were watching a holiday themed movie. This was an English class with a total of 18 students, ten of whom identified by the teacher as having a disability. The class was geared toward obtaining proficiency skills. The teacher reported that she had at least one or two students read to her each day, and students progressed on their own in the class by completing work packets that were maintained in classroom folders. When the packets were completed with 75% accuracy, they were allowed to progress to the next packet. A writing sample was collected at the beginning of the year and saved, so the students could compare their writing at the end of the year. She also noted that every Junior in the school must complete a term paper.

A cooperative team-taught Spanish class was observed. When the researcher arrived, the special education teacher was in the teacher's office administering a test orally to a student she later identified as a student with a disability. The teacher informed the researcher that she went over the words several times before she felt he had decent knowledge of them before she administered the test. While the special education worked with this student, the general education teacher attended to the rest of the class. Students were working in small groups of three to four on labeling Christmas pictures they created in Spanish. There were 24 students in class of which six were students with disabilities. None of these students were singled out, and they were totally integrated with other students. When the groups were finished with their posters, they orally answered questions in Spanish from the teacher. When each group was finished, they all moved around the television to watch Yogi Bear's Christmas in Spanish.

A general education history teacher and a special education teacher were observed team teaching a history class. Out of the 19 students present in class ten were later identified as students with disabilities and another four were English language learners. While observing the class, students were divided into five groups. The English Language Learners were in a group together with an aide to help them with the language barriers. The other students were mixed together among special education and general education students. Students picked their own groups and worked together accordingly. Both teachers went around the room and monitored the groups and answered questions. The teachers used humor to interact with the students, redirect behavior, and create a positive environment. When the students were finished, they cleared their desks to take a practice

competency exam on history. After taking the test, the students called out their scores and teachers used positive comments such as, “You made such an improvement from the last test!” to encourage the students.

In an interview, a general education teacher discussed his classes. He said that he made sure everything was written on the board in his basic classes rather than lecturing to the students as he does in his advanced classes. He also made sure that his classes were divided into 20-minute segments for assignments to break up the class for students who have more difficulty focusing. Another general education teacher also devotes his time at lunch or after school to help tutor students in which he spends most of his time working on assisting students with term papers.

### Creating Individualized Educational Plans

General education teachers used Individualized Education Plans (IEP) to adjust classroom routines in order to accommodate a least restrictive environment for special education students. The interviews in this research focused on how the school complied with a student’s IEP. The assistant principal, Ms. Hart, said that one administrator was at every meeting. Two special education teachers said that the administrator was joined by at least one out of five general education teachers at the meetings. These teachers were notified in writing that an IEP meeting is to take place on specific students. Another teacher concurred by adding that he was usually the only general education teacher at the meetings, and he added that it was usually the same teachers who attended. One general education teacher admitted that he has never attended one of the “horror show” IEPs, which were the long and intense meetings that escalated with negative interactions. A



special education teacher said that general education teachers were more likely to attend the meetings if the students were doing well in their class. Another general education teacher noted that if a teacher felt they need to attend an IEP meeting, then the teacher was responsible to attend and find coverage or seek assistance for coverage on their own. If teachers could not attend the meetings, they would send material on the students so that their input was used during the meeting. A general education teacher noted that teachers were given an input sheet to give to the student's case manager prior to the meeting for essential academic and behavioral information.

When talking to a special education teacher, it was evident that IEPs were done, but little emphasis was put onto them. "I am really not into the forms. At the meeting we tend to discuss the student's progress and planning rather than the goals or the present levels," added the special education teacher giving a sense that the paperwork was not driving decisions. The teacher reiterated that the focus was on the students and how he was going to work to get them graduated. He was expressing the idea that the process was more important than the paperwork. During all the interviews, it was clear that the IEPs were not the focus of the teachers. Repeatedly, general education and special education teacher noted that few of the general education teachers attended the IEPs due to time constraints. "There are usually one or two general education teachers at the meetings," said one general education teacher. This teacher felt that he was usually the one to go to them, but added that the teachers give information on the students for the IEPs.

Modifying the curriculum for each student in accordance with his or her IEP was important to discuss when addressing the IEP process. A general education teacher who

team-taught the Spanish class had her team teacher work with students on conjugating verbs in Spanish repeatedly until the student was ready to take tests and quizzes. In the cooking elective class, students with severe disabilities worked with their instructional assistants to help them cook when it was dangerous. Adaptation to assignments was done in welding to ensure student participation and safety. Other modifications and assistance that were offered in classes for students included offering extra help and tutoring after school, having tests read to students, dropping the two lowest grades, retaking tests, and taking tests orally.

Support was also offered to the general education teachers in regard to modifications. At the beginning of the year, a list of modifications was provided to each teacher so that they had ideas and ways to modify instruction. Also, a general education teacher noted that each teacher was given a summary sheet of all the necessary information on each student with an IEP. The sheet included the case manager, the handicapping condition of the student, qualifying special education areas, student strengths and weaknesses, modifications, and the student's schedule. The goals and objectives for the students were not listed on the summary sheet. The assistant principal reiterated what the teacher had said about getting individual information on the students in their classes by stating that teachers get sheets with modifications to help the students with disabilities.

### **Competency Exams**

Another topic that emerged from this study that speaks to the teacher's role in decision-making and the process of inclusion was the competency exams. As noted previously, Ms. Katz, the superintendent, and the local school board, instituted the exams.

As noted in the schools accreditation document, the superintendent, with the support of the school board, instituted mandatory competency exams for graduation beyond the state mandated proficiency exams. These competency exams were quickly instituted without much input from the teachers.

Each student must pass these exams before they can graduate. The subjects included in the exams were reading, language, math, integrated I (math), science, U.S. history, and American government. Other tests include performance assessments which were taken within a specific class including: world history, keyboarding, career research paper, expository writing, technical writing, science inquiry method, oral foreign language assessment, and a research paper with oral presentation. An employability report card and career plan were also a part of the competencies. The first was geared toward having teachers rate employability skills such as attendance, punctuality, time-management, respect, and self-control. The career plan was a way for students to track their professional goals. These tests cost the school district \$66,201 per year. The school district ranks third in the state in spending for tests even though it is considered a small district.

In a discussion with a special education teacher, it was said that she did not think that the tests matched the curriculum, but the principal, Mr. Waters, felt differently. He acknowledged that there was room for improvement for the tests; however he felt there was alignment with the curriculum. He said that the district contracted out the test to a company, which created tests and already had a bank of test questions that were already validated.

The school did offer support for students who were having difficulty passing the exams. There was a section of the student handbook that explained the competency exams and how to track progress; it documented that there was support for students. “As a student of (Hilldale High School) you are required to pass several competencies each year. If you are unable to pass all of these competencies, you’ll be provided with additional time in the areas that you are having difficulty. That time will be provided outside the regular school day if your schedule is full” (Student Handbook, 2001-2002). Students have the opportunity to receive assistance during additional periods such as zero period, which was before school and seventh period, which was after school. The school also offers Saturday study sessions and seminars throughout the year.

The competency exams were only one aspect of the challenges that the school faced with differing points of view. The teachers’ and administration’s overall philosophy of inclusion in the school differs as well. The assistant principal, Ms. Hart, said that people in the school continually reinvent the structure of inclusion and change to meet the needs of students. Ms. Hart also noted that the school attempted to reach the ideal situation for inclusion each year. Hours were devoted to achieving the ideal inclusionary school, but she added, “We are working at it.” Ms. Hart said, “Because change is a process, it is still a process and never done.” A special education teacher said that the school was as close to the ideal of inclusion as he has seen. He added that there was a willingness of the general education teachers to accept the expertise of the special education teachers and quickly modify the curriculum for students without opposition. A general education teacher stated that the school’s philosophy was close to the ideal. He noted that it was started under Mr. Adams and no real changes in the program have occurred since then.

A special education teacher added that the ideal philosophy was when the administrators, counselors, and teachers worked together to create a master schedule for special education students and place teachers into appropriate classes to work as a team. He continued that with the idea that cooperative learning was important for special education kids, and that communication between with special and general education teachers, counselors, and administrators was needed. He also noted that the administration needed to make general education teachers follow modifications for special education students.

A general education teacher said that the he believed that every student should have an opportunity to be cared for and educated, if even just for the social skills acquired in the school atmosphere. Hilldale was his only experience as a teacher, and he recognized that the school was a model for inclusion. A special education teacher felt that inclusion worked well as a result of the fact that the kids were the focus. The assistant principal, Ms. Hart, said that the ideal was when the best program was designed for each kid. She felt that exposing students with disabilities to general education teachers was beneficial. She said, "We need enough personnel to meet the needs of every kid." A general education teacher said the ideal philosophy was when students are able to be in classes regardless of their handicap. To accomplish this, he felt that teachers needed to "get rid of scantrons" and "have kids write." A special education teacher added that the ideal was "when people are willing to teach kids curriculum rather than the curriculum to kids." He felt that the school was on track to reach that ideal with the exception of the math department, which was still struggling with inclusion and more focused on curriculum.

A general education teacher said that every staff member needed to be held accountable for educating students with special needs. He felt that it was not a reality in the school, because there was a group of teachers who take the majority of the special education students while some staff avoid the students. He also added that he felt the special education students' needs were being met, but the general education students' needs were not. He added that many of the staff were supportive of special education students, but at least 20% of the staff were not supportive or understanding. The principal, Mr. Waters said that a better match was needed for student success. In regard to all students, he supported vocational education noting that only 40% of all students go on to college, and only 30% of those graduate. He felt that with over 50% of students not going on to college there should be greater emphasis on vocational programs for all students, not only special education students. Mr. Waters said, "When the regular education curriculum was appropriate and every student is capable, they should be placed there with expectations." He added that he felt that sometimes inclusion goes too far and was "forced" on the teachers without looking at the needs of the students. Mr. Waters agreed that the principal must support inclusion, but he added that he did not support inappropriate curriculum.

Another difference involved participant perspectives on whether inclusion at the school was institutionalized or personality driven. A special education teacher and a general education teacher agreed that inclusion was personality driven. A general education teacher said that on paper it was institutionalized, but the special education

department and the assistant principal, Ms. Hart kept the program going. A special education teacher said that if certain key people left, “the program may not totally fall apart, but it would look different.”

Another general education teacher and special education teacher disagreed by stating that the program was a part of the institution of the school. A general education teacher felt that inclusion was a little of both. He added that the assistant principal, Ms. Hart, teachers in the special education department, and a few general education teachers kept inclusion going. He thought the answer ultimately was in the hands of Mr. Waters and whether or not he changes it. The assistant principal, Ms. Hart, said that inclusion was personality driven at first when special education teacher, Ms. Miller, first initiated the program, and if she had left earlier, the program would have failed. She felt that so many general education teachers have bought in to the program it has become institutionalized. Ms. Miller left the school the year of the study and the program was still intact. Ms. Miller said, “Over the past two years, it’s shifting from personality driven to institutionalized.” She still expressed concerns that if teachers do not fight for inclusion that it will disappear. The principal, Mr. Waters summarized the answer well when he was asked if the program was personality driven or institutionalized. He remarked on how he was hired to be change agent for the school due to his experience with change, but he said in regard to inclusion at the school, “I couldn’t change it if I wanted to.”

### Retrospective

The move toward inclusion at Hilldale High School can be described in phases. These phases follow the leadership changes at the school over a ten-year period. With

three principals at the school, there were three distinct eras that inclusion went through. The principals Mr. Adams, Ms. Katz, and Mr. Waters each had specific leadership styles that influenced inclusion. Under Adams, the phase is best described as the implementation phase. This phase is characterized by the initial implementation of inclusion and the growth of the program. Under the next principal, Ms. Katz, inclusion was in the plateau period. Katz was preoccupied with her own agenda, which did not include the special education programs. This period is characterized by a stagnant period that did not see change in special education programs. The third phase under the current principal, Mr. Waters, is the reorganization stage, which is characterized by changes and even a slight de-emphasis in the inclusion program.

