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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS: POST-PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy

by

Julie M. Lane

September, 2011

Eric R. Hamilton, Ph.D.—Dissertation Chairperson

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This dissertation, written by

Julie M. Lane

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Doctoral Committee:

Eric R. Hamilton, Ph.D., Chairperson

Margaret Weber, Ph.D.

Kent B. Rhodes, Ed.D.

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my dear friend, Deb, for her ever listening ear and her insight from her own doctoral journey and to my parents who instilled in me to pursue my passions and to reach for my dreams. Lastly and most importantly, to my daughters, Cynthia and Kimberly, for their unconditional love and constant support.

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## VITA

Julie M. Lane

## Education

State of California Clear Administrative Credential	2010
Chapman University Graduate Course Work in School Psychology	2005
Chapman University Master of Special Education (with honors)	1997
State of California Resource Specialist Certificate	1997
Concordia University Lutheran Teacher Colloquy	1996
State of California Special Education-Learning Handicapped Credential	1994
State of California Professional Clear Multiple-Subjects Credential	1993
University of Redlands Master of Music	1987
California State University, Fullerton Bachelor of Music	1985

## Professional Teaching Experience

Faculty, Fresno Pacific University, Bakersfield Center	2010-2011
Consultant, Alternative Designs in Special Education, Bakersfield, CA	2009-2011
Administrator, New Vista School, Laguna Hills, CA	2008-2009
Director of Special Education, Connections Academy, San Clemente, CA	2006-2008
Resource Program Director, Lutheran High School of Orange County, CA	1999-2006
Resource Specialist, St. Paul's Lutheran School, Orange, CA	1996-1999
Special Education Teacher, Etiwanda Unified School District, CA	1993-1996
Long Term Substitute, Corona-Norco Unified School District, CA	1993-1993
Special Education Teacher, San Bernardino County Schools, CA	1992-1993
Substitute Teacher, Riverside Unified School District, CA	1992-1993
University of California, Riverside	1992-1993
University of California, Irvine	1991-1992
St. John's Lutheran School	1987-1989
Azusa Pacific University	1987-1995
St. John's Community Music Conservatory	1987-1990
Redland's Community Music School	1985-1987
Private Studio	1981-1993

## Educational Presentations

Joni and Friends, West Coast Summit, Westlake Village, CA	2011
ACSI Early Childhood Conference, Elk Grove, CA	2011
ACSI Early Childhood Conference, Lancaster, PA	2011
PSW District Teacher's Conference, Palm Desert, CA	2010
ACSI So California Conference, Anaheim, CA	2010
Summer Institute, Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA	2010
CAPSO Conference Long Beach, CA	2008
Texas Lutheran School In-Service, Houston, TX	2006
PSW District Teacher's Conference Palm Desert, CA	2006
Georgia-Florida LCMS School Conference, Orlando, FL	2006

CAPSO Conference Long Beach, CA	2005
National Lutheran Educators Conference Indianapolis, ID	2005
Las Vegas Regional LCMS In-Service, Las Vegas, NV	2004
CAPSO Conference Long Beach, CA	2002
PSW District Teacher's Conference Palm Desert, CA	2001
Learning Disabilities California State Conference Concord, CA	2001
PSW District Teacher's Conference Palm Desert, CA	2000
Learning Disabilities California State Conference Long Beach, CA	2000
PSW Orange County Regional In-Service	1998
PSW District Teachers' Conference Palm Desert, CA	1997
Session Chair International Orton Dyslexic Society Conference	1994

#### Honors and Activities

Special Education Dept, Program Restructuring Committee, FPU	Current
Master Schedule Development Team, FPU	Current
Co-Chair California State Credentialing Re-Write Committee, FPU	Current
Vision Development Committee, FPU, School of Education	Current
WASC Coordinator, New Vista School	2009
Carol Gray Award	2006
American's Most Influential Teacher	2006
Master Schedule Development Team	2005
Funding for the Future Committee Member, LHSOC	2005
Special Day Class Steering Committee, LHSOC	2004
Academic Advisors Committee, LHSOC	1999 - 2006
Student Concerns Committee Member	1999 - 2006
Start Date Committee, St. Paul's Lutheran School	1996 - 1999
Coordinating Council for Students with Special Needs, PSW District	1996 - 2005
California Retired Teachers Association Scholarship Recipient	1993
National Collegiate Music Association Award	1987
All-American Academic Collegiate Award	1986 - 1987
University of Redlands Graduate Assistantship	1985 - 1987
University of Redlands Talent Scholarship Recipient	1982

## ABSTRACT

Private schools are not required to provide special education services to students who have been identified as needing such services. No prior research shows what programs exist in Christian private schools and how services are provided. This study sought to understand Christian educators' experiences and obstacles when developing a special education program. Participants attended a 1-week summer institute that provided instruction in key areas of special education services, disabilities, and instruction pertinent to serving children with special needs. Participants demonstrated an increase in knowledge and skills following the institute. The institute coordinator provided afterward 3 months of support through a virtual forum. Synchronous and asynchronous communication provided participants with support as they implemented their plans at their school sites. Conclusions relating to the 3 research questions are as follows:

1. The experience of participants as they applied their knowledge from the institute to their school sites was that (a) the 2 Catholic schools experienced fewer obstacles in implementation than 2 of the Lutheran schools; (b) participants reported more success when they had buy-in from the school community; (c) the follow-up virtual forum provided the summer institute participants with a reliable avenue to seek support and guidance; (d) schools differed in their experience of implementing the plans, and their experiences could benefit those interested in determining potential obstacles.
2. Steps that participants took as they experienced obstacles in the implementation of their plans included the following: (a) setting up clearly defined policies and procedures regarding identification of needed services, as well as clarification of

general education teachers' roles; (b) recruitment of teachers and parents for student study teams; and (c) professional development for other staff members.

3. The virtual forum support following the professional development summer institute benefitted participants in the following ways: (a) provided them immediate and useful feedback, (b) provided a sense of community, and (c) held them to a deadline to report on progress.

Recommendations include (a) gathering statistical research about existing private school special needs programs, (b) development of a national private school database, and (c) regular summer institutes supporting special needs program development.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

With the passing of P.L. 94-142 in 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act ensured that all children with disabilities would receive a free and appropriate public education. Implemented in 1979, P.L. 94-142 mandated that children with special needs would be provided the services to help them reach their full potential. Since 1975, the law has had a tremendous impact upon the educational services for children with special needs and the funding necessary to provide these services. As indicated in P.L. 94-142's original passage, the federal government was to eventually fund 40% of the costs of these services while states were to cover the remaining expenses. However, the federal government has yet to meet the funding expectations. In February 2009, as part of the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*, President Barack Obama signed into law that 25% of IDEA will now be funded, whereas previously, less than 20% of the law had been funded since the law's implementation in 1979 (Council for Exceptional Children [CEC], 2009).

In 1990, P.L. 94-142 was reauthorized and renamed. Now known as the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*, the law gives every child the right to a free and public education including special education services. The demands under the law for program development and specialized instruction for special education services have continued to grow and change. As the federal government has yet to fully fund IDEA, program development is limited. These budgetary constraints coupled by the lack of highly trained professionals have resulted in parents being dissatisfied with services provided by their school districts. As stated by Billingsley (2004), "Because of teacher

shortages, many uncertified teachers are hired to work with students with disabilities” (p. 370). Thus, parents have started to look elsewhere for a more effective alternative to provide their children with specialized services and instruction outside of public education.

Prior to the 1997 amendments to the law, parents who elected to place their children in schools were able to receive special education services through their child’s public school. Therefore, children who had been identified by the public schools yet placed in schools by their parents were still able to receive special education services through their public school site. Moreover, children who were already attending schools could still request an assessment, be identified with special needs, and have services provided at their public school site. Yet, much of this has now changed due to the amendments to IDEA in 1997.

**Reauthorization 1997.** In 1985, the Supreme Court ruled in *Aguilar v. Felton* that religiously affiliated schools were no longer to receive funding under Title I, a law that strove to improve the academic achievement of children who were disadvantaged (Daughtery, 1999). Upon that ruling, the federal government began to question delivery of special education services in religiously affiliated schools. As a result, the reauthorization in 1997 stipulates that “students with disabilities in schools do not have the right to receive the same level of services that they would have received had they been enrolled in public schools” (IDEA, § 300.454). Although the law still allowed public schools to provide special education services, the decision was left in the hands of each state and district. This resulted in many public schools completely pulling funding and services to children placed in schools by their parents (Daughtery, 1999). Since



IDEA's reauthorization in 1997, state and local districts have continued to either cut back on, or completely discontinue, services to school children. Because the federal government has yet to fulfill its original intent of funding 40% of state costs, public schools reduced their financial obligations by reducing or cutting special education services to children placed in schools by their parents.

What did not change was the requirement of public education professionals to find and identify children with special needs placed in schools by their parents. This requirement is known as *child find*. Through the child find process, children in schools are identified through the assessment process as defined under the law. If a child qualifies for special education services, public schools must make an offer of a free and appropriate public education. Yet, to receive special education services, children in schools must return to their public school site. If the parents elect to maintain their child's enrollment in a private or parochial school, services are in jeopardy.

As stated under the reauthorization of IDEA in 1997, the responsibility regarding whether services are provided to a child in a private or parochial school is a decision made by each state or school district. Daugherty (1999) states that public school agencies may then "make their determinations as to the number of private school children with disabilities who will be served, and about the nature and extent of services to be provided" (p. 84). Thus, district professionals maintain the right to elect what services will be provided and to what extent. If children elect to remain in their private or parochial school, school leaders must make the decision whether or not they are able to provide the child with an effective and appropriate education.

**Reauthorization 2004.** In 2004, IDEA was reauthorized yet again. Although still commonly referred to as IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) again impacted children who had been placed in private or parochial schools by their parents. As under the original law and previous reauthorizations, children who had been identified for special education assessments were the responsibility of the child's school of residence. IDEA 2004 changed the responsibility to the public school district in which the private school is located. To assist in facilitating this process, the local education agency (LEA) personnel became responsible for meeting with school representatives on an annual basis. Referred to as consultation, public school representatives are to hold consultations with school representatives. This is to be done on an annual basis. Therefore, an LEA, or, if appropriate, State Education Agency personnel, must consult with school representatives and representatives of parentally-placed private school children with disabilities. Based on this annual consultation between public and private school representatives, a program will be designed for the development of special education and related services for parentally-placed children, according to section 34 CFR 300.134 and 20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(10)(A)(iii).

In order to meet the child find obligations under the 2004 reauthorization, parents of school children have an additional step. Parents must now contact special education personnel of the school district in which the private school resides. The private school's school district of location personnel is then, in a timely manner, to contact the child's school district of residence. The school district of residence's special education professionals must then assess the child to determine if s/he qualifies for services.

Upon the completion of the evaluation, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting is held. Both school districts are to be represented by special education professionals at the meeting since the private or parochial school's district of residence is responsible for providing services to the child. Per the researcher's experience, this is a rare occurrence. It is rare for representatives from both districts to be in attendance. Therefore, the IEP team is ill equipped to determine what types of services will be offered, if any, and to what extent. Thus, IEP meetings occur without special education services clearly defined.

**Summary of IDEA.** Children placed in schools by their parents no longer have individual rights and, therefore, no longer have the right to special education services. Moreover, the process used to evaluate these children became even more cumbersome as school districts have avoided the burden of responsibility. It is unclear why these shifts occurred other than funding and ease to those on placed in boarding schools across the United States. What is clear, though, is that until IDEA is fully funded by the federal government, cuts will continue to occur, and children in schools will continue to be denied the full benefits of their public school counterparts.

### **Statement of Problem**

Special education services are not readily available in private Christian schools. In addition, special education training for these school professionals is rarely provided. Taylor (2005) discussed the need to address special education services in schools by developing programs. For programs to be developed and services implemented, school leaders need opportunities to be educated about special education law, programming,

identification, and best practices. Taylor's research indicates the need to support continuing education for school leaders in the area of special education law and practices.

As parents continue to look for alternatives outside the public sector, children are being enrolled in schools due to the small student population and class size, a safer and more caring environment, and in hopes of finding educational success for their child (Taylor, 2005). Private Christian schools are accepting these children for a variety of reasons, including economic. Yet, schools are finding themselves unable to adequately provide an effective and appropriate education for these children.

Based on a national search by the author of the present study, programs that focus on the leadership skills of school educators vary from summer institutes to doctoral programs. Yet, it appears that only Loyola Marymount in Los Angeles, CA touches on school special education leadership. Consisting of 9 units (3 courses), LMU's Special Education Leadership Certificate is embedded in their Master of Arts in School Administration. However, no self-contained special education leadership program exists for school leaders. Over the many years the researcher has been in special education, she has witnessed firsthand school leaders' limited knowledge of special education law, private school law, program development, and program funding. In addition, teachers in schools also lack professional development opportunities for best practices in the special education field. Thus, school administrators and teachers do not have the tools to effectively serve this population of students.

### **Purpose of Study**

The first purpose of this study was to determine the nature of the lived experiences following a 5-day summer institute as participants apply their learned

knowledge of special education to their school sites. The second purpose of this study was to determine how participants respond to obstacles when implementing special education programming. The final purpose of this study was to determine whether support through the virtual forum following a 5-day summer institute would be beneficial.

### **Research Questions**

These purposes for the study translate directly to the following research questions:

1. What is the lived experience of participants as they apply their special education knowledge, including that acquired in the institute, to their school sites?
2. What steps do participants take as they experience obstacles in the implementation of their special education knowledge?
3. To what degree, if any, does virtual forum support following professional development benefit participants?

### **Key Terms and Operational Definitions**

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions apply:

- Educational psychological report: An educational psychological report is a confidential, formal report written by a licensed school or educational psychologist. The report contains information regarding the child's family history, milestone development, educational history, and current cognitive, neurological, academic, and social/emotional behavior assessment information.

In addition, the report includes findings and recommends for educational progress and development.

- High incidence disabilities: High incidence disabilities are those found most common in the general population. For this study, high incidence disabilities include learning disabilities, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, speech and language development, Autism spectrum disorders, and Tourette syndrome.
- Leaders: Leaders in schools either are in administrative or board roles and or who have been determined to embrace the special needs population within their schools. It is anticipated in this study that leaders will lead the way in implementing their strategic plan.
- Leadership: As skills were needed to assist colleagues in embracing the leader's strategic plan, leadership was defined as "a change-oriented process of visioning, networking, and building relationships" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 337).
- Institute: A 5-day professional development summer institute which participants attended at the Pepperdine University Malibu Campus from July 26 to 30, 2010, entitled, "Open Hearts, Open Minds: Serving Students with Special Needs in Schools."
- Obstacles: Obstacles are anything that obstructs or hinders progress (Obstacles, 2009). In the case of this study, the participants put into place their strategic plans, and obstacles were those events or circumstances that prevented participants from moving forward with their plan.
- Program design: Program design results from a vision and purpose for the special needs program within each individual school.
- Professional development: As defined by DuFour and Eaker (1998) professional development refers to "meaningful intellectual, social, and emotional

engagement with ideas, with materials, and with colleagues both in and out of teaching” (p. 145). For this study, this definition was used as applied to increasing the knowledge of school leaders so that they may increase the success of students with special needs within their schools.

- School site: Each participant in the study was required to be a full-time educator at a designated school. This school was their school site.
- Social skills development: Hanley (2008) states, “for individuals with autism the development and understanding of appropriate reciprocal social behavior and interactions is significantly impaired” (p. 2). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, social skills development indicated how to provide students with tools necessary to interact reciprocally while understanding social cues and understanding the feelings of others (Myles & Adreon, 2001, p. 14).
- Speech and language development: Speech and language development begins during early childhood. Speech and language development that does not proceed normally can result in an impairment. A communications disorder may be evident in the process of hearing, language, and or speech (Nielsen, 2008, p. 159).
- Special education: This term is an umbrella that covers children who may or may not qualify under federal and state guidelines as qualifying for special education services in public schools. In turn, special education not only embraces children who have been formally identified by such guidelines, but also includes children who have been identified within the school setting as not making anticipated progress per grade level expectations and are receiving specialized instruction at their school site by specialized staff members.

- Special education law: Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, children who have been placed in private or parochial schools by their parents do not have the same due process rights of their public school peers. For the purposes of this study, special education law specifically refers to the educational and special educational rights of children placed in schools by their parents.
- Strategic planning: For this study, each participant wrote a strategic plan in order to implement special education knowledge at their school site. A strategic plan was defined as “creating strategies to set objectives and coordinate resources” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 306).
- Student study team: A group of regular or special education teachers who come together to develop an intervention plan for a student at the request of a regular education teacher or administrator.
- Virtual mentoring: Guidance and support from an expert to someone of lesser skill through a median of communication that works across time, space, and geographical boundaries by use of synchronous and asynchronous technology.

### **Importance of the Study**

The importance of this study rests partly in devising and testing means to empower school administrators and leaders with the understanding of how special education laws apply to students identified with special needs. There is no doubt that children with special needs are in schools. Meadows (2007) points out that the job of school administrators continues to grow, and in “diagnosing” the needs of their schools. They must also be aware of the resources and avenues in which to meet these needs (Meadows, 2007, p. 9). In addition, educators in the classroom have the opportunity to



strengthen their knowledge and challenge themselves in serving these children. Informed by professional experts, educators can learn how to develop a strategic plan that they can implement in their schools. In doing so, these educators can return to their school sites and challenge the thought process or ineffective organizational patterns in serving this special population of students.

Through this institute and later through the on-line forum, leaders of schools began to acquire the skills needed in order to make such programs successful. School leaders often “neglect to spend the time and money on developing necessary new knowledge and skills;” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 370) the on-line support provided time for leaders to network and share their experiences as they address the needs of children in their schools. Lastly, in understanding the implementation process and obstacles that leaders face when developing such programs, there appeared a clearer understanding as to why some programs are more successful and sustainable.

### **Limitations**

This study was limited by its ability to replicate all of its findings in all school settings. For example, schools which are faith-based may have additional components by which children with special needs are embraced versus those schools that are not affiliated with a religion. Schools that are designated to provide an elite college preparatory curriculum may also vary in how faculty and staff members would desire such a program versus those that serve the needs of a more heterogeneous population.

An additional limitation was the inability of the researcher to control the environment in which the strategic plan is implemented. This included how often participants were involved with the on-line forum. Participants were able to participate in

all on-line forum opportunities, yet how prepared they were or how involved they were in the implementation of their plan could not be controlled.

### **Assumptions**

An assumption of this study was that each school leader would embrace and share the vision of the development of the special needs program. Leaders are expected to make the effort to implement a strategic plan and to share the vision of the program with their school community on a continual basis. Senge (2006) asserts that leaders must embrace a vision and live it in order to truly exemplify its importance within an organization.

A portion of this study was conducted using self-reporting methods. The study assumed all participants would respond in an honest and unbiased manner. In accordance with the assessment guidelines, self-reports were completed at the institute prior to the institute's first professional development session and following the last session.

## **Chapter 2: Conceptual Support and Review of Literature**

This literature review is related to the study of special needs program design and development in private and parochial schools, in preparation for the eventual development of a special needs program. Private and parochial schools are identified as schools that receive no federal funding and are not required to adhere to federal or state special education laws and regulations. In order to address the special education programming needs, this chapter review focuses on the theoretical framework of professional development in face-to-face meetings and through mentoring as part of a virtual forum. This literature review will also provide insight regarding the rationale for professional development for private and parochial school educators and the educational components needed in private and parochial schools as based on current research.

This literature review (a) defines key elements within the study related to professional development and mentoring as part of a virtual forum, (b) introduces research that will unite theoretical issues regarding professional development, (c) links the value of professional development with support through a virtual forum, and (d) provides insight as to the topics for professional development. This literature review is organized by the need for special education professional development in private and parochial schools, the theoretical framework of professional development and supporting studies, mentoring through a virtual forum, and professional development topics.

### **Special Education Needs in Private and Parochial Schools**

Special education services are not readily available in private and parochial schools (Eigenbrood, 2004; Taylor, 2005). However, recent studies by Conference of Catholic Bishops (2002) and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations (Institute for

Public Affairs, 2003) clearly indicate that students with a wide range of disabilities are being served within these school denominations, according to Eigenbrood (2004).

Eigenbrood (2004) also states that “in spite of the increased interest in the provision of special education in nonpublic schools, there is a lack of information in the traditional special education literature regarding the types of services available to students with disabilities” (p. 17).

Special education training for private and parochial school professionals does not exist outside of public school credentialing programs. Taylor (2005) argues that there is a need to address professional development in special education services by private and parochial schools. This implies that private and parochial school leaders must create opportunities to educate themselves and their faculty and staff members concerning special education law, programming, identification, and best practices. Eigenbrood (2004) supports these findings, suggesting that private and parochial school educators should participate in professional development activities in order to improve “abilities of teachers to provide effective instruction for students with disabilities” (p. 17). In discussions, conversations, and interviews with the Directors of School Ministries of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Regional Directors for the Association of Christian Schools International, and leaders in private and parochial school communities, professional development regarding special education in private and parochial schools have been found to be few in number and are significantly needed (K. Baxter, personal communication, 2010; J. Beavers, personal communication, 1999 – 2010; M. Brink, personal communication, 2004 – 2006; J. Haddock, personal communication, 2010; R. Klitzing, personal communication, 1996 – 2010; G. Pinick,

personal communication, 1999 – 2006; R. Ritzman, personal communication, 2010; R. Sprangel, personal communication, 2010).

**Professional development opportunities.** Based on a national search by the researcher, programs that focus on the professional development of private and parochial school educators vary from summer institutes to doctoral programs. Yet, it appears that only Loyola Marymount in Los Angeles, California touches on private and parochial school special education. Consisting of 9 units (3 courses), LMU's Special Education Leadership Certificate is embedded in their Master of Arts in School Administration. However, no self-contained special education leadership program exists for private and parochial school leaders. Over many years in private and parochial special education the research has informally but repeatedly observed private and parochial school leaders' limited knowledge of special education law, private school law, program development, and program funding.

### **Research in Special Education Using Scientific Methods and Evidence-Based Practice**

With the passage of the Education of Handicapped Children Act (1975), children with special needs gained the legal right to a free and appropriate public education. Prior to 1975 much of the research regarding special education was performed by those in the medical field and implemented in residential placements or institutions. Eventually this led to research by those in the psychological, sociological, and anthropology fields. However, with the passage of this act, special education research established new roots in the general education setting. Under the guidance of a Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Task Force in 2003, the types of research questions regarding best practices in

special education were closely examined. The CEC Task Force resolved that in special education research, the experimental groups, correlation data, single subject questions, and a qualitative design must all be addressed when determining best practices. The rationale behind these findings was due to the high complexity of special education services.

The complexity of special education research is rooted in the plethora of disabilities serviced, the program options, and the delivery of special education services. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 there are 13 categories in which children with special needs may qualify for special education services. Once identified, special education programming selections must be provided in the least restrictive environment, as defined in IDEA. These programs include, but are not limited to, inclusion, resource program, special day class, adaptive physical education, speech and language, physical or occupational therapy, social skills development, and mental health support. In addition, programs that address transitional services to support the movement from elementary to middle school to high school to post-secondary must also be addressed. Odom et al. (2005) state, “special education extends beyond the traditional conceptualization of ‘schooling’ for typical students” (p. 140). Therefore, researchers must determine what best practices research in special education are and how the current practices do or do not make use of research in the general education setting.

In 2003, the Institute of Education Sciences (n.d.) was established with the explicit mission to provide rigorous and relevant evidence on which to ground education practice and policy and share this information broadly. The results of IES research

affirmed the need for multi-disciplinary approaches to research when examining special education best practices. Using multiple approaches resulted in controlling the threats of internal validity. To further assist with the quality of the research, groups such as the American Psychological Association and the society for the Study of School Psychology have established guidelines by which to conduct research. Both of these organizations have developed criteria for studies using experimental groups. This is in contrast to the CEC Task Force, which created procedures for describing research methodology for studies using group, single-subject, and qualitative research methodology.

IES research has indicated that special education research has roots in the medical field. General and special education research has aligned itself with the medical field and has begun to use research-based practice in seeking effective methods to serve the special education population. The rationale behind this movement is to address the long standing concern regarding the significant gap between special education teaching practices and current research (Odem et al., 2005, p. 142). However, special education professionals have not adopted guidelines such as those set by the CEC Task Force. This has resulted in the Division of Learning Disabilities and the Division of Research jointly publishing a review of the literature that specifically addresses the lack of evidence in special education practices. This review has resulted in a Division of Research Task Force being set up in order to develop guidelines to determine best practices in special education.