#### Implementation Stage

According to data gathered in the study, the first steps toward inclusion were taken anywhere from 7 to 13 years before this study. The most consistent time frame offered by the interviewees was that it started ten years prior to this study. When Mr. Adams was principal, Hilldale High School had undergone significant changes over the past ten years. The principal who started inclusion retired at the end of the 1995-1996 school year after being at the school for fifteen years. The staff was attached to the principal, and he had the reputation of allowing the teachers the freedom to do their jobs. He was instrumental in the expansion of the school and oversaw the new building additions.

Mr. Adams was also one of the main people responsible for moving the school toward being more inclusive of students with disabilities. To hear Mr. Adams tell it, he would not claim any of credit for the school's inclusion. He really did not think he did much for inclusion. He did not send his staff to staff development workshops on



inclusion, nor did he spend a lot of time with disabled students or special education teachers. Ms. Miller said there were neither staff development workshops nor any other schools doing it at the time to go and observe. Ms. Miller said, “We simply made it work.”

What Mr. Adams did do was create an environment at the school that was conducive to change. When asked about inclusion, Mr. Adams did not initially credit his overall vision for the school and the impact it had on inclusion. Mr. Adams created an overall climate of change for the school – not just for inclusion. “I sent anywhere from eight to ten team members to attend summer workshops for topics like block scheduling. This helped the teachers become more open to restructuring the school.” He said he basically, “created an idea for the school to be open to change.” He promoted the staff to be leaders and innovators to foster productivity. The staff became more flexible by openly attempting new programs, and new ideas emerged. When asked about Mr. Adams’ vision for special education, one teacher noted, “He did not have one specifically for special education, his was an overall vision for his employees and all kids to fulfill themselves in some way – to find fulfillment in their lives, progress, and move along. It was not specific for special education.”

Where special education was concerned, Mr. Adams approached the special education department and told them of his plan for special education. In addition, the director of special education at the district level supported the principal’s decision to promote inclusion. They saw where the law was headed regarding moving students to a less restrictive placement and wanted to steer the school toward being more inclusive. Ms. Miller recalled a meeting with Mr. Adams where he simply approached the special

education staff and said, "This is what is going to be done, go ahead and do it." He told the special education staff his direction and he trusted them to take it from there. Ms. Miller repeatedly used the word "trust" to refer to Mr. Adam's faith in their ability to make it happen. He provided support by encouraging general education teacher participation, making sure they had the supplies necessary to teach, working with schedules, and selling staff on inclusion. Mr. Adams said, "I initially talked it up with the people who were open to change, and over a relatively short period of time, we added courses and increased the occupational education classes in the school."

Mr. Adams, looking back on the implementation of inclusion, recalled the processes as being quick and easy. This was not how Ms. Miller, the special education teacher recalled the movement. She recalled the changes being slower and more incremental. The special education department worked with specific teachers and students to set them up for success, and then they worked to get more teachers and students involved.

With the direction from the principal and the goals set for the special education staff, the change was begun. The move toward inclusion for this school involved the phasing out of resource and self-contained classes in most content areas and electives. The face of inclusion became one of almost total integration of students with special needs with their non-disabled peers. The only resource or self-contained classes became study skills, math, and language arts for the students whose Individualized Educational Plans dictated.

The change process for inclusion started with small steps. Ms. Miller initially handpicked special education students and staff members whom she felt would be successful team-teaching general classes. Over a period of two to three years, teachers began to accept the concept of inclusion and team-teaching after they saw the benefits of

the program. Miller said, "We were told to implement inclusion and we just did it. The principal supported our decisions and trusted us and the program grew." The program grew to where there were only resource classes in math and English for students whose programming demanded specific placement and study skills classes for special education students to work on study habits, obtaining extra help, and working on homework for their regular classes. Students were included in all other subject areas either with modifications in the general classroom, a special education teacher consulting the general education teacher, or special education and general education team-teaching classes.

The current principal, Mr. Waters, discussed his observation of how students were included at the time of the study. "Special education students are not separated out, they are totally integrated by students and staff. Lower functioning students can be found out with their aides." A general education electives teacher, Ms. Smith, noted her observation of inclusion by noting that special education and general students are not segregated at the school. She does not see a difference in how the students treat each other.

### Plateau Period

When Mr. Adams retired in 1996, Ms. Katz, who had a special education background, came to the school as principal and was there until 2000. Teachers who were there at that time reported that the four years when Ms. Katz was principal were difficult times. They talked about a definite decrease in morale. The teachers' perceptions of the district office were negative, because of the demand for increased testing standards, which put an increased burden on the teachers. Ms. Miller described the staff's perceptions of Ms. Katz by stating, "The school staff perceived her to be ineffective." According to Miller,

the staff felt that she was spending her time and energy at the district office and not enough time at the school. Miller noted that teachers felt that Ms. Katz backed the district office's decisions rather than the needs of the teachers. For example, Miller noted that the teachers perceived that she was backing the district with the implementation of the exams rather than soliciting teacher input. A special education teacher continued to discuss Ms. Katz by adding, "The last principal, (Ms. Katz) was kind but not a high school administrator. She and her assistant principal set people against each other." Another special education teacher recalled his account of Ms. Katz by stating that "she created problems for the school." The division with teachers and administration widened as the teachers perceived the principal as siding with the district office and the superintendent.

According to a special education teacher, Ms. Katz had difficulty partly because of her affiliation with the district office. By siding with the district office, Ms. Katz was widening the gap between the teachers and the administration creating an "us verses them" mentality. Teachers were unhappy for a number of reasons. Teachers had not received a raise and morale was low due to the low pay, according to a special education teacher. In addition, the superintendent, with the support of the school board, instituted mandatory competency exams for graduation beyond the state mandated proficiency exams. All of the teachers interviewed noted an issue with the competency exams. These competency exams were quickly instituted without much input from the teachers, and they influenced special education students. According to a special education teacher, the competency exams put stress on the teachers. A general education teacher said that he felt that having students in his class who could not pass the exams made him look like

a poor teacher – “regardless of whether or not they were special education students.” The number of teachers who simply did not want the special education students in their classes grew under the enormous strain of the exams.

The students with disabilities were also having a difficult time passing the exams and fulfilling the high school graduation requirement. According to a special education teacher, many of the special education students were opting for an adjusted diploma. “At least the special education students had an option. The general education students would just get a certificate of attendance if they could not pass the exams.”

A special education teacher recalled that during Ms. Katz’s tenure as principal, difficulties arose related to inclusion, “Ms. Miller worked to keep the program [inclusion] together when changes were occurring within the administration by balancing the needs of general and special education teachers.” He continued by adding that Ms. Miller never lost sight of the focus of inclusion during this time. Ms. Miller described it differently. She said, “Ms. Katz was so ineffective as a leader and caught up with other issues such as competencies that she did not even bother with inclusion”. This allowed the special education department to continue to do its job just as they had done under Mr. Adams. The one thing Ms. Miller noted was that during Ms. Katz’s time as principal, special education never became the target of ridicule from the general education teachers even when the morale of the school diminished. Ms. Miller added, “People never went after special education to place the blame.”

### Reorganization Stage

Beginning in the 2000-2001 school year, Mr. Waters became the principal of the school. He was faced with many challenges – the primary one being the school’s

climate. According to Mr. Waters, he was placed at the school because he had a reputation for being a change agent at other schools. To make matters more difficult for the new principal, the superintendent left her position after the 2000-2001 school year and an interim superintendent was assigned while a search was conducted. A general education teacher noted that he felt the interim superintendent was supportive of special education.

When it came to Mr. Waters' reputation for inclusion, three teachers interviewed noted that they perceived that he was not supportive of inclusion, and they were concerned that he would change the face of the program. In turn, Mr. Waters had heard of the reputation of the teachers at the school before he took on his position. He initially feared that he had "inherited negative teachers" when he took the school. He said, "I knew the school was in disarray, and I needed to work to improve it." Mr. Waters said, "I had to find out what was occurring in the classrooms and support it." When he arrived at the school, he found that the reputation of the teachers was far from the reality. Mr. Waters found the teachers to be extremely caring about their students and what was happening in the school. The principal realized that these teachers needed to be recognized for the work they do, and he proceeded to put forth tremendous effort in giving the teachers the necessary credit they deserve.

The teachers also found that their perceptions of the principal were wrong. When he came to the school, he did not change inclusion nor did he attempt to change the school's policy of inclusion. In fact, after a year of being the principal and getting settled into his new position, he began to take part in the special education supervision, which he had delegated to the assistant principal during his first year at the school. The special

education teachers interviewed expressed the most concern about his reputation; however, they found that he was supportive of the school's position on inclusion and special education. Still, another teacher who was no longer at the school was not as optimistic as the other teachers. A special education teacher expressed concern that Mr. Waters made moves to increase the number of resource room classes at the school after ten years. The teacher added, "(Mr. Waters) doesn't have a stand on inclusion."

### **Principal's Support**

In the implementation stage, the principal's support was an important aspect of getting the school to move toward inclusion under the principal, Mr. Adams. Mr. Adams had an overall school vision that influenced inclusion. He wanted to give all kids the opportunity to find fulfillment in their lives. Mr. Adams worked with the staff to be open to attempting new ideas such as block scheduling. He would send staff members out to receive training on new innovative concepts that could benefit the students at the school.

This enthusiasm carried over into special education and inclusion. Mr. Adams expressed his expectations for inclusion to the special education staff and then gave them the freedom to make it work. He supported their decisions and direction as they moved to make inclusion possible at the school. As the special education teachers began to make changes such as placing more students into general education classes and creating team teaching classes, Mr. Adams backed each move by making sure general education teachers met the requirements of the law and complied with the direction of the school toward inclusion. One special education teacher noted that if Mr. Adams had a report of a teacher not complying with an IEP, he would meet with that teacher to make his

expectations clear for the teacher to comply. However, Mr. Adams did not feel that he had to work too hard at making teachers comply with inclusion. "He never spoke against special education in staff meetings, and he would not allow for another staff member to speak negatively about inclusion," a special education teacher recalled. Mr. Adams felt that he had taken the time to prepare the staff to be open to new innovations and inclusion was just one of his ideas that they were eager to try.

Under Ms. Katz, inclusion went into a plateau period. Ms. Katz did not devote much time to inclusion due to her emphasis on implementing the competency exams and working with the district office. She had a special education background, but that did not appear to sway her emphasis on inclusion in any way. According to the special education teachers who were present in that time period, there was an overall perception that Ms. Katz was not involved with the special education program while she dealt with the areas of importance for her. "Ms. Katz was too involved with pleasing the district office. She did not do anything for special education or against it," one special education teacher commented. The program was kept alive by the special education staff and the general education teachers who believed in the purpose of inclusion. Ms. Katz did not give direct support of the inclusion, but her lack of interfering with the program allowed for it to continue with few changes.

When it came to the principal's support in the reorganization stage, Mr. Waters was recognized by many teachers. When Waters took the position as principal at Hilldale High School, the teachers' morale was low primarily due to the past principal, Ms. Katz. According to one general education teacher, Ms. Katz would suddenly cut teachers off from paper and copy machines were always broken. The lack of supplies and workable



equipment caused conflict among the staff, because they were feeling as though they were not being supported in doing their jobs. Teachers became frustrated which had an effect on morale. Mr. Waters made it clear that copy machines would not be broken for more than a day, and he subcontracted out to Xerox to ensure that the machines were operating correctly. A general education teacher pointed out that Waters made sure that the teachers had adequate supplies to support instruction in the classroom. Ms. Hart, the assistant principal and a general education teacher both noted how Mr. Waters made significant changes by allowing the teachers to do their jobs and work with kids rather than being bogged down with paperwork. Waters started a campus e-mail system to help streamline and eliminate unnecessary paperwork. A general education teacher added that the Waters' expectation was for teachers to teach to the best of their ability. Waters provided the teachers with what they needed and encouraged them to do it without being burdened.