The guidelines that were developed by the Division of Research Task Force may or may not have relevance to private and parochial school special education services. As previously indicated, private and parochial schools are not obligated to adhere to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. However, program development and special

education services in private and parochial schools will add yet another layer of options to be examined in the plethora of offerings within the public school system. Private and parochial schools typically function as independent entities, so the uniqueness of each program design and the implementation of services may vary greatly from school to school. Application of the guidelines that are established by the Division of Research Task Force in the private and parochial school setting may provide the foundation by which to examine such programs.

### **Professional Development**

Private and parochial school leaders must provide school communities with professional development opportunities in order to meet the needs of their specific school environments (Owings & Kaplan, 2003). Professional development as defined by Wall (1993) is “any in-service activities that can potentially increase an educator’s effectiveness within the school system, and more specifically, any planned process of education or training that will benefit the teacher, student, and school system” (p. 4). Over the years, effective professional or staff development has been most commonly structured as a 1-day event intended to provide educators with the latest knowledge on a specific methodology, strategy, or teaching tool.

Joyce, Showers, and Rolheiser-Bennett (1987) conducted a meta-analysis of professional development in order to develop an organized database to guide future research. Their investigation into professional development resulted in three qualitative variables: (a) “attitudes toward the training events” (p. 79); (b) “knowledge about an approach or theory” (p. 79); and (c) “knowledge of academic content, simple teaching skills, complex teaching skills and strategies, curriculum patterns, and students learning”



(p. 79). Joyce et al.'s investigation revealed that trainers and peers used traditional modes of information presentation along with opportunities for practice and for feedback and follow up. DuFour and Eaker (1998) and Stigler and Hiebert (1999) have revealed that the traditional presentation and instruction for professional development may not lay the groundwork for a shared understanding, collaboration, and empowerment of faculty and staff members. Townley and Schmieder-Ramirez (2007) echo these findings.

In addition, a missing component of professional development is teacher involvement. Wall (1993) reviewed the literature and examined the research regarding staff development and its successful elements. Wall's findings indicate that staff development is most successful when faculty and staff members along with administration are involved in the process. DuFour and Eaker (1998) support active involvement in professional development. Knowledge learned through faculty and staff professional development processes are more likely to be implemented when faculty and staff members take an integral part in their development and execution. Lieberman (1995) reviewed research dating back to 1957 and reported the same findings. Even at that time, the need for collaboration amongst faculty members was documented. Teacher collaboration, competence levels, and the development of community trust were at the forefront. Lieberman also echoes the need for involvement. In doing so, educators begin to embrace the concept of learning in the same mode in which they want their students to embrace learning (Lieberman, 1995).

The National Center on Staff Development (NCSd) was developed in 1969. To date, the NCSd has worked with 11 other national educational organizations to monitor, refine, and implement best practices in professional development. The NCSd defines

professional development as “a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers’ and principals’ effectiveness in raising student achievement” (NCSD, 2011, para. 3). In addition, the NSDC indicates that professional development must be supported by the school systems themselves and must support networking opportunities. Therefore, in light of the above research and its correlation with the NCSD’s guidelines, the NCSD (a) context standards, (b) process standards, and (c) content standards will be used as the theoretical framework in developing a cohesive and comprehensive model when developing a special needs program in private and parochial schools.

### **Special Education Practice Research**

**Study 1: Determining evidence-based practices in special education.** The research of Cook, Tankersley, and Landrum (2009) examined the criteria and procedures for identifying best practices in special education. Drawing from research in clinical psychology, school psychology, and general education, the research compared these findings with special education best practices and how to increase the academic outcome levels of children with special needs.

The gap between achievement levels and expected achievement levels as based on best practices research is the result of special education teachers using more familiar strategies in the classroom regardless of the evidence presented about the strategies’ effectiveness (Cook et al., 2009). This may be the result of a lack of support and guidance when implementing such practices (McCampbell, 2002; O’Neill, 2007). However, Cook et al. (2009) continue to question what qualifies as evidence-based practices and how can researchers identify these practices (p. 366).

The research blueprint components included a control group and quality design. A control group instilled the idea of producing a reliable knowledge base as to whether or not the intervention affects student outcomes. Control group design was based on the Division for Research Task Force as it provides for an experimental control. The quality design elements reflect the emphasis placed on the results of a single study regardless of its rigor and design. Therefore, Cook et al. (2009) ask the question regarding when is there enough supportive evidence to determine whether or not a practice is deemed worthy of implementation in the classroom. As reported in Cook et al., Gersten, et al. (2005) “required a minimum of two high-quality group studies to consider a practice evidence-based or promising research in special education” (p. 371). These numbers are also reflected in the evidence-based practices in clinical psychology and general education (Cook et al., 2009). The methodological quality of the studies in special education best practices was rooted in controlled trials. The standards of these studies require (a) the randomly assignment of participants to conditions, (b) overall and differential attrition must not be high, (c) the intervention is implemented consistently, and (d) by assigning more than one teacher to the intervention methodology (Cook et al., 2009, p. 369).

Using the model above, research in private and parochial schools could be developed. Control groups are easily accessible as most private and parochial schools do not offer special education programming. Professional development opportunities provide the forum to design needed programs. The use of mentoring and coaching, which extends beyond the initial professional development, provides the needed support and guidance in the consistency of the program design. Professional development that is

provided for an entire faculty and staff within a private or parochial school fulfills the requirement of one more than one teacher implementing the methodology taught.

Therefore, Cook et al. (2009) conclude that research may be very applicable to special education program design and development in private and parochial schools.

**Study 2: What we know about using research findings: Implications for improving special education practice.** Gersten, Vaugh, Deshler, and Schiller (1997) reviewed the literature in order to address the factors that lead to successful research-based practice and to reflect upon the factors that fail. The study also reflected upon the role of the researcher and role that researchers may need to assume in order to best understand application in the classroom. Based on the synthesis of the literature, Gersten et al. (1997) indicate that there is an assumption that educators are willing to accept and implement new practices that have been scientifically proven. However, the study reveals that (a) educators do not accept and implement new practices once they know what they are, (b) educators do not consistently monitor new teaching practices and their effectiveness, and (c) implementing new teaching practices requires substantial changes in teaching routines. The study's findings indicated that researchers must not limit themselves to working primarily with school administrators. Instead, researchers need to work more closely with teachers who are on the front lines and in the classroom.

The second aspect of the Gersten et al. (1997) study reviewed literature regarding the sustainability of teaching practices. This study revealed that in order for teachers to sustain the use of best practices, four components must be met: (a) fit within the day-to-day functioning of the classroom, (b) lend itself to practices already in place, (c) apply to all students in the classroom, and (d) enhance and enrich the current teacher's repertoire.

The study indicated that teachers do not want researchers “tinkering” (Gersten et al, 1997, p. 470) with the small aspects of the school day, but rather “feasibility and fit” (Gersten et al, 1997, p. 470) to the overall structure.

The third aspect of this study looked at the effectiveness of in-service opportunities and its correlation with practice implementation. As anticipated, the study clearly indicates the need for continued support and feedback following teacher in-service opportunities. “A system must exist such that when teachers try out new methods of teaching, they receive regular feedback from either a peer or person knowledgeable in the new strategies or innovation” (Gersten et al., 1997, p. 470). The study also clearly explains the need for time in which educators can collaborate and consult with one another regarding the implementation of innovative programs and instruction.

Therefore, in developing special education programs within private and parochial schools, researchers need to have an understanding of the unique cultures that develop within these settings. Experience within these settings provides researchers with an overarching awareness of current practices within the school. In addition, the study supports the need for on-going support, mentoring, and coaching. Researchers and educators are then able to collaborate and consult with one another and take equal ownership as a special needs program is developed.

Therefore, private and parochial school communities would benefit from researchers who (a) are trained in the field of special education, (b) have an understanding of the dynamics within private and parochial schools, and (c) can provide on-going support following professional development.

## **Special Education Programming Implementation in Limited Service Areas**

### **Study 1: Success and sustainability of visionary grassroots education**

**initiatives in rural areas.** This comprehensive case study identified and defined 20 common themes needed in order to create successful and sustainable innovative programming. The study included 38 interviews with members of four innovative grassroots efforts in three schools or educational organizations: (a) homeschooling, (b) community learning centers, (c) innovative schools, and (d) folk schools. Eiben's (2008) findings indicate that there is further research needed in the area of innovative program options in order to understand the rationale behind the sustainability and success of such programs. However, out of the 20 themes that Eiben (2008) identified, 14 of them are applicable to the development of special education programs in private and parochial schools:

1. Initiation, design, and on-going shared decision-making by local stakeholders
2. Local strengths and resources are identified and built upon
3. A shared vision
4. Long-term community health is a primary focus
5. Choice about participation
6. Group process and team effort are emphasized
7. A small enough project for a faculty to collaborate
8. A sense of collectiveness
9. Competent, committed, and consistent leadership with clearly identifiable skills
10. Development of local leadership

11. The development of relationship and a sense of community within the organization
12. Commitment to social justice
13. Importance of a core organizational group that is consistent for several years
14. The ability to be flexible and responsible during growth and change. (pp. 235-241)

Ironically each of the common themes stated above directly reflects the initial development of special education laws and programs under the Education for Handicapped Children Act of 1975. Through the development of a parent advocacy group in 1947, the rights regarding education of children with special needs were brought into question. As the initial movement began to develop, the grassroots effort to provide a free and appropriate education to all children took shape. As a result, federal law was introduced and implemented and innovative special education programs were created.

A grassroots effort of this type may also be the foundation for the development of special needs programming and professional development in private and parochial schools. Based on the experience of the researcher, programs in private and parochial schools are rooted in the efforts of individuals—administrators, teachers, parents—who have a passion for the development of such programming. It has been through these efforts that initial services have begun. However, in McDonald's (2008) research, described later in more detail, professional development and training is lacking, in understanding how to serve children with special needs.

**Study 2: Educator perspectives of special service implementation in a rural school system.** The purpose of Picone's (2010) qualitative case study was to examine

the perceptions held by educators in the implementation of special education services in rural public schools as it relates to the school-wide learning community. Picone studied three schools in one rural Missouri school district. The 25 participants in the study included regular and special education teachers in Grades K-12. Granted, there is a substantial amount of research regarding the attitudes and perceptions of educators and special education implementation. However, Picone researched focused on the perceptions and attitudes of educators regarding special education implementation as it directly relates to school-wide learning.

The results of the study revealed that environmental factors significantly impacted school-wide perspectives of special education implementation. A sense of connectedness amongst educators is needed. Through connectedness there is understanding regarding the conduct and operational structures as to the purpose of the program and its design. As a result of these findings, professional development that relates to school-wide learning and community cohesiveness should be targeted. In addition, opportunities for general and special education teachers should be provided with the time to collaborate and interact with one another in formal and informal conversations.

These components also apply to the development of special education programming in private and parochial schools. Special education implementation must be viewed as a part of the school-wide learning community and not a separate entity. School administrators must design professional development opportunities that enhance the learning of all community members. Lastly, school administrators must develop master schedules that allow for time to collaborate and consult with different faculty and staff members.



## **Studies in Private Schools Regarding Special Education**

**Study 1: An exploration of primary level special education practices in catholic elementary schools.** McDonald's (2008) study investigated the types of learning disabilities that had been identified within the diocese of 59 northern California Catholic elementary schools for Grades K-2. In addition she collected data about the types of programs that had been developed and the teaching interventions used. Lastly, McDonald examined the types of teacher preparation in special education.

The study revealed that the Catholic schools involved in the study primarily provided some type of program or special practice to support students who had been identified with a learning disability. The most common interventions used within these Catholic schools were the resource pull-out program, tutoring, and small group instruction. Yet, a lack of consistency amongst schools was highly apparent. In addition, the types of support programs also varied within some schools with these variations occurring within grade level departments.

Academic modes and intervention practices were also unveiled in the study. Of these, teaching modes that were most often used were auditory, visual, kinesthetic, and hands-on. Academic interventions to adjust assignments and materials to best serve the needs of the child were least often used. The lack of intervention practices may be connected with the problematic concerns of student inclusion in the general education classroom, as reported in the study. These problematic concerns are further embellished by the reports of respondents who indicated that they preferred to "collaborate with a pull-out teacher, rather than implementing interventions and special education practices themselves" (McDonald, 2008, p. 117). The desires to collaborate with a pull-out

specialist are supported by concerns regarding lack of training to service children with learning disabilities. McDonald's study revealed that only 5.4% of those in the study held specialized credentials that addressed special education. One-third of those in the study held master degrees. Of those, only 16.4% strongly agreed that they believed they had the proper instructional tools to service this population of students. Another 12.3% of the participants in McDonald's study reported that their credentialing programs had not prepared them for serving children with special education needs. In conclusion, McDonald's findings indicate that perhaps additional professional development experiences focused on Catholic special education might be beneficial for classroom teachers. Thus personnel preparation programs, school-based or diocese-based programs, and teacher preparation programs are challenged to find new and creative ways to support Catholic special educators working in Catholic schools (p. 118)

Therefore, this study supports the need for innovative professional development programming that specifically addresses children placed in private schools by their parents. As parents continue to seek special education alternatives for their children, private and parochial schools will benefit from developing effective programming.

### **Mentoring and Coaching**

“Mentoring is one of the most effective processes used for professional development” (McC Campbell, 2002, p. 63). Mentors are experienced role models who are experts in their fields of study. Mentors are guides who are willing to assist others in their plight. As per Gagen and Bowie (2005), “mentoring has been used in many professional development settings to support individuals new to a profession” (p. 40) in order to “meet the demands of a new position while managing the stresses of a new

environment” (p. 40). In order for this to occur, mentors must recognize and “focus on the human factor of mentoring and work to build a mentoring culture” (Francis, 2007, p. 57).

The first step in this process is the common goal that mentors and mentees share. In the field of education, the ultimate goal is to impact student learning. A mentee wants input and feedback from experienced colleagues who can assist with program development, instructional strategies, skilled teaching, and shared insight as to student expectations (Johnson & Kardos, 2002). The second step is the development of a safe relationship where the mentee is able to share the problem and seek help and guidance from the mentor. Research on the Teacher Support Program indicates there is evidence that a positive aspect of a mentor program being structured from bottom to top, with the participant’s concerns being the starting point of conversations, are far more beneficial than that of a preset agenda made by the mentor (Westling, Herzog, Cooper-Duffy, Prohn, & Ray, 2006). Westling et al. (2006) also demonstrate that the participants enjoy the “autonomy and professionalism of the program” (p. 145), as they were able to support one another while feeling supported. Through the cyclical steps of implementing their knowledge, receiving feedback, and implementing newly added knowledge, participants were able to try effective practices and develop more confidence.

A mentor and mentee must also develop a positive relationship. Onchwari and Keengew (2010) found that to build relationships mentors need to understand the needs of their mentee. In doing so, mentors are able to effectively support and guide mentees towards their individual goals. Once mentors and mentees have established this relationship, an avenue is built that shifts mentees’ attitudes towards accepting new

knowledge and strategies so that goals can be achieved (Onchwair & Keengew, 2010, p. 23).

The mentor must also play the role of a coach. The role of a coach is to inquire about where an individual currently is, where s/he wants to go, and how the coach will help the individual achieve the goal (Wooden & Jamison, 2009). Coaches provide support so that individuals “can transform their learning into results for the organization” (O’Neill, 2007, p. 5). The knowledge learned during professional development and its application within a school will be based as to the interpretation, experiences, and school culture in which the individual is accustomed. As stated by Freeman and Bamford (2004), “each person constructs knowledge depending on what is already known and prior experiences, as well as the meaning derived from those prior learning encounters and experiences” (p. 34). Coaches assist in making learning authentic.

Authentic learning provides a variety of contexts and viewpoints and helps the student see the personal and group relevance of the content. Group relevance is key because the students need to be able to look beyond personal relevance and consider ideas from the group’s point of view. (Fisher, 2003, p. 103).

### **Benefits of Virtual Mentoring and Coaching**

As previously mentioned, the lack of knowledge of the number of special needs programs within private and parochial schools is apparent (Taylor, 2005). Therefore, in order to provide support to private and parochial school communities who desire such programming and to address the geographical isolation of such schools, mentoring through a virtual forum is an option that may provide the support needed to develop sustainable programs. Mentoring through a virtual forum will provide the training

beyond the initial professional development presentations by a trained special education professional. Continued mentoring and coaching is needed for teachers, principals, and the school community at large, as there is a significant need for professional development to assist in program development, problem solving, prioritizing, and developing a collegial group in which to discuss and support one another (Gersten, Keating, Yovanoff, & Harniss, 2001).

As a result of technological advances, mentoring and coaching can provide educators with a new forum in which to be provided support and guidance. Per Raffoni (2000), when working through a virtual forum, it is key to develop different modes of communication. Face-to-face meetings are not obsolete, yet establishing a face-to-face meeting prior to working through a virtual forum is highly beneficial (Fjermestad, 2009; Raffoni, 2000). Virtual forum meetings should commence in a timely manner following face-to-face meetings (Fjermestad, 2009).

In order to encourage educators to participate in such environments, mentors must have a sense of their mentees. This may be accomplished through the initial face-to-face professional development opportunity. As a result, mentors will have more successful virtual forum discussions and dialogues when they understand prior knowledge and beliefs of mentee and are experts in their field of professional development (Gentry, Denton, & Kurz, 2008, p. 366). Gentry et al. (2008) also state that mentees will first weigh the benefits of their time and the program before they will adopt and support through a virtual forum.

Researchers Yang and Liu (2004) state the following:

quantity and quality do not necessarily go hand-in-hand, which suggests that those who design and implement technology-based mentoring systems must attend not only to factors that tend to support more frequent usage, but to those related to the quality of interactions. (p. 752)

Therefore, Gentry et al. (2008) emphasize the need for mentors and mentees to develop a level of trust that allows for collegial relationships to be developed. Hence, dialogue that allows for active questioning, collaboration, and problem solving will ensue. Yet, as noted by Denton (2005), this will only occur if a high level of ethics and confidentiality are respected.

Francis (2007) describes a typical web-based mentoring group as one being contrived by participants determining and selecting development areas with “core organization competencies” (p. 54). In attending a professional development as a group, all members have the same basic knowledge and expectations. In addition, each member has developed a sense about how the information learned will need to be implemented at their school. Thereafter mentoring and coaching will target individual needs while the group is able to reflect upon their own needs, the needs of others, and share their own experiences as they unfold (Spatariu, Quinn, & Hartley, 2007).

### **Key Components of Virtual Communication**

The technological era has brought about the opportunity for professional development to occur in face-to-face meetings and through virtual forum presentations. Beginning in the late 1980s, online communication began with the initial downloading of information from the internet. Some 15 years later, technology has moved towards the

use of broadband, presence, messaging, and conferencing (Johnson, 2009). In doing so, the need for traditional face-to-face meetings may no longer become the standard method of team communication. A key component to the success of communication through a virtual forum is embedded within the development of a communication plan along with the guidance of an effective leader.

Harvard Business Communication reports that a communication plan through a virtual forum “develops the organizational culture and community, improves organizational effectiveness and teamwork, and improves individual performance” (Raffoni, 2000, p. 7). In developing a communication plan that will utilize a virtual forum, a leader creates the structure that will provide for effective communication. The formal development of a communication plan provides the structure needed that will enhance the morale to address concerns and move communication members forward (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Fullan (2006) concurs by supporting the needs for brief written plans that may be less formal yet are geared towards action while providing immediate feedback (p. 60). The members will then have a clear understanding as to the roles, expectations, and procedures in communication through a virtual forum and a sense of empowerment and direction will be developed.

A secondary component is trust. A culture of trust establishes how participants will interact and assists with the development of community. In a virtual community, trust appears to be rooted in the perceptions of integrity, and it is through trust that cooperation is instilled (Thomas & Bostrom, 2007). The development of trust can be impeded though, due to the natural distractions when working outside the traditional work environment. Therefore, the leader must develop a plan that provides virtual forum

participants with the expectations and guidelines when participating in a virtual meeting (Krasne, 2009).

Conversely, more research needs to be done on the role of leaders in a virtual community. Thomas and Bostrom (2007) state, “we know little about team leadership in the distributed, multi-organizational, computer-mediated communication work setting” (p. 48). Research does reflect the need for strong leadership. Bolman and Deal (2003) indicate that without a strong leader an organization “is seen as reactive, shortsighted, and rudderless” (p. 279). Therefore, virtual forum leaders must create an environment in which positive outcomes occur, according to Thomas and Bostrom. A virtual forum leader needs to take on the role of a mentor or coach by providing timely and effective guidance as based on the comments, discussions, and concerns of the virtual team.

When investigating virtual forum communication in the educational setting, Onchwari and Keengew (2010) indicate that ongoing virtual forum communication beyond the traditional education setting provides guidance for novice teachers and for veteran teachers who have acquired new knowledge through professional development. If strategies, methodology, and pedagogy have only been provided through traditional settings, educators do not have the continued support needed to effectively implement information taught. Therefore, a combination of face-to-face professional development and on-going virtual forum support provided by a mentor may be the avenue needed to implement the knowledge learned through professional development.

### **Modes of Virtual Communication**

Virtual synchronous and asynchronous communication provides participants with on-going support following professional development. Using these modes of



communication, both mentors and mentees are able to maintain communication, exchange ideas, discuss obstacles, and support one another. Stated in the research of DeWert, Babinski, and Jones (2003), collaboration and consultation are keys to success for new teachers when led by a trained facilitator. As group members will have established relationships during the summer institute, there will be common knowledge so that mentees will be able to receive the “emotional support they need” (Paulus & Scherff, 2008, p. 116). DeWert et al. (2003) state that in a peer support community, collaboration and consultation are developed when virtual forum support is utilized. Yet, it is important to note that individuals respond differently to different modes of communication. Therefore, in order to support different communication styles, synchronous and asynchronous communication systems for mentoring and coaching through a virtual forum are needed.

**Synchronous communication.** Synchronous communication provides interaction from participants regardless of geographical location, yet must be scheduled at a designated time. This tool allows for multiple participants interact with one another in real time. Group members are able to share their success and obstacles while receiving immediate feedback from their colleagues. Dawley (2007) reports that using synchronous communication assists in making “the experience more meaningful and further cements the concept of team learning” (p. 124). Participants also receive feedback while being able to ask clarifying questions, as “two way communication is more engaging” (Dawley, 2007, p. 124). As stated in Freeman and Bamford (2004), studies have found synchronous online communication when focused on a specific

discussion provides a forum for the generation of ideas. Therefore, synchronous communication may be ideal following a professional development presentation.

Synchronous communication also provides a mentor with the ability to pick up on emotions through vocal intonation. Feelings of stress, excitement, exhaustion, and quandary may be ascertained. This may result in mentors being able to reflect more deeply about the needs of their mentees and addressing those needs. Freeman and Bamford (2004) indicate that when group participants become more comfortable with one another, they will share more openly. Hence, mentors are able to gain greater insight as they strive to meet the needs of their mentees. This results in “team members feeling trusted, satisfied, and productive” (Fjermestad, 2009, p. 39). Therefore, synchronous communication following professional development may provide participants with immediate feedback, interaction, and real time dialogue while feeling a sense of emotional support and understanding (Dawley, 2007, p. 123).

**Asynchronous communication.** Asynchronous communication does not occur in real time. Rather participants are able to post their thoughts and questions on a virtual forum communication board at any time. In utilizing a communication discussion board, a mentor creates a central location where they can monitor mentees while analyzing and reflecting upon their postings (Francis, 2007). Communication discussion boards are a place where mentees are able to post information, share their experiences, discuss obstacles, and interact with their colleagues.

It also provides time for reflective feedback from their mentor and colleagues, which cannot be provided through synchronous communication. As stated in Freeman and Bamford (2004) and Pena-Shaf (2001), asynchronous feedback provides time for

participants to reflect upon postings of others as well as their own situations. As participants share their experiences through a virtual communication board, they are able to not only reflect upon their own given situation, but are able to read and reflect on the experiences of others.

The postings provided by the mentor will help guide these discussions and reflections. It is important that the questions posted on the communication board are “planned in a way to provide contexts within which teachers can feel safe to make mistakes, study themselves, and share learning with each other to be successful” (Onchwari & Keengew, 2010, p. 312). Therefore, the postings by the mentor should consistently draw the group members back to the material learned during the summer institute while providing a focus and avenue for continued virtual discussion. These discussions can develop over time and mentees can go back and relook at previous postings and add to the discussion.