Assistant principal, Ms. Hart, and Mr. Waters both emphasized the importance of supporting the teachers. Ms. Hart noted that it was essential to let teachers talk and really listen to what they were saying. A special education teacher noted that Mr. Waters did listen to teachers. Mr. Waters acknowledged that he spent more time talking to special education teachers than general education teachers due to their more flexible schedules. He also stressed the importance of being trusted by the teachers. Overall, both the principal and assistant principal reiterated the importance of letting the teachers know that they are appreciated. The assistant principal added, "We take the time to acknowledge events in each staff member's life. Whether it is having a child, a marriage, or completing a degree. If there is a death in the family, at least one administrator will go

to the funeral if it is feasible.” She continued, “We also make sure the teachers have a gift at each staff meeting.” The new administration took the time to acknowledge the teachers and show their support.

During Mr. Waters’ first year as principal, Ms. Hart was in charge of supervising all the special programs. However, after a year in his position, the supervision of special programs was divided up among the three administrators. Mr. Waters met with general education teachers when he heard they were not complying with modifications for special education teachers. According to a special education teacher, Mr. Waters also provided backup on discipline issues dealing with special education students. As for the involvement of the principal with the special education programs, the assistant principal and special education teachers had a better understanding of the principal’s activities than the general education teachers. In the previous year, special education was officially delegated to the assistant principal, Ms. Hart. Many general education teachers perceived her to be the administrator with the most involvement. According to a special education teacher Ms. Hart was very supportive and protective of the special education program.

A general education teacher said that he did not know how much the principal did with the change process for inclusion, but he commented on how Ms. Hart had a large influence in the changes. When a general education teacher was asked to give specific examples for what she does to influence changes, he could not give specific examples. He acknowledged that he really did not know. A general education teacher said he thought that Mr. Waters went to Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) meetings when there was a problem with a parent. A second general education teacher said that he saw Ms. Hart as having more participation in activities involving students with special needs

than Mr. Waters. To add to the confusion, the school's accreditation document had Ms. Hart listed as the supervisor of the special education department. Both Hart and Waters clarified that the program was split after last year due to the immense workload on one administrator to take the whole department. Mr. Waters also felt that he needed to be more involved in the department and that the newer assistant principal, Mr. Moore, needed the experience too; therefore they decided to divide the department.

The principal actually had more involvement than the general education teachers perceived, according to the special education teachers, assistant principal, and principal. The supervision of the teachers in the special education department was split between the administrators. The administrators chaired the IEPs of the students for each of the teachers they supervised. The administrators also assisted each other and covered the IEPs of students when the assigned administrator could not be present. Mr. Waters said that he spent most of his day with special education issues in meetings, either in IEP meetings or discipline meetings. He noted that the discipline incidents among students with disabilities were slightly higher than among general education students, especially the students with severe emotional challenges and the students with conduct disorders. A special education teacher said that Mr. Waters participated in creating behavior plans for students.

A special education teacher added that Mr. Waters had to intervene in parent complaints and investigate behavioral concerns. Mr. Waters noted that special education parents were advocates for their students and demanded more time. He said that he did spend more time with special education parents than general education parents.

Mr. Waters said that the most of his time was devoted to scheduling. The master schedule was the most important and difficult aspect of special education. The master schedule must be continually evaluated and changed to fit the needs of teachers and students. He said it was important to involve teachers with inclusion who liked teaming and liked working with all kids and not forcing inclusion on anyone. He added that some general education teachers ask for cooperative teaching classes where special education and general education teachers team-teach classes. Ms. Hart also echoed the importance of scheduling and reinforced that it was a very time-consuming project to get schedules aligned.

A special education teacher explained Mr. Waters' supportiveness by stating that he saw Mr. Waters working with special education at least three times per week on either staffing issues, with students, in meetings, or emphasizing teacher responsibilities. A general education teacher said, "I see the principal eating with special education students and talking with them sometimes at lunch". Ms. Hart emphasized Mr. Waters' involvement by discussing how he provided teachers quiet time to work on IEPs and training opportunities especially in the areas of functional behavioral analysis and adaptive PE programs. Mr. Waters also participated in luncheons, peer tutoring classes, constant update meetings with administration and specialists, tracking IEPs and compliance, and behavior planning meetings.

When inclusion was started ten years earlier, with Mr. Adams as the leader, it was noted that he was supportive of Ms. Miller, who participated in the movement. The next principal, Ms. Katz, had "hands-off" approach with special education. She had a special education background and kept the inclusion program running, but she alienated the staff

and caused turmoil throughout the school, which did not help the cause of inclusion. Mr. Waters came into the school with the reputation of not being supportive of inclusion, but being more “data driven” as noted by a special education teacher. Teachers soon found this not to be case after he arrived. Mr. Waters was very supportive of the program. Mr. Waters said that he felt it was important to have good supervision of the programs and how important it was to identify the needs of the students.

### Staff Development

In the reorganization stage, staff development was noted as one of the ways Mr. Waters supported the teachers. Staff development was also one of the themes that emerged out of the related literature as being important for the implementation for inclusion as noted by authors such as Burrello and Sage (1979), Chaiken and Harper (1979), Hall and Hord (1987), and Moffett (2000). When asked about staff development, the teachers and administration answered the question based on any training they received in relation to special education. Some of that training was done in and in-service format where the staff was simply given information, while staff development was done through collaboration, sharing experiences, and developing strategies. The individuals interviewed did not delineate between their knowledge of the differences between in-service and staff development.

Interestingly enough, training for special education was limited at the school. On August 23, 2001, the entire staff attended in-service training on special education law as noted in the school’s accreditation document. Ms. Hart explained that an attorney specializing in special education law spoke to the staff regarding the law and legal

responsibilities of the teachers. Mr. Waters said that teachers were trained on the changes of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in August of that year, and he mentioned that the staff requested more information on special education.

One general education teacher said that in the past there was a lack of effective staff development training in special education. A special education teacher said that there were few opportunities related to special education training. Another teacher said that the school received training in August and that it had been beneficial for him as a general education teacher. "The staff development we had was about special education law and how it affects teachers," the teacher said. Another teacher was asked about the staff development he received from the school on special education. "We haven't had any," he added. This teacher did not recall the training they had at the beginning of the year.

A special education teacher recalled that the school did not have any in-service or staff development training when they first adopted inclusion under the implementation stage ten years earlier. "There were no other models for us to observe when we first started inclusion. We simply just made it work." Mr. Adams, the principal at the time of implementation, said he did not have staff development specifically for inclusion, even though he worked on staff development for moving the school toward other innovations, which he felt created an acceptance of the staff for any kind of change. The teachers claimed that there was no staff development noted under Ms. Katz in the plateau period.

Every teacher interviewed said that more staff development on special education would be beneficial for the school. When the teachers were asked what type of training they would prefer in regard to special education, the topics varied. Two general education teachers claimed that more strategies for working with students with

oppositional defiance would be beneficial. Ms. Hart agreed that more information on oppositional defiance was needed. Ms. Hart also added that she thought teachers needed to be taught how to modify instruction to meet the needs of the students and more information was needed on reading. Another general education teacher emphasized the importance of learning more about special education law. A general education elective teacher said that she would benefit by getting training on how to handle students with disabilities and how to work effectively with classroom assistants. Mr. Waters acknowledged that the staff wanted more training and said that he wanted to provide more even though it was not planned. Ms. Hart said that the school must constantly provide training.

When the teachers were asked how they learned to work with students with disabilities, replies were similar. Responses from the teachers noted that little was learned in college to help them prepare, but on-the-job training, basic classes, and learning from other teachers were the most frequent responses given when teachers were asked how they learned to work with students with disabilities. A general education teacher revealed that he had not spent time furthering his education in special education since he was working on his Masters degree in another area. A special education teacher said that he was a history major in college and minored in special education. He had 12 credits toward administration and 15 credits geared toward special education. Another general education teacher said that he had classes that touched on special education back in his home state, but he has not had any classes directed toward special education. A general education teacher added that he did not get much out of his college classes related to working with students with disabilities, but he learned from personal experience when

he was a substitute and taught in alternative education and special education. "The classes I had did not prepare me for working with special education students," said a general education teacher. The helpfulness of the on the job training was noted by the interviewees, including the principal.

Mr. Waters noted that all his past experiences helped him learn how to teach students with varied needs, especially when he trained teachers. He also added that he never took any direct classes on special education, but that some of his classes touched on the subject. One teacher discussed how his teaching basic level classes actually helped him be a better teacher, "Just working with students with special needs makes me a better teacher to all kids." This teacher added that working with students with disabilities opened his eyes to strategies that could benefit all students. A special education teacher said that he learned the most by working with other good teachers and learning from them. The idea of learning from others was how the assistant principal, Ms. Hart, said she obtained her information. She said that the special education teachers at the school were her best training ground. She desired to learn more and asked questions after her own personal experiences prompted her to want to learn more. She took it upon herself to go to two or three professional seminars.

Access to enhancing professional knowledge was difficult in the small town. The nearest schools available for graduate classes are from 45 minutes to one hour away by car. A special education teacher pointed out that the district did have a professional development center located at one of the elementary schools where teachers could obtain



resources. Another special education teacher noted that this center helped new teachers and reinforced good teachers. Also, the school's accreditation document discussed how teachers could earn professional growth credit.

### Climate

It would be impossible to discuss the changes at Hilldale High School without discussing the climate. When discussing the background of the school, the discourse focused on the changes that had occurred since 1996 with the different administrators. Under Mr. Adams in the implementation stage, the school had positive morale where people were willing to try new ideas and maintain an overall positive atmosphere at the school. Mr. Adams was described as a low-key administrator who gave the teachers the freedom to simply do their jobs.

Mr. Adams was distinctly different from the principal who followed him. According to all participants interviewed. Ms. Katz had a negative effect on the morale of the school. She was preoccupied with the pleasing the administration at the district office rather than focusing on her own school. This lack of concern for the school, the students, and the teachers resulted in the principal being alienated her staff. A line appeared to be drawn dividing administrators from teachers, and she stood on the side of the district office. Many of her decisions damaged the climate of the school including her support of the district office and the superintendent. "She was always right there with the superintendent doing what the superintendent wanted instead of asking the teachers what was best for the school," said a general education teacher. The demands of the competency exams put increased pressure on the staff to change from teaching students

to teaching tests. Teacher success was based on the success of students taking these competency exams. Many teachers resented the exams and Ms. Katz for forcing the implementation of the exams and not supporting teachers at the district.

Since Mr. Waters took over the school in 2000, he had an uphill battle trying to improve the climate of the school. With issues such as poor pay, lack of leadership at the school and district office, and implementation of the competency exams, teachers were unhappy. Mr. Waters came in as principal with the promise that he would make changes in support of teachers. According to a special education teacher, one positive component Waters brought in to the school was that he had a good reputation from his past school. Waters himself also noted that a simple change in leadership was a change in a positive direction. A general education teacher noted that the school and principal were more focused. Special education teacher added that Waters came into his first staff meeting and said that he was going to dedicate himself to the school over the next few years. A general education teacher added that Mr. Waters came into the school with an attitude like, "This is what we'll do to make things better."

A general education teacher discussed the principal's commitment and his effect on others by stating, "People don't necessarily like him, but they are willing to work for him". He continued by adding that Waters is an advocate for the teachers, especially against the district office. Another special education teacher said, Waters "treats people like professionals; he respects the classroom, limits disruptions, and develops curriculum. He is an educator". The teacher continued by adding that the climate was good. He noted that there has been a benefit from a new principal and that the principal has uplifted the spirits of teacher who have been bogged down by the district office. The teacher also

added that there were not over three teachers who were negative at the school at the time of the study. A general education teacher said, “The overall climate was the best ever with school spirit up and fighting among students down.”