A consistent theme in the literature regarding virtual communication boards is the ability to move participants towards higher level thinking skills and student reflections (Rose, 2004). As cited by Spatariu et al. (2007), research done by Heflich and Putney (2001) reflects that an effective mentoring discussion assists in developing critical thinking skills rather than involving a leader who questions the moves of their mentees. This research is supported in the use of virtual communication boards as a means to lead a group to higher levels of cognitive processing (Peterson-Lewinson, 2002). Online discussion boards provide an avenue for a wide array of questions and situations to be answered and discussed. As stated by Jeong (2004), when dilemmas are put into play, the group thinks more critically and begins to interact more substantially with one

another. Jeong specifies this is the result of conflicting viewpoints that result in further discussions. As each group member will have their own individual strategic plan coupled with differing school environments, mentees have the opportunity to think and reflect upon not only their own questions and circumstances, but upon those within their group as well. Through the e-mentoring program in Minnesota, participants were able to weigh in on all discussions while feeling that they would not be judged, as all members of the group were in the learning process. Simply stated, online discussion groups appear less threatening than when groups meet face to face, and higher level thinking skills unfold (Anonymous, 2006).

In summary, mentors and coaches should coordinate discussions and encourage participation regardless of the use of synchronous or asynchronous communication. In doing so, mentees are able to take control over their own learning and become active participants in the process while adopting the positive practices that are presented to them by their mentors (Onchwari & Keengew, 2010, p. 316). Feedback and guidance by the mentor should be done so in a facilitating manner that allows for group members to use higher level thinking skills while feeling a sense of safety and trust.

### **Private and Parochial School Professional Development Topics**

Minimal research has been conducted as to current special education programming in private and parochial schools and the structure of professional development in these schools (Eigenbrood, 2005; Taylor, 2005). However, the research results have indicated the typical special education populations that attend private and parochial schools (Eigenbrood, 2005; Rehabilitation Research, 2009; Taylor, 2005). It has been consistently concluded that high incidence disabilities are more prevalent in

such schools. Eigenbrood (2005) and Taylor (2005) concur that program development, leadership, special education law and professional development which address the needs of high incidence populations are considered necessary in order for private and parochial schools to meet the needs of these students.

**Strategic planning.** The strategic planning process provides organizations with the ability to focus on long term planning and program development. Strategic planning is an on-going process that provides the step by step procedures to develop a special needs program. Through this process organizations are able to evaluate and overcome obstacles that occur as their programs are developed (Schein, 2004). “Put simply, planning is deciding what needs to be done, how it is going to be achieved, and how its outcomes will be measured and assessed” (Cornwall, 2003, p. 158). The initial steps of a strategic plan are developing a shared vision and a structured purpose.

**Vision.** A shared sense of community is influential, and success of private and parochial school special needs programs are dependent upon a solid foundation that exemplifies a shared vision. A “shared vision is vital for the learning organization because it provides the focus and energy for learning” (Senge, 2006, p. 192). DuFour and Eaker (1998) describe that a learning community is different from an ordinary school in its “collective commitment of guiding principles that articulate what the people in the school believe and what they seek to create” (p. 25). As the vision becomes a clear and conceivable image, school communities become excited and relationships change and develop. With the establishment of a shared vision, school leaders are then able to personify the vision that will inspire the school community members (Senge, 2006). When a school community embraces the vision and develops the passion for its success, a

leader must humanize the vision. This humanization provides for organizational norms. Baker, Greenberg, and Hemingway (2006) identify the need of organizational norms as they help teachers maintain a willingness to extend beyond their job descriptions with unquestioned integrity (pp. 278-279).

When establishing a realistic vision, a new culture will emerge which will define what a school “will look like, be like, feel like, and sound like” when a special needs program has been established (Dwan, 2008, p. 36). Walter Waller observed in 1932 that a school culture consists of traditions, rituals, ceremonies, and moral codes that are all still relevant today (Deal & Peterson, 1994, p. 2). It is through these avenues that make schools unique and different. A special needs program in a private or parochial school will establish a different culture. As a result, cultural changes impact the structure of a school and may present challenges for the school community (Hill & Jones, 2001). The new culture that is established within a private or parochial school must be very clearly perceived within the vision. This clear picture includes the rationale for the program’s development creating a moral and unified school community (Sergiovanni, 1996). This results in a shared power that invigorates an organization, so that the school is no longer referred to as “their” school, but rather “our” school (Senge, 2006).

**Purpose.** Once the school community adopts a shared vision, it must be solidly affixed to a developed purpose. The purpose provides for a specific direction in which the program will grow and develop. For instance, as Senge (2006) points out, two people can have the same vision while the purpose that drives the vision may be significantly different. To illustrate this point, two people purchase a lottery ticket with the intention to win millions. One may want this wealth in order to acquire material items for them

self while the other may wish to impact the lives of others as he/she builds and establishes homeless shelters. Both have the same vision to be wealthy, yet their purposes are different.

Therefore, *purpose* answers the questions regarding why the program is being established. It is through purpose that structure is created and school community members can understand the daily expectations as far as instruction methodology, intervention plan development, support systems, and the types of disabilities that will be served. These pieces establish the purpose of the program. Consequently, a structure is established that formalizes the policies and procedures of the program and the day-to-day expectations (Pfhol & Buse, 2000). When combined with the vision of the program, school community members understand the structure and purpose of the program and members have the necessary ingredients to create a successful program (Neck & Echols, 1998).

Just as vision impacts culture, culture is defined within the purpose. In the case of a private or parochial school developing a special need programs, culture is defined as a school which welcomes children with special needs while having the tools and training to provide academic, social and emotional opportunities. This culture is created through the actions, words, and values as reflected by all school community members (Cornwall, 2003, DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Private and parochial school leaders who develop special needs programs establish a culture of acceptance and understanding that is expected at every level of a school organization.

Therefore, vision and purpose are the gatekeepers for the formalization of the policies and proceeds resulting in the expectations and limitations of the program (Pfhol

& Buse, 2000). Having these guidelines provides school communities with a sense of expectations. Yet, vision and purpose are only the initial steps. Schools also need to recognize the process as it is broken down “into three overlapping stages: planning, implementation, and institutionalization” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 46), which creates “a blueprint for formal expectations and exchanges among internal players and external constituencies” (Deal & Peterson, 1994, p. 98). As a result, the vision and purpose of each special needs program will take its own form and shape based on its own array of variables including demographics, funding, and educational training. With the vision and purpose in place, private and parochial school leaders will then begin the process of program design.

**Program design.** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) does not require private and parochial schools to serve children with disabilities unless the school receives federal funding. In addition, federal law does not require private schools to (a) meet guideline and accreditation standards, (b) report academic progress, or (c) report what, if any, special education programming is offered within their schools. Moreover, with no national database regarding special needs programs in private and parochial schools, it is difficult to discern what components create a successful program. Conversations with leaders in private and parochial schools over the past two decades have shed light on the needed components (K. Baxter, personal communication, March 12, 2010; M. Brink, personal communication, February 17, 2005; K. Dunning, personal communication, January 10, 2004; R. Klitzing, personal communication, February 2, 2010; P. Rasmussen, personal communication, April 14, 2006). A national database that provided insight as to types and number of disabilities served, type of special needs



program, qualifications of specialized faculty, and a program establishment date would be highly useful in this study. Yet without this data, it is difficult to ascertain information best practices in special needs programs design for private and parochial schools.

Therefore, program options as outlined in special education public law may serve as models for program development in private schools (Office of Special Education, 2004). Children in public special education programs are most often served in one of three programs: (a) inclusion, (b) resource specialist program, or (c) special day class. Each program is designed to meet the needs of children in the least restrictive environment so that each student may reach his/her full educational, social, and emotional potential.

**Inclusion.** Inclusive education is designed to meet the educational and social needs of all students equally. “The true essence of inclusion is based on the premise that all individuals with disabilities have a right to be included in naturally occurring settings and activities with their neighborhood peers, siblings, and friends” (Erwin, 1993, p. 1). Inclusion programs educate children who qualify for special education services alongside their general education, age appropriate peers. As a result, special education professionals bring their services to their students.

However, inclusive education has not been fully embraced in public school communities. Supporters of inclusive education believe that the impact of stigmas related to special education, the lowered expectations, and poor self-esteem on school learning is significant when students are required to attend separate educational classrooms (Lipsky & Gartner, 1992). Opponents of inclusive education have concerns about meeting the needs of all children in the classroom and concerns that educational

standards will be lowered (Thompkins & Deloney, 1995). Yet, Thompkins and Deloney (1995) reflect on the general consensus that with appropriate professional development educators are able to effectively serve the needs of children with mild disabilities in the general education classroom. Consequently, if private and parochial school leaders are to develop inclusive special education programming, school leaders must be aware of how inclusive education may be perceived by their school community and provide for appropriate professional development.

**Resource specialist program.** As defined under the law, children who receive 49% or less of their education services through special education programming are enrolled in a resource specialist program (Office of Special Education, 2004). Often referred to as the “pull-out program,” children in the resource specialist program typically have mild disabilities. Students typically perform relatively close to grade level proficiency (Ysseldyke, Salvia, & Bolt, 2010). Students typically leave their general education classroom for a period of time during the school day to work with a trained special education teacher. Often working in small groups, specific skills and or subjects are addressed. Instruction focuses on developing strategies that will strengthen academic areas while providing the tools so that students may learn independently.

In designing such programs, private and parochial school leaders will need to consider hiring a specialist whose primary purpose is to serve children with special needs. Specialists will need to work collaboratively with general education teachers to design schedules that will not impact learning in other subjects. School leaders will also need to be aware of the stigma that may be created by pulling children from classes in order to receive support and to educate teachers and parents how to handle inappropriate remarks

by classmates and peers. Professional development for all educators will also be necessary as students will be involved in the general education curriculum during different periods of the school day.

**Special day class.** The law defines special day class (SDC) settings for children who need specialized instruction for more than 51% of their school day (Office of Special Education, 2004). Children in a SDC typically need more substantial educational support and or have more significant disabilities than those found in private and parochial schools (Rehabilitation Research, 2009). However, programs for moderate disabilities (e.g., Down syndrome, autism, aphasia) do exist in private and parochial schools (e.g., Catholic schools in St. Louis, MO; Chicago, IL; and New York State). Children in SDC programs are taught by a special education professional for most, if not all, of the school day. SDC curriculum is aligned with the child's chronological grade level, yet the difficulty of the material is congruent with the child's current performance skills. It is in special day classes where children with special needs receive highly individualized lessons plans and instruction to increase their specific academic skills.

In designing a SDC, private and parochial school leaders will need to hire an instructor whose primary purpose is to teach all subject materials in a multi-graded classroom and who has the skills and training to meet the needs of the students. These classrooms are typically small, ranging from 8 to 12 students. In addition, due to the substantial need for individualized instruction, an additional classroom aide may need to be hired. Professional development will still need to be included in the program design for the school. Children in SDC programs typically have breaks, lunch, and recess with their typical peers along with non-academic areas of art, music, and field trips. All

faculty members will need to be educated about social and emotional support pieces so that all children will find success while interacting with one another (Lavoie, 2005).

**Leadership.** Private and parochial school leaders play a substantial role in the success of special education programs within their schools, and their “principals are key agents in this type of change” (Taylor, 2005, p. 283). In addition, because independent school principals have fewer constraints to contend with than their public school counterparts, private school leaders can shape their schools according to their students’ needs. In fact, Yarbrough (2002) contends, “the mission statement, the long-term goals, and the admission process of students can be defined, specified, and shaped by the leaders rather than by public policy” (p. 40). Nevertheless, school leaders cannot develop a special needs program without the support of their school community members.

In years past, private school leaders have been referred to as the *sole proprietor* (Griffin, 1999, p. 12) of their schools. In this capacity, a school leader, administrator or principal would make decisions at their own discretion with little or no collaboration with other school community members. Yet the role of private school leaders has changed as private and parochial school leaders are increasingly held accountable by school boards, faculty and staff, and the families enrolled in the school. In order to be an effective private school leader, an individual must work collaboratively with all members of the school community to make needed changes and to lead new program development.

School board members must work together with school leaders to create unique programs. Special needs programs are uncommon in private and parochial schools and it is believed that the types of individuals who lead such schools are uncommonly found. In fact, these unique school administrators and board members may be exactly the kinds

of leaders Robbins and Judge (2008) may be referring to as leaders who “challenge the status quo, to create a vision of the future, and to inspire organization members to want to achieve the vision” (p. 176). Unfortunately, literature does not appear to provide us with insight regarding the leadership styles of board members and school administrators who inspire and lead special needs programs in private and parochial schools. What is known though is that board members of a private and parochial schools serve as volunteers within their schools. Their role extends beyond policy setting to making a difference in the “lives of staff, students, families, and even the larger community” (Lundgren, 2004, p. 46). It is through school leaders and school board members working collaboratively that private and parochial schools are effectively led (Hayes, 2001, p. 78).