When asked about the changes in the school climate, Ms. Hart contended that Waters was the reason that the school was positive. He did team-building and created a theme in the school called “relationships count.” He made people feel important by stopping by the classrooms, writing notes, and acknowledging teachers. A general education teacher noted that teachers got something at every staff meeting. The general education teacher and Ms. Hart both noted that Waters created more social committees and functions to get teachers involved. Ms. Hart and Mr. Waters both noted the importance of creating the prep period committees, which served as a decision-making model for the school.

Mr. Waters was vocally proud of his teachers and lets it be known. “It is an exceptional staff”, Mr. Waters said when he was asked about the staff. He also noted that the school climate was wonderful and on a scale from one to ten, the school was about seven and a half to an eight. Mr. Waters discussed the fact that last year was the first time he was aware that the entire staff showed for graduation. He said that he did not make it mandatory, but he felt that graduation was what they work for as educators and should be celebrated. He noted that he respected the teachers’ contract and gave the teachers time-off later to compensate for attendance.

A survey conducted for the Southwest Accreditation noted the attitudes of teachers, parents, and students on a five-point scale. The teachers’ responses were consistently high on the questionnaire. Some of the highest responses from the teachers included, increased student achievement through “hands-on” learning, increased student

achievement through parental involvement, seeing the results of their work with students, and administrative communication. The lowest score for the teachers was being recognized for good work. Parent responses were a bit lower than the teachers. Parent perception was high with respect to parent support of learning at home, value of parental volunteers at school, their child's knowledge of teacher expectations, and respect of teachers and administrators. The lowest response from parents was the lack of information on non-college options after graduation. The students' responses were slightly above average and lower than the parents. Student responses were never below average or lower. Student perception was high on the ability to read and learn on their own, feeling safe at school, importance of doing well at school, and the teacher's expectation of doing their best. The lowest ranking response from students was "school is fun."

The climate in relation to inclusion was an important aspect that needs to be discussed. Ms. Hart said that the climate for inclusion was positive and supportive. She noted some negative pockets of teachers, but she thought that most teachers felt supported by the school and needed more support from the district. A special education teacher continued that the climate overall for the school was positive, and the impact of inclusion on the climate was good. A general education teacher reiterated the special education teacher's comments regarding inclusion and its positive impact on the school's climate. Ms. Hart said, "Inclusion makes everyone more human; special education brings out the best in everyone." A general education teacher added "teachers needed to laugh a lot and have fun with the special education students and be understanding of them." A special education teacher felt that the impact of inclusion on the school climate

was highly positive and that kids were accepted more. Mr. Waters noted that the social growth of special education students was tremendous and that all the students were sincere in their friendships. Ms. Hart, the assistant principal, said that there was almost no pinpointing by general education students toward special education students.

A special education teacher expressed his concern for the remainder of teachers who still believed that modifications were not good and did not agree with inclusion, but understand that it was the law. Ms. Hart could not leave out her concerns with the math department and their lack of support for inclusion. A special education teacher added that there are a core group of teachers who do a good job supporting students. A general education teacher said that the topic of how inclusion had impacted the climate did not come up with his friends at school.

A special education teacher expressed frustration with the changing climate of the staff toward inclusion, which she felt was fostered by Mr. Waters. She gave an example of a time when a general education teacher made the comment that test scores would be higher if the special education students were not a part of the scores. She said that Mr. Waters “did not take a stand.” She added, “Not every general education teacher has the perception that they don’t need to educate every student that walks through the door.” She felt that the attitude came from the administration, and she felt that Mr. Waters “allowed teachers to choose who they are there for.”

The impact of inclusion on the climate also became apparent when discussing discrimination. One general education teacher said that a special education student was the manager of the basketball team and that he was fully accepted by the team. Other teachers noted that there was no discrimination of students due to their being in special

education. Students were friends regardless of disability. Teachers said that all the students had classes together and did not even know or care about the difference of general education students and special education students.

Discrimination was also dealt with in many school documents including student handbook, staff handbook and district regulations. The school's policies of non-discrimination was listed in each of the documents, "No person shall, on the basis of gender, race, color, national origin, sexual orientation, religion, or disability be excluded from participation, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subject to discrimination." As noted in the Southwest Accreditation document, the Board of Trustees has policies and procedures for discrimination complaints for students and staff. They have a set policy against discrimination and for equal educational opportunities. The board follows the policy of the Americans with Disabilities Act of Non-discrimination with complaint procedures and reasonable accommodation, and steps are provided should a person choose to file.

### **The Future of Inclusion**

Ms. Hart said, "Every year the inclusion program is recreated. It is still not right." She was expressing the school's desire to make improvements and continually develop the program. It would be naïve to think that the school did not have problems and issues related to inclusion. One of the most consistent problems noted by the staff was the number of special education students in the classes. Not only has the special education population grown from 88 students in 1996 to 129 in 2001 as documented by the Southwest Accreditation; however, the number of special education students in specific

classes had grown. Ms. Hart gave some background to how this problem arose. She summarized a staff survey that said most teachers wanted more special education students in a class section with a team teacher. With this direction outlined by the teachers, specific classes became targeted and more than half of the classes became special education students. A special education teacher argued, "Teachers said they wanted the special education students in less classes with support, but now teachers are complaining. Is that Mr. Waters?"

She added that it essentially became a special education class taught by a general education teacher. Also observed in the classes, it was noted that not only were special education numbers half the population, but English Language Learners were also placed in these classes that were deemed "basic." Ms. Hart clarified that the only department that wanted to keep special education students spread out evenly with two to three in a class was the computer department. One problem that was noted by a special education teacher was that teachers and administration were looking at the label of the special education students rather than their disability area. For example, if an English teacher counts a student as special education because she has a special education label, but that student has a disability that is math related, should that influence the number of special education students in the class. The teacher also argued that the large numbers of special education students in regular classes does not make another special education class. A special education teacher said, "Regular education classes are the curriculum. Why would it be called a special education class when content is what is important?"

Another special education teacher said that the principal reduced the number of developmental classes since he arrived a year and a half earlier, and the basic classes

were the classes that are team-taught. He was not sure why Mr. Waters decreased the number of developmental classes. Two special education teachers expressed concern over Mr. Water's reputation from his past school. They believed he supported heterogeneous grouping and would therefore decrease basic level classes. A special education teacher discussed how the last principal, Ms. Katz, left the number of developmental classes, which created conflict in scheduling between counselors, teachers, and administrators. He saw how there could be success for special education students in non-developmental classes with proper support. According to Mr. Adams, the initial principal, the basic classes were already a part of the structure of the school. This was a natural place to start to integrate special education students. One special education teacher said the large numbers of special education students in classes was due to the current principal reducing the number of basic team-taught classes. She added, "Mr. Waters made the decision to have less basic classes."

The principal, Mr. Waters, was clear on his position with large numbers of special education students in classes. He thought special education students should not make up more than 25% of the class population. He knew the numbers were at 50% and had a problem with the narrow placement of students into the cooperative classes. Mr. Waters said, "Inclusion is expensive; it is a Cadillac", but he agreed that it was effective for all learners with the proper support for general education teachers, support personnel, time and money.

A general education teacher noted how the past two to three years, inclusion had moved into a negative direction with too many special education students in classes. He commented on how the ratios went up over the past year and a half since the new



principal came in, and he did not know if it was his fault. The teachers were very aware of the problems of these full classes, but they were not sure where the problem lies. A general education teacher commented on how Mr. Waters moved special education students into basic classes, but he did not know how the process would work moving students into regular classes. He discussed how he had to modify his instruction by decreasing the number of labs to deal with the large numbers of special education students in his classes.

One of the suggestions from the teachers interviewed was to equalize the load of the teachers who teach the basic classes. A general education teacher discussed how experienced teachers should be teaching some basic classes and how everyone should participate. He continued by adding that the social studies department balances out the classes by making sure no teacher has more than one basic class. Out of the fourteen teachers in the department, there were eleven basic classes evenly distributed though all the teachers. He added that not all departments were sharing the classes. A general education teacher said that some staff would not do cooperative classes, so the teachers who do get dumped on. He continued by stating that it would be helpful if every teacher would buy in. He would like to see other departments distribute and rotate the cooperative classes like the social studies department.

Mr. Meyer, a special education teacher said that one of the difficulties in moving students into certain classes was the prerequisite for placement. The number of developmental classes was limited, so the number of special education students in these classes was too large and teachers were not happy with that. One of the departments singled out that had established prerequisites was the math department as noted by Ms.

Hart. This department had traditionally shown opposition to inclusion. Ms. Hart added that the general education math teachers did not let the special education teachers do anything in class when team teaching. A general education teacher said that he felt the school should have a planning committee. He continued by adding that a set number of students should be allowed into classes, and he thought he should have seen a model of team teaching before he did it so that he would have known how it worked.

Another issue noted by a general education teacher was that he had over ten special education students in class and the special education team teacher was not always there. A special education teacher said that the special education teacher had more of a consultant role than a cooperative team teacher due to the number of special education students and responsibilities. One teacher added to the lack of time a special education teacher spends in a cooperative class due to being pulled out of the class for emergencies with students on their caseloads. A special education teacher also discussed the problem of a conflict of roles. He noted that obstacles for collaboration were how people saw their roles. Compromising with the general education teacher on behavior expectations and grading can be a problem with the roles of the teachers. Mr. Waters discussed the role controversy by stating that the general education teachers needed to understand that their role was different in each class. A special education teacher noted that there was less team-teaching due to the high numbers of special education students in the classes, behavior problems, and competencies. He felt the trend was that special education teachers were taking more of a behavior modification role in the classes.

Mr. Waters said the relationship with the cooperative teacher needed to grow into a teaming relationship. A general education teacher revealed his past experience with

certain team teachers. He said he was disappointed with how the teacher worked with him. He felt they should have had expectations set out at the beginning of the class. He noted, "the experience with working with a good team teacher has helped me be a better teacher by learning how to deal with certain kids like oppositional defiance." A general education teacher said that the staff should be more responsible to work in conjunction with each other as team teachers.

Working in conjunction with others can be difficult especially with time constraints. Mr. Waters said, "The obstacles are natural when trying to collaborate. The constraints of time make it difficult to do well." A general education teacher said that there was not much time for collaboration between cooperating teachers. He thought there should be more time to collaborate, and he took it upon himself to get together with others to work together. A special education teacher agreed that there was not time for collaboration like there used to be. A general education teacher added that teachers set out time to meet, but he noted the lack of time for good reflection. He said that he plans with the special education team teacher the day before class by having a discussion with the cooperative teacher. One teacher gave his version on how he collaborated by saying, "The teachers plan as they go since it is hard to meet on preparation periods." In his experience, the special education teacher added to plans and made modifications to the instruction. Assistant principal, Ms. Hart said that she would like to provide planning time for teachers to work together. Oddly enough, one general education teacher said that he did not feel it was the principal's responsibility to work out collaboration time for teacher. He thought the teachers should work it out for themselves.

## Summary

This study was designed to look into the role of the high school principal as a change agent for implementing inclusion. This chapter focused on the research data collected during the school visitation where observations, interviews, and document analysis were conducted. The population was a small rural school in a Western state that was identified as being inclusive by the district's special education coordinator. Since inclusion started ten years prior to the study, it was important to discuss the background of the school and how inclusion developed and how it was still developing and what each principal's influence on the process was during their stay. Mr. Adams helped create the program. Ms. Katz maintained the program as she negatively influenced the school's climate overall, and Mr. Waters has worked to establish his position on inclusion with a staff that was supportive, yet uncertain of his intentions with the program.

One thing was clear, the current principal, Mr. Waters, has been supportive of the teachers and has worked to improve the school environment. He was respectful of the school's position on inclusion and was supportive of special education, even if some general education teachers were not fully aware of his activities. Also, the research shows that there was a lack of staff development programs and that the teachers were interested in learning more even if they did not agree on the specific topic on special education they were interested in obtaining more information.

The climate of the school was a large part of the study and went beyond the aspect of inclusion. The school has undergone significant changes with the changes of leadership, yet the inclusion program has stayed in tact. The current principal, Mr. Waters put forth tremendous effort to improve the climate of the school and deferred special education to

the assistant principal last year. He has since taken on more of that responsibility and worked closely with the special education department.

The issues the school faced cannot be overlooked. The large numbers of special education students in limited cooperative team taught classes was causing difficulties, resentment, and stress for the general education teacher. The lack of whole school responsibility, planning time, and role confusion were issues that the teachers and administrators addressed.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

**The national movement toward inclusion of students with disabilities into the general classroom setting has created hurdles for school principals. Principals that have chosen to tackle inclusion may be faced with issues of change that may help or hinder their desires to create a school climate that is conducive to educating students of all levels and abilities. Principals may confront resistance to change as well as those who are open to it. Utilizing skills as a change agent is necessary to make a fluid transition for the staff as the school moves toward inclusion. As change agents, the principals also need to meet the needs of the students and teachers, provide staff development, follow the restrictions of the law, and create master schedules that provide for flexibility and teaming of teachers. This study was set up to investigate the challenges of the principal as a change agent while implementing inclusion.**

#### **Problem Statement**

**In what ways did a principal's leadership affect the change process for the implementation of inclusion?**

### **Purpose of the Study**

The increasing identification and growth of students into special education, along with court cases and legislative mandates prompted a move towards inclusion. This has placed an increased burden on school site administrators as they attempt to guide schools through these changes to create educational environments that are conducive to educating students with disabilities in the regular setting. The school principal is an important component for completing change within schools; however, the literature and research for the implementation of inclusion is primarily focused on the teacher. As Mayer (1982) noted, "very little information can be found in the professional literature concerning the principal's role for special education. This area is wide open for research" (p. 127).

This study investigated one school's degree to which the principal created change in order to gain insight into enhance the learning of students with disabilities in the regular classroom setting. Using a qualitative research design, data collected from participant interviews, document analysis and program observation. This study was designed to assess an inclusive school program and the role of the principal as a leader for creating change.

### **Research Questions**

Questions regarding the implementation of inclusion and the influence of principals on inclusion programs precipitated this research. The following questions served as a framework for guiding this case study:

1. What were teachers' perspectives of the principal's role in the change process?

2. In what ways did the principal act as a change agent for creating inclusive programs in his/her school?
3. What was the process of change used in a high school identified as an inclusive school?
4. How did school climate, principal's support, and staff development program themes emerge out of the change process in the schools?

### **Population**

The Director of Special Education for the state, had a statewide conference with the special education directors from each of the state's districts. The director had the directors self-identify schools in their districts that had a reputation for being inclusive. The director received two recommendations. The researcher randomly chose one of these sites and contacted the district superintendent and building principal, both of whom agreed to have the study conducted at their site.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected from a variety of sources. The sources included interviews, observations, and document analysis. The documents analyzed included student and staff handbooks, and documents compiled for accreditation including schedules, policies, background, statistics, school improvement plans, mission, and other data relevant to the school. Data were also collected through interviews of participants. Dr. Putney, a qualitative research expert from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, reviewed the interview protocol. Trial interviews were conducted prior to the study with a school



principal, special education facilitator, special education teacher, and general education teacher in order to solicit feedback and improve and clarify the interview questions.

“Confidentiality is ensured by making certain that the data cannot be linked to individual subjects by name” (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 195). McMillan and Schumacher (1997) note that one way to ensure anonymity is by linking “names to data that can be destroyed” (p. 195). This type of confidentiality system was employed while conducting and writing conclusions for this research. In order to ensure the participants in this study confidentiality, the school and all participants were identified with pseudonyms, and in several locations in the paper, interviewees were identified as a general education or special education to ensure further anonymity. The name of the state from which the study conducted were eliminated from the bibliography and all areas of the document to ensure that the state and therefore school could not be identified.

### Research Conclusions

Hilldale High School was chosen as the site for this study on inclusion, because the school had been practicing inclusion of students with disabilities for at least ten years.

Over ten years ago, the first principal, Mr. Adams, created the change from a school that kept students with disabilities hidden away in a corner of the school to a school where all students regardless of their disabilities were accepted as part of the school. This change was not initially done specifically for special education, but it was done when he created an atmosphere at the school for teachers to try new ideas and teaching practices. After Mr. Adams left the program was able to sustain itself over the next six years under two different principals. Ms. Katz, the second principal, did not have much

to do with the inclusion program at the school. In effect, the program was able to run itself as it had done during Mr. Adams's time. Then, Mr. Waters came in for the past two years and smaller changes did take place. Mr. Waters did not communicate a plan for change, and he claimed that he did not want to change the inclusion program at the school. Yet, Mr. Adams did make smaller incremental changes to the structure of the program that got the attention of several teachers who were not willing to see a successful program be altered. In essence, the program has sustained itself since its inception in spite of three changes in administration.

These three school principals that have influenced inclusion with their differing leadership styles and expectations. Interviews with the staff and school leaders indicated that Mr. Adams, the principal who implemented inclusion, was a strong school leader in that he encouraged change and progress through his overall school vision during the implementation stage. During the plateau period, Ms. Katz was the next principal who was not considered popular due to her association with the district office and support of the district's competency exams. And, the third principal was Mr. Waters who improved the school climate, but has given the staff an inconsistent perception on his stance on inclusion in the reorganization stage.

The influence of the school principals greatly affected the staff and the atmosphere of the school. The themes of the related literature were evident throughout the study including the school climate, staff development, and the support of the principals. These three themes contributed to the rise and decline of inclusion over the ten-year period at Hilldale High School. The research questions relating to the role of the principal in the change process were addressed under subsection of the role of the principal and

throughout chapter five. Other topics that arose out of the research showed significant effects on inclusion. These other topics included the changes in class size, the implementation of competency exams, and the impact of individual personalities on inclusion or its institutionalization into the school's normal routine.

### **Personality Driven or Institutionalized**

One of the questions that was asked during the interviews was whether or not inclusion at Hilldale High School was personality driven or institutionalized. The answers varied from the subjects interviewed, but there were several indicators that emphasized the school's inclusion program as being institutionalized. First, it is important to note the current principal's viewpoint on the questions; he claimed he could not change the program even if he wanted to. Second, there have been several personnel changes with people who were close to the program.

Two of the main participants being Mr. Adams, the principal who initiated the program, and Ms. Miller, one of the main teachers associated with the success of the program. After these two important personalities left, the program was still intact. Another was that the program outlasted the second principal, Ms. Katz. Ms. Katz may have left the program alone during her reign as she focused on other issues, but even without her support or interaction with the program, it still existed. Lastly, one of the greatest indicators that the program was institutionalized was the reaction of many of the teachers when they perceived that Mr. Waters was making changes to the program. Teachers voiced opposition to his changes and questioned his motive and direction toward inclusion. The fact that the teachers became defensive about a program at their

school when someone was tampering with it reinforced that inclusion was a part of the school's institution and that Waters was attempting to alter the norms of the school.

### **System Input**

There were two factors that affected the way inclusion was done at the school in a negative manner. The first issue was class structure and the second was competency exams. The class structure affected inclusion because the foundation of the cooperative classes and numbers of students in general education classes was being altered by Mr. Waters. This caused frustration with the teachers who had done inclusion their way for the past eight years. The second issue was that of the competency exams. The exams increased the pressures on students and staff and caused problems for teachers and students.

### **Class Structure**

One of the most pressing concerns expressed by the current staff was the large number of special education students in some classes. In some classes over sixty percent of the students were students with disabilities. One reason this occurred, however, was that teachers requested to have the special education students grouped into classes with special education support. The majority of teachers requested the students not be spread around with smaller numbers into more classes without special education teachers' direct support. The teacher essentially got what they asked for; however, special education teachers were not always able to be in the classes each period. This put an increased burden on the general education teachers.

Thus, the number of basic classes decreased. Ten years earlier the basic classes evolved into the cooperative classes. Teachers that taught the basic classes expected to

have lower functioning students and special education students placed into the lower level classes. Over the past two years, the principal, Mr. Waters, decreased the number of basic classes, which in turn, created larger number of special education students in the cooperative classes. These classes were also where the limited English speakers were placed, which increased the burden of the teacher. Many of the departments assigned new teachers to the basic classes, while the more experienced veteran teachers were given the advanced classes. The history department was the only department that distributed the basic classes evenly over all the teachers.

The teachers were so concerned about the numbers of special education students in their classes that they did not consider the fact that special education was only a label and that a student's disability might not have anything to do with the subject they are teaching. For example, a math teacher might count a student on his role to be in special education just because she receives services. The teacher did not consider the students disability. She could be disabled in a language arts area, which would not affect the student's math performance, yet the teacher counted her as a special education student in his class.

The issue of how teachers accept the special education students in their classes reflects the attitudes of the teachers and the influence of the principal. For over ten years, the special education students were included into general classes. Now, for the first time, teachers thought there were too many of these students. This change in teacher attitude seemed to have evolved with the new principal, Mr. Waters. Another example of how teacher attitude changed was when Mr. Waters did not express his disapproval when teachers started to blame special education students for the drop in test scores. The lack

of support from the math department and the general attitude from that department were other examples where Mr. Waters could express his expectations and influence the staff.

There was no dispute about the high percentage of special education students in the cooperative classes. Mr. Waters not only decreased the number of basic classes, but he has increased the number of resource room classes. According to Ms. Miller, at least one class was created because the teacher lacked the patience and the skills necessary to teach special education students. Essentially, the teacher was not implementing the modifications for the students. It is not known if the administration addressed the teacher. What is known is that the teacher had the special education students pulled from his class, and a new resource room was created to accommodate for these displaced students. The general education teacher was not held accountable, and the students were inappropriately and illegally placed into a more restrictive setting.

As a result, the administration was faced with the decision between making the students suffer with a teacher who was not special education friendly or make everyone's lives easier by taking them out. The obvious decision would have been to make the teacher do his job. The results were that the students had less of an opportunity to gain academically or socially, the teacher was rewarded for his negative behavior, and a special education teacher was pulled from an already limited cooperative class to staff the new resource class. The principal should have been the one to set expectations for that teacher and monitor him for his compliance of special education requirements.

### Competency Exams

Implementing the competency exams was another topic that arose out of the research. During Ms. Katz's tenure as principal, the superintendent and school board passes a policy regarding competency exams that the students needed to pass before they could graduate. These tests were mandatory in addition to the already mandatory state proficiency exam. The superintendent of Hilldale School District wanted to raise the standards for students in the Hilldale School District higher than the rest of the state. First, there were mandatory tests that students must pass before they could graduate in which the corresponding class was not required. An example was the foreign language competency. Students were required to pass the foreign language exam, but a foreign language was not a state required course necessary for graduation. Students were to be tested on subject matter from classes many students did not take. Although most students who were college bound took a foreign language, a large portion of the student population, including many special education students did not. This discrepancy was seen in the cooperative classes. Most of the cooperative classes were well over fifty percent special education students, while the cooperative Spanish class only had six special education students.

The competency exams influenced special education students because students had increased pressure to pass the tests to obtain a regular high school diploma. The required exams included content areas that were not required curriculum. It also hurt these students because teachers too had increased pressures to have their students pass the exams. Teachers knew their students were tracked by the administration and they did not want to have students with low scores bringing down the averages in their classes. This

resulted in some teachers wanting fewer special education students in their classes or for the scores to reflect the diverse population.

The special education students at least had a graduation option of receiving an adapted diploma if they did not meet the district or state graduate requirements. General education students had no option for graduation if they did not pass the exams other than attempting to get an adult diploma. One special education teacher addressed the issue of the growth of numbers of special education students in the district and the implementation of the competencies. It was a concern that general education students might attempt to become labeled as special education so that they could obtain a diploma if they could not pass the exams, even if it meant getting a special education diploma. This teacher indicated that the implementation of the competencies did not seem to result in the increase of students being qualified or tested for special education.