Faculty and staff members also play a significant leadership role in the development of a special needs program. However it is the school leader’s responsibility for making sure that there is a clear understanding as to faculty and staff members’ roles in the program’s development. Faculty and staff members need to be given the opportunity to voice their concerns and support of such program development. Typically, faculty and staff members have been kept out of many important conversations on, and the significant work of, school restructuring and reform (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1997, p 277). As a consequence, faculty and staff members are left on the outside of school reform and program development results in miscommunication and poor program development.

In addition, private and parochial school leaders will need the support of their school communities. School leaders must create an environment where others believe it is possible to provide children with special needs with a successful educational

experience within their schools. As stated by Kouzes and Posner (2003) school leaders reflect the passion of what is “worthy in and of itself” (p. 34). Due to the uniqueness of special education programs in private schools, it is the responsibility of the school leaders to convey this passion and vision for the school to all members of the school community.

From the school board to faculty and staff members and the school community at-large, school leaders must infuse the importance of the special needs program into the mission and the vision of the school. Leaders frequently revisiting the vision with the school community can accomplish this. As expressed by Baker et al. (2006) “innovation in an organization is like consciousness in a living being. It is not something separate, but something that rises organically from the being itself” (p. 149). If the leader does not take a proactive approach to review, renew, and recommit to the vision, an innovative special needs program will not develop. To assist with this process, school leaders must be aware of their language. Language impacts every school community member including the school leader. Language aides school leaders in focusing on the vision of the program. This focus leads to using inspiring language that assists community members in reaching the vision (Senge, 2006, p. 328). School leaders also use language to demonstrate a commitment and dedication to accomplishing each step and goal of the strategic plan. Bolman and Deal (2003) state that the uniqueness of each school’s language, its phrases and its metaphors creates a culture that can communicate with little misunderstanding. The authors continue by stating “a shared language binds a group together and is a visible sign of membership. It also sets a group apart and reinforces unique values and beliefs” (p. 292).

To do this, special needs program development requires school leaders to invest time educating themselves regarding best practices when serving children with special needs (Taylor, 2005). Transformational theory tells us effective leaders challenge themselves intellectually while bringing about positive change (Aditya & House, 1997). School leaders will then be able to make educated decisions as milestones are reached and obstacles are incurred (Brinkman, 1999). In addition, school leaders must be aware of the school community's perception of the program and the program's effectiveness. The school, although externally consistent, may be feeling the effect of internal cultural changes that could stand in the way of the program being developed. Therefore, school leaders will need to create a realistic viewing lens when looking at the program (Baker et al., 2006, p. 16).

To avoid the creation of a negative persona, a school leader must spend time communicating with members at every level of the school. In doing so, the school leader will be able to determine unforeseen obstacles that lie ahead. School leaders will then be compelled to assist where needed and aid when summoned as this demonstrates a commitment to the cause (Senge, 2006). In preventing mishaps and avoiding obstacles, school leaders "make it possible for others to do good work" (Kouzes & Posner, 2003, p. 8).

Leadership occurs in a group context (Yarborough, 2002, p. 13). Although group members may have mutual goals, they must work collaboratively in developing a special needs program and serving children within the program. To institutionalize the special needs program into the school, new structure, roles, norms, values and beliefs must become part of the daily operations of the school and school community (Deal &

Peterson, 1994). In addition, new knowledge must be ascertained which directly relates to serving children with special needs. Knowledge regarding special education law, student study team development and purpose, implementation of an education evaluation, social skills development, and serving the needs of children with high incident disabilities have been determined to be the key areas of need for private and parochial schools (K. Baxter, personal communication, 2010; J. Beavers, personal communication, 1999 – 2010; M. Brink, personal communication, 2004 – 2006; J. Haddock, personal communication, 2010; R. Klitzing, personal communication, 1996 – 2010; J. Lane, personal communication, 1995 – 2010; G. Pinick, personal communication, 1999 – 2006; R. Ritzman, personal communication, 2010; R. Sprangel, personal communication, 2010).

**How public special education law impacts private schools.** It is imperative for private school leaders to understand the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its implication for children enrolled in private schools by their parents (Eigenbrood, 2005; Taylor 2005). Under IDEA, children with special needs who have been parentally placed in private and parochial schools do not have the same due process right of their public school peers. As indicated previously, Taylor (2005, 2007) has stated that private and parochial school leaders lack awareness and knowledge about IDEA's implications and how this knowledge impacts the implementation of special needs programs in private and parochial schools. Therefore, private and parochial school leaders must be aware of the laws and procedures in having a child assessed for special education.



In order to formally identify children as having a disability as defined under IDEA, school leaders and educators need to understand the process of requesting an assessment through their public schools. This process is referred to as *child find*. Public schools are required to demonstrate a sincere effort in locating children in private schools who may qualify for special education services. If children are identified, they must be offer a “free and appropriate public education” as addressed in federal law (IDEA, 2004, [34 CFR 300.131(a)] & [20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(10)(A)(i)(II)]). Therefore, public schools must provide parents with an appropriate offer of services to meet the special education needs of the child.

Child find is a process that is mandated by federal law and is executed by public school systems. This section of IDEA was revised in 1997 and 2004. In both years, the procedures to follow when requesting assessment for a private school child changed. Private school leaders are not aware of the changes. Nevertheless, it is the burden of private school administrators to provide support and guidance to families when requesting a public school assessment. Making a referral for an assessment is a legal process with which private school leaders are not familiar (Eigenbrood, 2005; Taylor, 2005). The legal maze of the process can be overbearing, especially when parents are overwhelmed and anxious about the process and its possible findings. “Issues surrounding the delivery of special education services became even more complicated when the private schools in question were sectarian. Consequently, districts have to provide services at public schools or neutral sites off of the grounds of sectarian schools” (Osborne, Russo, & DiMattia, 2000, p. 224).

**Identifying students.** The student study team process is the initial step of the Child Find process. Student study teams are used to collect data and develop appropriate support plans for individual students. The goal of the student study team is to determine areas of strength and weakness and to develop an intervention plan to assist in student learning through response to intervention strategies (National Center, 2010). In addition, the student study team process is a requirement for public school systems prior to a referral for special education assessment. Private school educators need to know how to develop student study teams and how to “collect and review the necessary data to monitor student progress” (IDEA, 2004, [34 CFR 300.305(a)] & [20 U.S.C. 1414(c)(1)-(4)]). In doing so, private school educators “align identification practices with the public school system when requesting testing” (IDEA, 2004, [34 CFR 300.302] [20 U.S.C. 1414(a)(1)(E)]).

Student study teams bring together a multidisciplinary team of educators. As a team they work together to address the needs of each student. The learning that unfolds within the team empowers team members. By learning from one another, teachers learn to embrace diverse concepts and ideas and to develop transformative relationships so that they can accept direction from one another and solve problems (Senge, 2006). Bringing a group of educators with diverse skill sets together provides opportunities to discuss different strategies and techniques in assisting students. As Senge (2006) points out, scientific results are of the utmost importance and may result when a diverse group of individuals work together (p. 221). Student study teams must be developed in private and parochial schools as this is the data collection step which may lead to the child find

process. Therefore, school administrators and special needs program educators will need to know how to implement student study teams within their schools.

**Diagnosing and implications.** The IDEA requires that a child must be assessed by a qualified school psychologist in order to qualify for special education services (IDEA, 2004, [34 CFR 300.305(c)] & [20 U.S.C. 1414(c)(1)-(4)]). Test results, data interpretation, and recommendations are recorded in an educational psychological report. Included in the report are the findings as to whether or not a child qualifies for special education services, a diagnosis, if any, the child's strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations for the classroom teacher in order to assist the child in reaching his/her full potential (Jacob & Hartshorne, 2003). For those unfamiliar with the information shared in these reports, educational psychological reports can be overwhelming (Wright & Wright, 2010).

A student must be assessed in four areas: neurological, psychological, social/emotional, and academic achievement. Additional areas of assessment may also be requested or reported based on the information and data collected from the student study team process and through parent and teacher input. Assessment results are typically reported in the form of standard scores, scaled scores, percentile, percentages, and T-scores. Understanding these scores and how to implement recommendations within the classroom are of significant importance to the private and parochial school administrator and educator (Taylor, 2005).

**Understanding disabilities.** Mild disabilities as stated under IDEA are those that are commonly referred to as *High Incident Disabilities* (Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Statistics and Demographics, 2009, p. 110). The special

needs population in private and parochial schools is primarily made up of children with mild or high incident disabilities as reflected in the research of Beales and Bertonneau (1997), Eigenbrood (2005), Bello (2006), Jones (1990), Osborne et al. (2000), O'Brien (2004), and Taylor (2005). However, private and parochial school educators do not have adequate training to serve the needs of these students (Eigenbrood, 2005; Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001; Taylor, 2005). Therefore, if private schools are to serve students with high incident disabilities, private and parochial school educators must have an awareness of this population.

**Specific learning disabilities.** Specific learning disabilities are the most common of disabilities found amongst school children (Rehabilitation Research, 2009). Children with a specific learning disability are the most commonly served in private and parochial schools (Beales & Bertonneau, 1997; Bello, 2006; Eigenbrood, 2005; Jones, 1990; O'Brien, 2004; Osborne et al., 2000; Taylor, 2005).

As defined under federal law, a student with a disorder in at least one of the psychological processes that impact the use of language, spoken or written, and becomes apparent in a student's ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations, and has a severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement in one or more of the academic areas. Basic psychological processes include attention, visual processing, auditory processing, sensory-motor skills, cognitive abilities including association, conceptualization and expression (IDEA, 2004, [34 CFR 300.307] & [20 U.S.C. 1221e-3; 1401(30); 1414(b)(6)]; Wright & Wright, 2010). Statistically, 1% to 3% of the general population has been identified with a specific learning disability with 5%

of all children in special education receiving a diagnosis of a specific learning disability (Nielsen, 2008, p. 144).

Students with specific learning disabilities display a number of educational challenges as defined by Nielson (2008) and the American Psychiatric Associations' (2000) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV). Disability characteristics vary significantly and are unique to each student. These challenges may include, but are not limited to, (a) poor organizational skills, (b) failure to see consequence of actions, (c) distractibility, (d) hyperactivity, (e) perceptual coordination problems, (f) impulsiveness, (g) low tolerance for frustrations and problems, (h) difficulty in reasoning, and (i) problems with social relationships. As defined under IDEA, students with a learning disability must also possess a processing deficit. Processing deficits include auditory, visual, and attention.

Best practices for serving children with a specific learning disability include the adaption of materials and instruction in the classroom (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2010; Ysseldyke et al., 2010). A strategy may include a well-structured environment that provides students with the flexibility to work at their own pace. In addition, children with a specific learning disability often learn in different modalities such as visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile. Providing students opportunities to learn and be assessed using these modalities often allows for students to learn and to demonstrate progress. Therefore, private and parochial school administrators and educators need to have an understanding about how to best assist these students to reach their full potential.

**Other health impaired.** Other health impaired covers a wide umbrella of disabilities (Wright & Wright, 2010). As defined under federal law, other health

impairment means having limited strength, vitality or alertness, which includes a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, resulting in limited alertness in educational environments. This is due to chronic or acute health problems, such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, and sickle cell anemia, that adversely affects a child's educational performance, according to 34 Code of Federal Regulations (U.S. Government Printing Office, 2010, § 300.7[c][9]; Wright & Wright, 2010). The most common of these disabilities found within school age children are attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (Nielson, 2008, p. 51), oppositional and defiant disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p. 101), and Tourette syndrome (Nielson, 2008, p. 176).

**Attention deficit / hyperactivity disorder.** Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder includes children with have one or more of the three types of this disorder: (a) hyperactive, (b) inattentive, and (c) combined types. Similarities and differences in characteristics for each of these types vary. Characteristics as described within the research of Barkley (1990) and as stated in the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) vary for each individual. Deficits that are found in all three types may include (a) avoidance strategies, (b) listening skills, (c) reading comprehension, (d) distractibility, (e) lack of attention, (f) disorganization, (g) poor study habits, (h) social skills, (i) self-esteem, (j) carelessness and, (k) emotional sensitivity. However, hyperactivity disorders may also include, excitability, chronic impulsivity, disruptive behaviors, constant motor movements or excitement, outwardly defensiveness, and poor written work. Children identified with the inattentive type of attention deficit/hyperactive

disorder may possess sporadic impulsivity, passive defensiveness, and possess fair written work. Students experience high functioning days that are at or near normal abilities producing varying levels of class work and homework completion (Nielsen, 2008; Rief, 2003; Ysseldyke et al., 2010).