The impact of the exams on the teachers was an important result that needed to be addressed. The implementation of the exams by Ms. Katz had an effect on the teachers. Teacher input and advice regarding the exams was not solicited and the teachers were resentful toward the administration. Ms. Katz did not build upon the foundation that Mr. Adams established at the school by empowering teachers through their involvement. An effect of the exams was declining morale and increased resentment from the teachers, as student progress in their classes was tracked and teachers were held responsible. As the teachers were held accountable for the success of the students in their classes, some teachers began to question the students with disabilities that were placed in their classes. With large numbers of special education students in their classes and few students who were able to pass the exam, teachers began questioning the placement of these students in



their classes and resenting the fact that they got the students rather than the teacher down the hall. The competency exams had an effect on the school climate as a whole and inadvertently on the special education students.

### **Staff Development**

Staff development was another topic that was focused on in the interviews. When the school first moved toward inclusion, there was no staff development on inclusion due to the fact there were no programs or experienced experts accessible. When the current staff was asked about the staff development they have had for special education of inclusion, there were differing answers. According to the assistant principal, Ms. Hart, a staff development was offered on a teacher's legal responsibility for special education students in their classes, but only a few teachers recalled the training. The assistant principal said it was an outstanding training that was very informative, but it obviously lacked enough meaningful information to get the teachers to recall or retain the information.

When Mr. Adams, the initial principal, and Ms. Miller, the special education teacher, were questioned about staff development, they both said that there was none, because there was no other model available to observe or experts to train them. The question is whether there really was or was not staff development at the school? To hear both participants explain the process of creating an inclusive school it was very clear that staff development was occurring. There may have been no in-service type of training, but what they failed to realize was the staff development was occurring daily on the campus with the interaction between teachers. There was an informal training that the teachers created and learned from to "Make it work" as the principal requested. They developed a

learn-as-you-go training that required trial and error on the part of the teachers. The teachers were their own students as they grew and developed a program that did not previously exist.

Sage and Burrello (1986) discussed the differences between forms of personnel development including in-service or continuing education, supervision, and consultation and networking of staff (p.164). Very few of the people interviewed had any special education background with the exception of the special education teachers nor had there been any significant in-service training or presentations on special education. The in-service presentations that were given at the school were limited. The next aspect Sage and Burrello discussed was supervision. None of the principals in any of the stages had direct interaction with utilizing supervision as a form of staff development. What was occurring in the school throughout the entire process was the continual consultation and networking that Sage and Burrello discussed. The teachers were meeting in the halls and before classes to discuss what was working or was not working and problems of successes they were having with specific students. This is where the staff development was taking place and making a difference in the implementation of inclusion.

Literature emphasized the need for the formal staff development and the role of the principal in overseeing the staff development. Burrello and Sage (1979) said, "the administrator must be more heavily involved in staff development" (p. 186). Hilldale High School did not fit the expectations for the principal led formal staff development. The principal, Mr. Adams, worked hard to create an environment that fostered innovation and learning. Perez (1999) discussed the need of the principal to encourage and support new approaches and innovations and leave room for errors without the fear of being

reprimanded. Mr. Adams created this environment and learning atmosphere at the school where teachers were not afraid to try new ideas and learn from each other to develop a new program.

The fact that there was little formal staff development does not mean that it was not necessary or still needed. Many staff members expressed the desire for assistance on special education issues. It is also unknown if more formal training would not have helped the process of implementing inclusion happened more easily had it been done. Ten years ago, they did not have the choice of staff development on inclusion - there was little available.

The teachers did request training on how to work with team teachers and instructional assistants in the classes. They also felt information on working with specific disabilities such as oppositional defiance and ways to implement modifications was necessary for staff development and would help them to reach the special education students more effectively.

### **Role of the Principal**

Clausen (1988) discussed the role of the principal as a change agent versus that of a manager. Clausen said that a change agent was one who was an initiator, a listener, and set high expectations while the manager was one who established a good work climate and kept the organization running (p. 26). Mr. Adams, the first principal, could be characterized as a change agent, because he initiated, listened and established the expectations for his staff. Mr. Waters, the current principal, on the other hand, fit the criteria for the manager. He works very hard to create a positive work environment and

he keeps the organization running. The difference between a change agent and a manager does not mean one is better than the other under Clausen's definitions; it is only an explanation of the differences in style.

Mr. Adams, the first principal, fit a definition by Keyes. Keyes (1999) said, "creating schools that are inclusive often requires administrators to engender an environment in which members begin to question the status quo" (p. 19). Mr. Adams created this environment by sending teachers out on all types of training to start new ideas and projects at the school. He basically prepared the staff to be open to new ideas and try new things. This philosophy helped the staff be open to starting inclusion at their school.

One question that arises is whether or not Adams was a visionary leader or an innovator. Chance and Bjork (2002) described vision as "future oriented in wording and concept" (p. 17). Chance (1992) explained how a visionary leader involved others in the process. "The visionary leader engages others in the process by actively involving them in decision making, problem solving, and goal shaping" (p. 101). Adams involved his staff in all the aspects delineated by Chance. The end result of the staff involvement was as Chance (1992) described as building a "collegial and collaborative atmosphere that began as the vision was developed but focuses the total organization on what is to be accomplished" (p. 101). When it came time to actually defining Adam's vision, there was confusion between whether he attempted new ideas and programs, thus being an innovator or whether he had vision. Adams did not clearly define his vision in his interview, and most teachers did not directly answer the question. One special education teacher identifies his vision in her interview that answered the question. She emphasized that Adams wanted, "his employees and all kids to fulfill themselves in some way – to

find fulfillment in their lives, progress, and move along.” His vision was there, but the people interviewed did not clearly define his vision. The teachers knew it was there, but did not know how to describe it. His vision could have been that much stronger had he continuously communicated his vision statement to the staff.

Another aspect of vision that was overlooked by Adams was that of collaboration. Chance and Bjork (2002) noted, “The vision development process should be viewed as a collaborative effort among all the stakeholders” (p. 18). They continued, “Vision that is imposed on an organization is often doomed to ultimate failure” (p. 18). At no point in the interviews did any person say that Adams collaborated with others to develop a vision. Adam’s programs, including inclusion, still worked. It could have been that he set the expectation and then gave the staff the freedom to meet the expectation, thus having personal investment into the program.

Adams did create change, and he utilized small incremental changes that Hopkins, Ainscow, and West (1994) described as, “a gradual, often subtle transition from one state to another” (p. 21). On the contrary, Ms. Katz attempted to implement planned change described as seeking to “interpret the natural development of events, and often on a given day, to break with previous practice to establish new order” (p. 21).

Dufour and Eaker (1992) discussed the principal’s role as a change agent with four criteria, including: the empowerer of teachers; promoter and protector of values; instructional leader; and manager of climate. The only principal who fit all four criteria was Mr. Adams. He empowered the teachers by giving them free reign in creating an inclusive program in the school and trusting their expertise and judgment to make it work. He promoted and protected the values of the staff by keeping the students as the

focus at all times. He was an instructional leader in the way he had teachers collaborate and work together and worked to create an environment that fostered learning. Lastly, he not only managed the climate, but he successfully worked to create a specific climate at the school that fostered innovation.

Ms. Katz, the second principal, did not fit any of the descriptions established by Dufour and Eaker. She did not empower, promote values, lead, or manage. Dufour and Eaker pinpointed qualities that Katz lacked as the school leader. She never fit into the school. Mr. Waters, the last principal, had one component that Dufour and Eaker wrote about and that was the manager of climate. Mr. Waters had inherited a school of unhappy teachers, and he chose to spend the majority of his time focusing on his primary goal, which was improving the climate of the school. At the time of the study, he had only been at the school for a year and a half, and the school climate, as measured by teacher responses, had improved dramatically. Teachers who were interviewed expressed concern about the stance Mr. Waters took on inclusion, but Mr. Waters said he was not interested in changing inclusion. This can be taken two different ways. First, Mr. Waters could have been telling the researcher what he thought she wanted to hear, or he could have been so focused on improving the climate and making the teachers happy that he did not see what his actions were doing to the inclusion program. After all, the teachers were the ones that requested the special education students be centralized into specific classes, so the teachers could get extra support from the special education department. Mr. Waters gave them what they wanted and then the teachers complained that the numbers of special education students in their classes were too high. Regardless of what his intentions were, his overall role as the principal of the school was positive.

## Climate

Owens (1995) created a social systems model out of Tagiuri's description of an organizational model. Owens described the organizational dimensions and their influence on the school climate. These dimensions include the school culture or the norms of the school. The second is the ecology or the physical make-up of the school and technology. The third is the milieu or morale. The fourth is the decision-making aspect of the school or the organization. Owens warned administrators about understanding how their decisions effect the connection between each of these dimensions and the result on the school climate. These dimensions and how they relate can be applied to each principal. When discussing the changes in school climate, the evolution of the climate created by each of the administrators is essential.

The first principal, Mr. Adams, did not specifically address inclusion in his overall school climate. Mr. Adams created a school-wide philosophy that emphasized change as an important component of the school. The change he was implementing was an important aspect to meet his vision of the school as being progressive in its ideas and implementation of programs. Mr. Adam's vision was, "for his employees and all kids to fulfill themselves in some way – to find fulfillment in their lives, progress, and move along," as described by a special education teacher.

Mr. Adams spent time creating a school atmosphere that was conducive to change by sending staff members to workshops and trainings that would persuade attitudes to be open to new ideas and thoughts. When he gave the direction for inclusion to be implemented, it was just another program that they were starting. Special education teachers were given the direction to, "Make it work," as Ms. Miller expressed, but the

majority of general education teachers accepted it as another one of Mr. Adam's projects. Janney, Snell, Beers, and Raynes (1995) discussed how principals could create an environment for teachers to build ownership in a program and encourage others to get involved by recruiting volunteers. Mr. Adams knew who his key teachers were, and he got them involved. They moved a few successful students with disabilities into general classes of teachers who were open and willing and broadened the number of students and teachers involved in the program over time. The program grew from there.

Teachers in that time period seemed to take pride in the new, innovative ideas and programs Hilldale was implementing. The trust that Mr. Adams had in his staff was an essential part of the programs implementation. Ms. Miller said during her interview, "I wish I could give you a scientific explanation for how we did it, but I can't – we just did it." There were no staff development programs for them to attend; they were the forefront of inclusion ahead of their time. Mr. Adams gave the staff the freedom to make it work and he provided the climate at the school to enable it to happen.

The climate of the school changed under Ms. Katz. She influenced a negative school climate at the school due to her association with the superintendent and support of the competency exams. However, reports through the interviews showed that very little changed with special education programs under Ms. Katz. Ms. Katz had a special education background and was supportive of special education. But, she had no direction for special education, and she succeeded in diminishing the school's overall climate. As Ms. Miller noted, the staff never targeted special education when the climate started



falling apart. Many times the underdog can be targeted when tough issues arise, but the program never became the target and inclusion stayed in tack while everything else at the school seemed to crumble.

One answer could be that Ms. Miller was noted as being a strong supporter and fighter for the program. Another answer could be that Mr. Adams helped to create a program that could be sustained without him, because he took a hands-off approach to inclusion and allowed the experts to do their job. So, when he left and another hands-off administrator inherited the program, it was able to run itself. Some interviewees contend that Ms. Katz was so tied up with the district office that she did not have time to really know what was occurring at the school.

The school climate and inclusion became more interesting under Mr. Waters. Each interview supported the fact that Mr. Waters improved the overall school climate as noted by teacher interviews, but there was a mixed reaction when the interviewees were asked about his impact on inclusion. Mr. Waters was not the hands-off administrator like Mr. Adams or the district follower like Ms. Katz. Mr. Waters created his own reputation at the school. As noted by a special education teacher, "People either loved him or hated him, but they were willing to get the job done for him". With that kind of approval from the staff, it was interesting to see what appeared to be a decline in the inclusion program. Clearly, Mr. Waters worked on improving the morale of the teachers and the school, but his overall vision was not clear, and it was even more blurred when inclusion was discussed.

When discussing the influence of the organization on the school climate, it is interesting to look at each principal's style. Mr. Adams, for example, had the teachers

make decisions for the school. Ms. Katz did not let the teachers have any input with any decision nor did she seek their advice on issues. Mr. Waters, on the other hand, kept much of the decision-make authority, yet he worked with the teachers by listening to their concerns and suggestions.

Each of the principals faced specific dilemmas. Ogawa, Crowson, and Goldring (1999) defined dilemma as, "The very notion of a dilemma infers deep commitment to core values that are often in conflict with one another" (p. 279). Ogawa, Crowson, and Goldring (1999) continued, "Dilemmas are value-laden choices that can never be resolved. Dilemmas are prevalent in organizations because multiple values are always at play" (p. 279). "Dilemmas facing organizations, such as adapting to environmental pressures versus maintaining internal certainty, are not the responsibility of a particular person's job description but touch upon all aspects of an organization" (p. 279). Thus, reiterating that changes made by administration without considering the core values of the staff affect the entire school and continue the dilemma.

This conflict between core values can be applied to the dilemma between professionalism and bureaucracy. "Professionals are constrained by the norms of their professions and thus identify with their colleagues, while organizations require participants to respond to the directives of superordinates" (Ogawa, Crowson, and Goldring, 1999, p. 283). The dilemma continued because of "the professional's need for autonomy and the organization's need for compliance with formal structure" (p. 283). Mr. Adams gave the teachers more autonomy, then it was taken away under Katz, and some of the autonomy was given back under Waters. Under the changes of each principal, the conflict of the teacher's need to be treated as professionals rather than the

control of the bureaucracy changed as the style of the administrators changed. The teachers became focused on respect and being treated like professionals as they received directives from their superordinates. Adams gave the power to the teachers to make decisions, Katz gave top-down decisions from the district office, and Waters still made the decisions, but he listened to the stakeholders prior to basing the decision.

The dimension of ecology of the school was shown to be different with each principal. Mr. Adams increased the size of the school by almost double and oversaw the creation of a state-of-the-art library at the school. He also had computers in each teacher's class. Katz did not have anything built, nor was there any evidence that she made any improvement with technology. Mr. Waters did not participate in any substantial building changes, but he did take the school to a new level in computer technology. He streamlined teacher paperwork by implementing and training teacher on how to use the computer more effectively in the classroom.

The dimension of culture was another dimension that affected the school. Mr. Adams created a school where the belief system that encouraged teachers to take a change. He promoted new ideas and backed teachers who were trying and implementing new things in their classrooms that would benefit kids. The overall aspect of inclusion became imbedded in the school culture as seen by its ability to last through two other principals. With a few exceptions like the math department, the people interviewed expressed the idea that inclusion was a part of the school norm. One way to view this would be through the changes imposed by Ms. Katz and Mr. Waters. Ms. Katz forced the implementation of the competency exams, which made including students into classes more difficult since they would have to pass a test for graduation. Mr. Waters began making changes in

the program and moving more special education students into more restrictive settings. There were several teachers, including special education and general education teachers that expressed concern over this move. Mr. Waters and Ms. Katz both disrupted the norms of the school with their actions. These norms were established long before these principals obtained their positions, and their changes violated the norms.

The decisions to make changes were in direct conflict with the norms of the school. Under the milieu dimension, Ms. Katz with her competency exams and Mr. Waters with limiting inclusion also had an effect on teacher morale. Teachers were frustrated with Ms. Katz forcing the competency exams on them and her consistent alignment with the district office against teachers. The four years Ms. Katz was the principal took a toll on the teachers' morale. Teacher input was no longer solicited and decision-making was abruptly taken away when she obtained the position. Mr. Waters came into the school knowing that the morale was low among the teachers, and improving the morale became one of his self-professed goals.

Mr. Waters and his administrative staff put forth considerable effort to make the staff feel important and valued. The assistant principal said that the administration acknowledges teachers at staff meetings and other events or specific accomplishments. The administration made sure that they had gifts for teachers at Christmas and during teacher appreciation week. While Mr. Waters intended to improve the school morale, he may have violated the norms of the school. For example, it was expressed by a special education teacher that one general education teacher was having difficulty working with special needs students. The special education students in the teacher's class were placed into a resource room instead of working with the teacher to follow the modifications of

the students and to appropriately work with the students. Mr. Waters may have improved the morale of one teacher or the few others like him, but several of the people interviewed expressed concern for his changing the way things were done at the school.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) warned against principals moving too quickly to create change, “failing to appreciate that even small changes can transgress sacred elements of the school culture” (p. 85). Mr. Waters seemed to have focused on improving the school climate and began making small, minor changes to the inclusion program and the staff began to question Mr. Waters’ actions concerning inclusion. He may not have meant to change the inclusion program at the school, but the small changes he made disrupted the sacred elements of the school. Rossman, Firestone, and Corbett (1988) added, “Both teachers and other members of the school community are likely to respond to a change in terms of its fit with existing culture” (p. 21). Mr. Waters did not appear to take into consideration how making changes with the inclusion program would be accepted in the school culture. Teachers had included students with disabilities for years, and they viewed Mr. Waters as making changes that could redefine inclusion. For example, a general education teacher said, “The principal has decreased the number of basic classes which is where special education students were primarily placed.” The teacher went on to discuss how the decline of basic regular classes limited the options for placing some special education students. The teachers were unaware of what this new inclusion would look like, but one teacher was sure that it was not positive, which resulted in her leaving the school.

The vision of the school principals impacted the three stages of inclusion at the school including the implementation, sustained, and redefining stages. Unlike Mr. Adams, Mr.

Waters seemed to lack vision. Mr. Waters was very concerned about improving student test scores and student achievement, which was a fact of life for administrators in Mr. Waters' era where tests scores defined the school's success. Mr. Waters' concerns were not vision. Mr. Adams was different. Mr. Adams had an overall school vision that pushed the school staff to become innovators by attempting new ideas and programs that could enhance student achievement. Interestingly, Mr. Adams did not take credit for the implementation of these innovations – he credited the teachers.

### Review of Research Questions

The first research question asked: "What were the various perspectives from the teachers of the principal's role in the change process?" Teachers' perceptions of the principals' role in the change process changed with three different principals and their three distinct styles. Each principal had his or her own era within the inclusion process. The teachers' perceptions of the principals' roles in the change process changed with each principal. In addition, the second question attempted to find: "In what ways did the principal act as a change agent for creating inclusive programs in their schools?" Each principal implemented his or her own style when it came to acting as a change agent. Regardless of whether each principal was an agent of change, each had an influence on changing the inclusion program at the school in some way. The third research question asked: "What was the process of change used in a high school identified as an inclusive school?" Over the ten years the program developed, different processes of change occurred with each principal mainly influenced by their own beliefs and values. Question four specifically related to recurring research themes of the school climate, staff

development, and the support of the principals. The study demonstrated that the themes influenced the development of an inclusive educational program through three different principals with three separate issues that developed over the past ten years.

The problem statement for this research study was, "In what ways did a principals leadership affect the change process for the implementation for inclusion?" While discussing specific research questions it would be fitting to address the problem statement, thus concluding the results of the study. By addressing only the principals' influence on inclusion, one principal was responsible for creating an inclusive school, Mr. Adams. His leadership took the school from a segregated environment for students with disabilities to one that included its students. The other two principals had an influence on the program as a result of their overall decisions for the school. However, Adams made the effort to create the change specifically for inclusion.

By looking at Havelock's (1982) change agent roles, Mr. Adams can be identified by several traits. He was a catalyst in the sense that he motivated the entire staff by sending them to training regarding innovative approaches to teaching. This opened the possibilities for the teachers to make dramatic changes in their teaching strategies and modifications for all students. Mr. Adams acted as a catalyst for inclusion by explaining to the teachers what he wanted to see done and then left it up to the teachers to get it done. Second, Mr. Adams was the solution giver by having the solution about what he would like to change in regard to special education, and then he expressed his ideas to the staff. Third, Mr. Adams was the process helper. He delegated responsibility to the special education teachers to create an inclusive school. He then offered the teachers his assistance as they worked through the problems solving process. As a resource linker,

Mr. Adams linked a special education teacher with other teachers, both general education and special education. He noted the expertise of others and fit certain personalities together that would be beneficial for his direction on inclusion. Mr. Adams made sure the teachers involved in inclusion had all the resources and support they needed to make the program work. In contrast, neither Ms. Katz nor Mr. Water behaved as a change agent for inclusion. Ms. Katz imposed the wishes of the district office on the teachers at the school; therefore, she took no leadership role at the school. Mr. Waters was not interested in making lasting change at the school in the short time he had been at the school. He was more interested in building the morale of the school, thus, laying the foundation for future change.

Examining the three principals in regards to leadership behaviors noted by Yukl (1994), it was evident that Adams consulted with and delegated to others on his staff. Adams consulted his staff and looked for input and suggestions when making decisions about special education. He also delegated the responsibility of moving students with disabilities into a less restrictive setting at the school to the teachers who knew the issues first-hand. Adams had other traits that were less obvious such as motivating and monitoring. Even though he did not get directly involved in the changes for inclusion, he did monitor its progress. He also encouraged his staff to adopt inclusive practices through motivation, rather than edicts. He made it clear that they were the ones to make it happen. These behaviors are directly related to the roles he played as a change agent.

Ms. Katz's behaviors regarding inclusive practices, on the other hand, of not oppositional toward inclusion, did not serve to advance these practices. For instance, teachers repeatedly mentioned that she left special education alone. She was more



concerned with mandating the competency exams be implemented. She did not consider the effect the exams could have on the school, teachers, or students, including special education students.

Waters' leadership trait in reference to Yukl (1994) was that he was working on rewarding the staff for their achievements. Several times it was mentioned that Waters and the administration would give gifts to teachers and recognize accomplishments. When it came to inclusion with Mr. Waters, his leadership behavior was just as lacking as Ms. Katz. He did not communicate his intentions for special education to the teachers. He reduced the number of basic classes, which was where the majority of included special education students were placed. This deletion of classes and an already negative reputation with regard to special education made teachers wary of Mr. Waters' intentions with inclusion. He also lacked meaningful leadership traits outlined by Yukl.

When looking over the ten-year period of the implementation of inclusion, it becomes clear that the real change occurred in the implementation stage. Mr. Adams was a change agent for inclusion at the school in his own way. He enlisted the help of influential teachers such as Ms. Miller, to get the program started. In doing so, Mr. Adams took a school that had alienated special education students to one that valued each student as a part of its general education community. The principals that followed him may have changed a few details, but the nature of this institutionalized program has stayed in tact.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

The influence that the size of the community had on the implementation of inclusion is one aspect of the study that was not addressed and would be an interesting addition to

the data. There are only two high schools that are geographically separated in the rural county. The county has a population of over 37,000 people, predominately white, and includes three towns and other rural housing developments. Regardless of the growth of the town, it still has the small town atmosphere. It is unclear as to whether the changes at the school to support inclusion would have been easier in a big city, or whether the small town community hurt the efforts to become more inclusive. The homogenous population of the school could have had an effect on the implementation of inclusion. A study of a more heterogeneous urban school conducted in the same fashion would contribute additional information to the field.

The fact that this study was not done over a period of years and that the implementation was done ten years earlier opens the opportunity for research. Finding a school that is about to start the process of inclusion and following the school over a period of years would be a substantial contribution to the field. Also, returning to Hilldale after another five to ten years and conducting the same interviews would be an interesting way to see how the school resolves some of the issues they are facing with inclusion. This data would help other schools dealing with the same issues.