Children with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder often benefit from behavior intervention plans that support them in the classroom and at home (American Psychiatric Association, 2000; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2010; Ysseldyke et al., 2010). Students often find themselves bombarded with negative comments to redirect negative behavior, yet are seldom acknowledged for expected behavior (Nielsen, 2008; Rief, 2003; Ysseldyke et al., 2010). Classroom teachers will need to learn about developing positive behavior intervention plans to support their students along with creating a classroom environment that does not over stimulate or distract students with this diagnosis.

**Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD).** Oppositional defiant disorder is a high incident disability that appears in private and parochial schools. As defined by the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p. 102), a child with ODD will demonstrate at least four of the characteristics below lasting at least 6 months: (a) often loses temper, (b) often argues with adults, (c) often actively defies or refuses adult requests or rules (e.g., refuses to complete work), (d) often deliberately does things intended to annoy others (e.g., flicks stationary at staff or pupils), (e) often blames others for child's own mistakes, (f) often easily annoyed by others, (g) often angry and resentful, and (h) often spiteful or vindictive. The diagnosis of a child with ODD includes a clinical significant in the impairment of social, academic or occupational functioning. Therefore, as with the child with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, general education teachers will need to

understand how to effectively develop and implement behavior intervention plans (Ysseldyke et al., 2010).

**Tourette syndrome.** As defined by the Nielson (2008), Tourette 's syndrome (TS) is “multiple, involuntary, rapid, repetitive muscular movement of the face, head, or body and limbs as well as noises and vocalizations” (p. 175) otherwise known as tics. TS is typically identified prior to the age of 18, and usually identified by the age of 5 or 6. TS impacts 3% of the overall population. There is no cure, and children with TS often go undiagnosed. In addition, 60% of those with TS also have learning disabilities and 50% of those with TS also have ADHD (Nielson, 2008). Private school leaders and educators not only need to understand the disorder, but how to support these students in their classrooms. Frequent breaks, diminishing stressful environments, building self-esteem, and providing a safe place for a student to relax are all areas for general education teachers to be trained.

**Autism.** The identification of children with Autism has significantly increased over the past 10 years (Autism Society, 2010). Autism is defined under federal law as follows:

a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal or nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age 3 that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. This term does not apply, though, if a



child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disability as defined in this document. (§ 300.8[c][1][i][ii][iii])

Included within the definition of autism are children with Asperger syndrome.

Children with Asperger syndrome struggle with social interactions due to speech and language peculiarities, the inability to read and understand body language or voice intonation, and the preoccupation with their own social agenda. However, most children with Asperger syndrome possess average to above average ability levels (Nielsen, 2008).

Private school leaders and educators need to be aware of the educational impact and the lack of social skill development for those diagnosed with Asperger syndrome. The lack of ability to interact socially, function within a group setting, understand analogies and slang, interpret body language, and have difficulty with written language and organization, can be supported by a highly structured environment (Myles & Adreon, 2001).

**Speech and language disabilities.** Children who qualify for speech and language services are typically diagnosed at an early age. As defined by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, a communication disorder is impairment in the ability to receive, send, process, and comprehend concepts or verbal, nonverbal, and graphic symbols systems. "A communication disorder may be evident in the process of hearing, language, and (or) speech" (Nielsen, 2008, p. 159). In addition, speech impairments are defined as follows:

a sound system disorder that includes articulation and (or) phonology exhibited as a delay of correct sound production which adversely affects educational performance. This category also includes fluency disorders that are exhibited

through one or more symptomatic behaviors of dysfluency (repetitions, prolongations, blockages, or hesitations) which adversely affects educational performance, and voice disorders that are exhibited through deviations in one or more of the parameters of voice (pitch, quality, or volume) which adversely affects educational performance. (§ 300.8 [c][11])

For children to qualify for speech services under federal law, students must demonstrate that they are currently performing between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> percentile (§ 300.34 [c][15]). As this is reflective of a child who has significant speech and language delays, private school leaders and educators must be aware and able to address the needs of these children within their schools as such delays occur in 3% to 10% of children (Nielson, 2008). Typical characteristics of children with speech and language delays include the failure to meet the developmental milestones for language development, the inability to follow directions, the demonstration of slow or incomprehensible speech after three years of age, serious difficulties with syntax (placing words in a sentence in the correct order) and serious difficulties with articulation, including the substitution, omission, or distortion of certain sounds (Ysseldyke et al., 2010).

**Social skills development.** As children with special needs often struggle with peer relations and interactions. Private school educators need to provide opportunities for social skills interventions and opportunities.

Thus embedding social skills awareness and development in every aspect of the school day provides students with the opportunity to learn and grasp social skills. To assist students with the art of conversation, social interactions should be monitored. During breaks, lunches, school activities, or simply while passing one another in the

hallway educators must be cognizant of opportunities to reinforce positive and developing social skills as well as to guide students who are struggling (Attwood, 2008; Kelly, Garnett, Attwood, & Peterson, 2008; Myles & Adreon, 2001).

For children who struggle with social skills, friendships are of a lesser quality and children are often lonely. In addition, children with special needs are more often the recipients of bullying (Kelly et al., 2008). Teaching students to greet one another in the morning, to stop and look at one another when having a conversation, and to take turns while conversing are all skills students need to be consciously aware of so that social skills will eventually become more natural and spontaneous. “In the middle school years, children with Asperger’s syndrome may achieve genuine friendships but have a tendency to be too dominant or to have too rigid a view of friendship. Such children may ‘wear out their welcome’” (Attwood, 2008, p. 61). Hanley (2008) also states as “for individuals with autism the development and understanding of appropriate reciprocal social behavior and interactions is significantly impaired” (p. 2). Another reason why children with special needs have difficulty in developing friendships is their lack of turn taking. The fluidity of language is impacted so that typical children lose interest in the conversation.

As stated by Attwood (2008), the “optimum environment to develop reciprocal play with peers is at school” (p. 63). Providing a structured and supervised environment such as this, students are more willing to participate and learn as they feel safe and protected. Turn taking in conversations, initiating conversations, and learning how to appropriately end a conversation are all areas of need that must be taught.

Myles and Adreon (2001) explain *theory of mind* as “the ability to pick up and act on” (p. 9) social cues, body language, and understanding the art of conversation. Yet,

children with special needs may struggle. “The ability to think about other people’s thinking—and further, to think about what they think about our thinking—and even further to think about what they think we think about their thinking” (Myles & Adreon, 2001, p. 9) are needed in order to have conversations of merit and understanding. For typical children, this development is taken for granted. Children with special needs such as learning disabilities, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, Asperger Syndrome, and language disorders lack this ability of reflection and interpretation. “It is proposed that individuals with Asperger Syndrome do not recognize that people have opinions and feelings differing from their own and therefore do not possess a theory of mind” (Hanley, 2008, p. 9). Therefore, just as the child with special needs interprets the world different, so does the typical child who anticipates typical responses, comprehension, and interaction.

As with all adolescents, the need for approval and acceptance by their peers is substantial for their success as an individual. “Developing a group of friends often makes the difference between success and failure” (Myles & Adreon, 2001, p. 99). Often times, children enjoy the company of those younger than themselves. In interacting with younger children, students who struggle with social skills and conversation find comfort. Younger children look up to students who struggle; therefore they are able to control the direction of their interactions. In addition, younger children do not question their older playmates or challenge their authority. “One important social skills area that has long been neglected is the hidden curriculum—the do’s and don’ts are not spelled out for everyday behavior, but somehow everybody knows them” except for the child with

special needs (Myles & Adreon, 2001, p. 280). Without the insight to the hidden curriculum, children, youth, and even adults struggle in social settings (Lavoie, 2005).

Middle and high school years are a period “so difficult that many youths complain about the stress they feel” (Myles & Adreon, 2001, p. 2). As school strives to take advantage of every opportunity to meet the needs of its students, faculty and staff must take every opportunity to guide its students through the social maze. Neurotypical children quickly understand the *hidden curriculum* in school and social situations. Yet, for children with special needs, the hidden curriculum is often invisible (Attwood, 2008; Lavoie, 2005). The approach to the hidden curriculum needs to be structured, and taught so that children with special needs are able to process, interpret, and respond in an appropriate manner (Myles & Simpson, 1998; Lavoie, 2005). To ensure this occurs, educators must be able to respond to socially inappropriate situations in a manner in which children on the spectrum can learn social skills. As stated by Attwood (2008) “it is essential that such children receive tuition and guided practice in the ability to make and keep friendships, and that their friendship experiences are constructive and encouraging” (p. 5).

In summary, the literature and data available to guide special needs program development in a private and parochial school is inadequate. However, it is evident that the need for professional development is the cornerstone of program development. There are questions regarding when instruction, methodology, and strategies are to be regarded as best practices. However, in reviewing the literature regarding the implementation of special education programming, there is a consistent theme for the need of: (a) providing faculty and staff members with the appropriate professional development, (b) providing

on-going advisement and support by experts in the field of special education, and (c) providing time to collaborate and consult with colleagues.

The rationale for the need to develop and design programs has been determined through the “trends, facts, and data taken from local, regional, and national perspectives” (Cornwall, 2003, p. 38). Taking into account the researcher’s own experiences in developing such programs over the past 20 years and through discussions, conversations, and interviews with the Directors of School Ministries of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Regional Directors for the Association of Christian Schools International, and leaders in private and parochial school communities, special needs programs in private and parochial schools have been found to be few in number and are significantly needed (K. Baxter, personal communication, 2010; J. Beavers, personal communication, 1999 – 2010; M. Brink, personal communication, 2004 – 2006; J. Haddock, personal communication, 2010; R. Klitzing, personal communication, 1996 – 2010; G. Pinick, personal communication, 1999 – 2006; R. Ritzman, personal communication, 2010; R. Sprangel, personal communication, 2010). In addition, the information gleaned from these conversations, discussions, and interviews has provided the researcher with the needed components for developing a special needs program within a private or parochial school. The guidelines of program design in public education, private, and parochial school programs design should be based on the individual needs of each school. For this reason, vision and purpose should be developed in order to address the desires and unique cultures of each school. This should result in a program design which should provide the structure, policy, and

procedures so that school communities will be clear as to what they are supposed to be doing while focused on the organizational goals (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 70).

Professional development should include (a) the content of the actual skills and knowledge that educators need to possess or acquire, (b) the process by which educators will acquire skills and knowledge, and (c) the context in which the professional development is initiated (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Townley & Schmieder-Ramirez, 2007). In addition, Taylor (2005) and Eigenbrood (2005) have shed some light concerning components of the professional development topics when developing special needs programs. Previous conversations, discussions, and interviews have also provided insight as to the needs of private and parochial schools (K. Baxter, personal communication, March 12, 2010; M. Brink, personal communication, February 17, 2005; K. Dunning, personal communication, January 10, 2004; R. Klitzing, personal communication, February 2, 2010; P. Rasmussen, personal communication, April 14, 2006).

As based on this literature review and in reflection of personal communications, the researcher identified 10 professional development topics essential for developing a special needs program for private and parochial school educators:

1. The role of leadership in an organization and the development of a vision and purpose.
2. Strategic planning as it applies to special education program development.
3. Federal law as it applies to private and parochial schools and children placed in private schools by their parents.
4. The student study team process, its implication for special education assessment, and the collection of data.

5. Tools to understand and implement the recommendations of assessments within an educational psychological report.
6. High incidence disabilities most prevalent within private and parochial schools. Therefore, educators must have the tools with which to address areas of strength and weakness so that children may reach their full potential.
7. Social skills development training, because social concerns typically impact children with special needs.

In order to support new knowledge gained through the professional development topics and to assist with the implementation of a strategic plan, a mentoring program through a virtual forum plays an important role. This mentoring should provide a continuum in which private and parochial school educators receive the support needed in implementing special needs programs.