Broadening the definition of the stakeholders to participate in the study would contribute rich data as well. Interviewing general education and special education students and the parents of both as well as community members would add informative data. Regardless of what research is done on principals and inclusion, it is important with the changes in the laws and the mandatory move toward inclusion that more is studied to assist principals with successful implementation practices since they are clearly the ones who influence the success or failure of the program.

## Conclusion

The school had issues that it needed to overcome with respect to special education. After ten years of inclusion, the program had changed and constantly evolved. It first began with a supportive principal, Mr. Adams, and teacher buy-in. Then small steps were taken to get the entire school involved. The program appears to have peaked between six to eight years after it was started. This was at the time the principal retired and a new principal, Ms. Katz, took over. The program was maintained during this time period. However, for the past two years under the third principal, Mr. Waters, the program has been on a decline with frustrated teachers, increased special education student numbers, and growing numbers of resource rooms. Regardless of the problems the school faced, the inclusion of the special education students was unsurpassed in the state. The school was truly a remarkable environment for all students to learn and be accepted. The special education students were not harbored in a dark corner of the school and kept out of sight. They were an integral part of the school. This was not lost in all the changes the school went through in the past ten years. The school was a model for high school inclusion, and with some staff development, support from the principal, and a vision to create a positive climate, the school should continue to be inclusive for the next ten years.

In short, it is the principal who is responsible to ensure that each teacher is fulfilling his duties by complying with IDEA and each student's IEP. It is the principal who sets the climate for the school to create a positive environment for all students and be supportive of students and staff. It is the principal who needs to communicate with the teachers to understand their needs for staff development in special education that would

**be beneficial for them. And most of all, it is the principal who must establish a vision for special education inclusion to successfully make it work.**

## **APPENDIX**

**University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
Research Involving Human Subjects  
Protocol**

**DESCRIPTION OF STUDY**

**Name: Wendi Hawk**

**Department: Educational Leadership**

**Title of Study: The Principal as a Change Agent for Implementing Inclusion**

1. **Subjects:** One school will be selected based on the recommendation of Marsh Lakes, Education Consultant for the Nevada Department of Education. From the school selected, the principal and a minimum of six teachers will be selected to participate in the study by way of interviews or classroom observations. These teachers will initially be recommended by the school principal and later through the research process should further investigation be necessary.

2. **Purpose, Methods, Procedures:**

a. **Purpose:**

The increasing identification and growth of students into special education, along with court cases and legislative mandates prompted a move towards inclusion. This has placed an increased burden on school site administrators as they attempt to guide schools through these changes to create educational environments that are conducive to educating students with disabilities in the regular setting. The school principal is an important component for completing change within schools; however, the literature and research for the implementation of inclusion is primarily focused on the teacher. As Mayer (1982) noted, "very little information can be found in the professional literature concerning the principal's role for special education. This area is wide open for research" (p. 127).

This study will analyze how principals are creating change to facilitate the learning of students with disabilities in the regular classroom setting. Using a qualitative research design, data will be collected from participant interviews, document analysis and program observation. This study is designed to assess an inclusive school program and the role of the principal as a leader for creating change. This study will add to the literature by determining the leadership characteristics that create change for an inclusive school.

b. **Method:**

This study will utilize a case study approach to analyze a principal's role in a particular high school that was recognized as being an inclusive high school. A case study was chosen in order to describe the various contextual factors that contribute to the change process including the social and cultural factors of the school.

This study will use qualitative methods of obtaining data. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) said, "qualitative research methods are ideally suited to examining the

world from different points of view” (p. 19). Rice and Ezzy (1999) said, “Qualitative research aims to elicit the contextualized nature of experiences and action, and attempts to generate analysis that are detailed, ‘thick’ and integrated” (p. 1).

c. **Procedures:**

“A good qualitative study combines an in-depth understanding of the particular settings investigated with the general theoretical insights that transcend that particular type of setting” (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p. 26). Rice and Ezzy (1999) suggested triangulation as a source of obtaining data from multiple resources. Rice and Ezzy (1999) said, “use of multiple methods, involves using a combination of methods, researchers, data sources, and theories in a research project” (p. 38). Rice and Ezzy (1999) added, “triangulation allows the research to develop a complex picture of the phenomena being studied, which might otherwise be unavailable if only one method were utilized” (p. 38). Taylor and Bogdan (1998) said that triangulation is a way to obtain various information from differing sources of data. This study will incorporate triangulation by utilizing interviews of school personnel, observations of inclusive classrooms, and collecting data sources such as memos pertaining to inclusion, staff development documents, and Individualized Educational Plans.

Qualitative methodology will be used for this study by collecting interviews, classroom observation, and document analysis. The information collected will be sorted and coded to identify themes and data that emerge from the process.

3. **Risks:** The names of the participants and the school will be kept confidential. A specialist in qualitative studies from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas will review the question guidelines to ensure that potential risks for subjects are not a factor. Teachers may fear being observed or being reprimanded by the principal for their answers. At this time, there is minimal evidence for potential risks to the participants of the study.

**Benefits:**

Court decisions and the implementation of the law have demanded that students with disabilities be placed into more inclusive settings with their non-disabled peers. These mandates have created more pressure for principals to properly and legally implement inclusive programs that would place students with disabilities into the general classroom setting with their non-disabled peers.

The principals, as the school leaders, are responsible for the actions of the school in regard to special education. With inclusion at the forefront of the special education movement and the education of students with disabilities with non-disabled peers, it is important that principals take an active role in implementing more inclusive programs in their schools.

This study will gather data that will assess the principal as an implementer of change for inclusion. This will help state and district administrators evaluate the roles of the

principals in the schools so that improvements could be made to help with professional development and program implementation for the schools. This information will be a tool for assessing programs and servicing students with disabilities.

Little research has been done on the principal and school inclusion. This study will add to the field of research knowledge regarding the implementation of inclusion and the principal's role in its implementation. The school may also feel a sense of pride and community being identified as one of the top inclusive schools within the state.

4. **Risk-Benefit Ratio:** Readers of this project will benefit from the understanding of what factors contribute to creating inclusive schools that benefit all students. The benefits outweigh the risks.
5. **Costs to Subject:** The only cost to participants is that teachers will need to give time (approximately 20 minutes) for the interview before school, after school, or during their preparation period. Phone contact and reviewing documents will also be required. There are no direct financial costs for the subjects.
6. **Informed Consent:** A letter will be given to all participants involved in the research. This letter will follow the University's informed consent guidelines including general information, procedure, benefits, risks, contact information, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and participant consent. Wendi Hawk, the researcher will be responsible for collecting the letters and the data will be stored at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas for three years.
7. **Child/Youth Assent:** No children will be interviewed or be a direct participant during this study.

#### **Resources**

Mayer, C. L. (1982). Educational administration and special education: A handbook for school administrators. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

Rice, P & Ezzy, D. (1999). Qualitative research methods: A health focus. South Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press.

Taylor, S. & Bogdan, R. (1998). Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.



**University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
Department of Educational Leadership  
Interview Informed Consent Form**

I am Wendi Hawk, a doctoral candidate from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Department of Educational Leadership. I am the researcher on this project. You are invited to participate in a research study about the principal as a change agent for implementing inclusion

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a twenty-minute interview and be observed teaching classes that have learning disabled students. There is a minimal risk associated with the interview process. You may feel fearful of having a stranger interview you or observe your classes. However, the benefits from this research include adding to the knowledge base of a principal's role in creating change for inclusion.

You might be uncomfortable answering some of the questions asked. You are encouraged to discuss this with me. I will explain the questions to you in more detail. If you have any questions about the study or if you experience harmful effects as a result of participation in this study, you may contact me at (702) 567-2551 or my advisor, Dr. Patti Chance, at UNLV 895-4391. For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, you may contact the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at (702) 895-2794.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or at any time during the research study.

All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for at least three years after completion of the study.

**I have read and understand the above information and agree to participate in this study. A copy of this form has been given to me to keep.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Name (Please Print)

**I understand that my interview will be tape recorded, and that I can deny being recorded or stop the recorder at any time.**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Semi Structured Interview Format

I am a doctoral student from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas within the Department of Educational Leadership and a school administrator in the Clark County School District. I am completing my dissertation of the principal's role in creating change for inclusion. I am conducting an interview to collect information for a descriptive case study on how inclusion was implemented at your school and the principal's role. It is not an evaluation of you, but it is a means of soliciting your views and perspectives regarding the project. Obtaining various views of inclusion in your school is a critical aspect of this project.

This interview will be recorded, so I can focus on our discussion without taking detailed notes. Feel free to stop the tape recorder at any time if you have topics that you would like to discuss confidentially.

Tell me about yourself.

What is your position in the school?

How many years have you taught?

What is your experience with special needs students?

How were you involved with the school's move toward inclusion?

Describe an ideal school /approach/philosophy toward inclusion?

a. How does this ideal philosophy relate to the school's philosophy?

Tell me about how your school became more inclusive of students with disabilities.

How long ago?

How did people participate in the process?

What were some of the issues that the school faced?

How is the school being affected by the change today?

What was the principal's role in the change process?

What has helped you prepare for serving students with disabilities in the regular setting?

Staff development

College classes

Personal/ professional experiences

What other training would be helpful?

What types of support does the school principal provide for the teachers toward assisting them in servicing students with disabilities?

Tell me how the teachers plan and prepare for classes with students with disabilities?

Tell me about the process of Individualized Educational Planning?

What kind of support does the principal provide for special education teachers and general education teachers?

How often does the principal participate in activities involving students with disabilities?

How would you describe the school's climate?

How do general education teachers and special education work together?

**What is the principal's affect on school climate?**

**What does he do to create this climate?**

**What types of activities?**

**How do staff members support servicing students with disabilities?**

**Describe the typical day with learning disabled students.**

**What else do you want to tell me?**

December 4, 2001

Dear Mr. Waters:

I am a doctoral student from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas within the Department of Educational Leadership and a school administrator in the Clark County School District. Hilldale High School has been noted as being one of the top schools within the state for promoting inclusive education for students with disabilities. I am completing my dissertation on the principal's role in creating change for implementing inclusion. You are invited to participate in this study that would contribute to the research on inclusion and assist other schools in implementing inclusion successfully.

Participation in this study would include interviewing staff members during non-instructional time, classroom observations, a tour of the school, and document analysis of your school's policies and procedures for implementing inclusion. Participants in the interview portion of the study will have the opportunity to review their dialog before the data is reviewed, which will require extra time.

The school's participation in this study will be kept confidential with the description that it is a high school in the West. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and you will not be compensated with monetary rewards. All the documentation for this study will be stored and secured at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas for three years. If you request a copy of the results of the research, I would be more than happy to send the results to you.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns at 567-2551 in the evenings or 799-7660 x 257 during the workday. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Wendi Hawk  
Doctoral Candidate  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

**I have read and understand the above information and agree to participate in this study. A copy of this form has been given to me to keep.**

---

June 24, 2002

**Dear Interview Participant:**

My name is Wendi Hawk, and I met with you last December to discuss inclusion in your school. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for participating in my doctoral research project.

In order to verify and validate my research, I have highlighted quotations and paraphrases of my interview with you. I kindly request that you review and correct the highlighted portion of the attached text to verify the accuracy of my research. I have enclosed a self-addressed, stamped envelope in which you may return the documentation to me. As I anticipate, the review will take only a few minutes. This is the final portion in completing my dissertation, and I would appreciate the reviewed documents be returned to me no later than July 8, 2002, with or without any changes.

Please be advised that I have ensured that your identity remain anonymous in the draft copy mailed to you by changing the names of the participants and of the school's location. The final draft has been designed to disassociate the participants from their role in the school or the study.

Do not hesitate in contacting me at (702) 567-2551 should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Wendi Hawk

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**The Practices of Principals in Implementing Inclusion in Their Schools**

**Dissertation Examination Committee:**

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