### **Summer Institute**

As a result of this literature review, a 5-day summer institute was designed and presented to 17 participants at Pepperdine University in July of 2010. Those who participated in the institute were selected using a purposive, non-probability sampling method. Marketing for the institute was done through Pepperdine University's marketing department, specifically, the Graduate School of Education and Psychology and Alternative Designs for Special Education, LLC. A webpage on both websites was developed along with e-blast notifications and mailings. Organizations contacted included, but were not limited to: the Christian Institute on Disabilities, California Association of Private School Organizations, National Association of Christians in Special Education, Association of Christian Schools International, the Catholic



Archdiocese and Dioceses of the United States, and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. In addition, Pepperdine University and Alternative Designs for Special Education, LLC used their databases of private and parochial schools.

The summer institute included 5 speakers who presented on one or more of the topics indicated previously. Speakers were identified by the researcher as being experts in their field. Two of the speakers are nationally renowned in their area of expertise. One speaker is on faculty at Pepperdine University and another from California State University, San Bernardino; both are published authors. One speaker has been in private practice for several years and brings many years of experience and education. The remaining speaker is the researcher who has been developing special needs programs in private and parochial schools for the past 20 years. Speakers, with the exception of the researcher, were contracted by Pepperdine University.

Speakers were aware that their presentation(s) were the basis for a dissertation study and provided consent for their materials to be used for this study. All speakers provided handouts prior to the institute.

Monday, July 26th, the morning session was entitled *Open Hearts, Open Minds: Building from the Ground Up, Part 1*. Programs can vary vastly depending upon the vision for each school site. This session was specially designed to assist participants in strategic planning for a program that meets their schools' needs. Needs assessments, professional development, and school community development were addressed. Participants developed a template that would facilitate the development of their individualized plans as based on the presentations given during the 5-day institute.

The afternoon session was entitled *Discovering and Cultivating Your Desired Leadership Language*. In this session, participants explored and discussed their individual behavior styles and how this shaped their leadership language within their education environments. Chris Argyris' and Peter Senge's concepts of ladder of inference and mental models were used to illustrate the lenses leaders look through when communicating and making leadership decisions. Participants discussed the differences between management versus leadership, research-based leadership characteristics, and values-based decision making.

Tuesday, July 27th, the morning session was entitled *Public Law, Private Schools, and Special Education*. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed into law in 1975. Since its implementation, the law has yet to be fully funded as promised by the federal government. As the law has been amended several times since its passage, children placed in private and parochial schools by their parents no longer have the same rights under the law as their public school peers. This session provided insight about the law, in particular, (a) how the lack of funding is impacting both public and private school children, and (b) the sections under the law that directly impact children placed in private and parochial schools by their parents. Included in this session was instruction regarding how to assist parents in requesting testing by their local school district. In addition, participants learned what an IEP meeting was and what their role was.

The afternoon session was entitled *Past Reflections, Present Collaborations, and Future Assessments*. Under the federal law, public schools must demonstrate the need for a child to be assessed for special education services. One of the process by which this is

done is the Student or Child Study Team. Made up of regular education teachers, the team evaluates and collaborates in order to develop a plan to determine whether success can be reached through accommodations, modifications, remediation, and interventions. This session provided (a) participants the structure of the student study team; (b) instruction that the above terms—accommodations, modifications, remediation, and interventions—are not interchangeable; (c) participants the insight needed to create change through data collection; and (d) instruction on how to collect data that is needed in order to request a public school assessment.

Wednesday, July 28th, the morning session was entitled *Let's Talk!* Children and adolescents with communication disorders can be quite successful in the same classrooms as their typically-developing peers. However, there are many challenges that educators face when teaching these students. This session addressed some of those challenges and provided practical tools for supporting Pre-K through high school students with communication disorders. Participants learned creative activities to support students struggling with speech production, language processing, and social communication skills.

The afternoon session was entitled *What do I do with the Report?* This session focused on developing an understanding of psycho-educational evaluation reports so that accommodations can be developed and implemented effectively in the school setting for students. Topics discussed included: norm-referenced versus criterion-referenced measurement, the use of standardized scores to describe performance, a review of typical assessment measures utilized in testing, interpretation of test data, and development of accommodations based upon test results. Participants analyzed and discussed mock assessment reports.

Thursday, July 29th, the morning session was entitled *Finding Structure = Avenues for Success*. This session provided a host of practical strategies and accommodations to enable students with ADHD to achieve school success. Best instructional and management practices were shared for engaging attention, structuring the classroom environment, and supporting students with self-regulation difficulties. Research-based interventions for managing challenging behaviors were provided, as well as a variety of strategies and accommodations in the areas of organization, time management, written language.

- Understanding Students with ADHD: A Few Key Points to Keep in Mind
- Critical Factors for Success of Students with ADHD in General Education Classrooms
- Strategies for Maximizing Attention and On-Task Behavior
- Preventing/Minimizing Behavioral Problems in the Classroom (Proactive Strategies and Positive Supports)
- Strategies and Interventions for Managing Challenging Behaviors
- Organization, Time Management, Study Skills Strategies, and Supports
- Academic Challenges Associated with ADHD
- Key Academic Strategies, Supports, and Accommodations
- Collaborative Efforts: It Takes a Team

The afternoon session was entitled *Social Skill Development for Students with Special Needs*. This session discussed (a) the impact of language difficulties on social interaction; (b) development of friendship skills; (c) assisting children in adjusting to a school's culture and so-called hidden curriculum; (d) bullying and specific strategies that

teachers, administrators, and parents can use to enhance students' social competence and peer acceptance.

Friday, July 30th, the morning session was entitled *High Incidence Disabilities*. Although children with special needs in private and parochial schools often go undiagnosed, those who are often fall into four categories: learning disabled, oppositional defiant disorder, autism spectrum disorders, or other health impaired. This session provided insight as to how each is diagnosed, differences and similarities, and an overview of tools for the classroom teacher.

The afternoon session was entitled *Open Hearts, Open Minds: Building From the Ground Up, Part 2*. The final session of the institute provided participants with the time and guidance to review their program development plan. Through their active participation and consulting with fellow participants, each member solidified the program development goals and objectives and action plans.

### **Summary**

Modest research exists regarding the development of special education programs in private and parochial schools. As a result, the steps to be taken in developing such programs are unclear. Consequently, conversations, discussions, and interviews have become a source of information in developing such program along with the personal experiences and knowledge of the *researcher* (K. Baxter, personal communication, 2010; J. Beavers, personal communication, 1999 – 2010; M. Brink, personal communication, 2004 – 2006; J. Haddock, personal communication, 2010; R. Klitzing, personal communication, 1996 – 2010; G. Pinick, personal communication, 1999 – 2006; R. Ritzman, personal communication, 2010; R. Sprangel, personal communication, 2010).

Previous research has provided us with a glimpse into the types of disabilities most often served in private and parochial schools (Beales & Bertonneau, 1997; Bello, 2006; Eigenbrood, 2005; Jones, 1990; Osborne, et al., 2000; O'Brien, 2004; Taylor, 2005).

In building such programs, school leaders will need to educate themselves and provide faculty and staff members with professional development. It is through professional development that faculty and staff members learn new methodologies, strategies, and best practices to meet the needs of their students. Therefore, professional development should include (a) the content of the actual skills and knowledge that educators need to possess or acquire, (b) the process by which educators will acquire skills and knowledge, and (c) the context in which the professional development is initiated (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Townley & Schmieder-Ramirez, 2007). Eigenbrood (2005) and Taylor (2005) have shed some light concerning some of the professional development topics when developing special needs programs. Previous conversations, discussions, and interviews have also provided insight as to the needs of private and parochial schools (R. Klitzing, personal communication, February 2, 2010; K. Baxter, personal communication, March 12, 2010; M. Brink, personal communication, February 17, 2005; K. Dunning, personal communication, January 10, 2004; P. Rasmussen, personal communication, April 14, 2006).

In order to support new knowledge gained through the professional development topics and to assist with the implementation of a strategic plan, a mentoring program plays an important role. Mentoring through a virtual forum provides a continuum in which private and parochial school educators receive the support needed in implementing

special needs programs. McCampbell (2002) has stated that “mentoring is one of the most effective processes used for professional development” (p. 63).

Prior to mentoring through a virtual forum, mentors and mentees are able to meet face-to-face during professional development. As a result, relationships are developed. Relationship development is important as it impacts the quality and quantity of communication through a virtual forum (Fisher, 2003; Francis, 2007; Jeong, 2004; Yang, & Liu, 2004). The use of synchronous and asynchronous communication provides for the different learning styles of mentees. Synchronous interaction provides the mentor with insight through voice intonation and energy levels of mentees. Asynchronous interactions provide for personal reflection and higher level thinking. As Francis (2007) states, “as more organizations build mentoring cultures rather than just support related programs, technology paves the way” (p. 55). In addition, virtual forum support provides an environment where the mentor is able to structure conversations and discussions in order to guide mentees (Gentry et al., 2008).

This literature review introduced the key elements in developing a special needs program in a private or parochial schools. Although the literature is modest, private and parochial school leaders need to have a better understanding about how to develop such programs, and school community members must have access to the appropriate professional development. Private and parochial school leaders can also enhance professional development opportunities through the use of communication and discussion through a virtual forum. For these reasons, a private or parochial school can develop a special needs program provided the key elements of strategic planning, professional development, and virtual forum support are embedded into the school.

### **Chapter 3: Research Design**

This mixed methods study had three purposes. The first purpose was to examine how participants coped with obstacles as they implemented a strategic plan at their school sites. The second was to understand the lived experiences of individual participants as they applied the knowledge learned during a 5-day summer institute. The final purpose of this study was to determine whether or not support through a virtual forum following a 5-day summer institute was beneficial, and if so, to understand why.

Qualitative and quantitative information was gathered through a virtual forum. The forum was made up of scheduled meetings through Skype, a virtual synchronous communication system along with a virtual asynchronous communication board for participants to pose questions and dialogue with one another. It was anticipated that participants' questions were based on (a) the strategic plan (See Appendices A - F) they were implementing at their school site, (b) the associated obstacles they were encountering, and (c) how to overcome them. Situations from each school varied, but with the virtual Skype and communication board, all participants were able to listen and respond to one another's concerns and comments. The researcher maintained a record of participants' questions and conversations on the virtual communication board and categorized them to aid retrieval. In addition, the researcher maintained comprehensive notes regarding the conversations held through Skype.

Qualitative data were also gathered through the post virtual forum survey. Qualitative data were correlated with data collected from the pre and post conference survey, as appropriate. Participant responses provided insight into the participants' experiences and the obstacles that they encountered. As themes were developed, data



were categorized and sorted. The post virtual forum survey was also used to collect data regarding participants' experiences with the synchronous and asynchronous forums.

Quantitative data were kept concerning the number of questions asked on the virtual communication board and Skype. Frequency of obstacles and type of obstacles incurred were also recorded and categorized.

### **Rationale**

Christian school personnel have developed programs that serve children with special needs. It is the experience of this researcher that in order for these programs to flourish and thrive, a member of the school faculty must have (a) an interest in serving this population of students and the (b) knowledge base and skill to develop a program. Therefore, an extensive, internet-based search was conducted to locate college courses targeting special education in private schools. No college course work or programs were located.

Christian school leadership programs at the graduate level were noted in approximately a dozen universities throughout the United States. Yet only one of those programs had course work that addressed diversity, including special needs, in private schools. In part due to the lack of such programming, an institute was developed which would not only provide the participants with expert knowledge, but also subsequent support and mentoring needed to implement their unique strategic plans tailored to their respective schools.

As each participant developed a strategic plan during the summer institute experience, the researcher hoped that each participant's school community would be able

to fully implement the plan to move the school forward. The intent was to give families of children with special needs greater educational options for their children's education.

As with many institutes, participants leave with a new knowledge and skill base, yet most often without support for implementation. However, through the virtual communication board and Skype sessions, this institute provided continued support and guidance. The virtual modality allowed the researcher to continue to provide support and guidance, and the participants were able to support one another.

### **Participant Work, Instrumentation, and Forms**

The following list shows the content of the See Appendices:

- Appendix A: School A Vision, Purpose, and Plan
- Appendix B: School B Vision, Purpose, and Plan
- Appendix C: School C Vision, Purpose, and Plan
- Appendix D: School D Vision, Purpose, and Plan
- Appendix E: School E Vision, Purpose, and Plan
- Appendix F: School F Vision, Purpose, and Plan
- Appendix G: Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities
- Appendix H: Questionnaire for Demographic Information
- Appendix I: Pre and Post Conference Survey
- Appendix J: Post Virtual Forum Survey
- Appendix K: Virtual Communication Forum

### **Sampling Method, Sample, and Participants**

A purposive, non-probability sampling method was used. Marketing for the summer institute was jointly carried out by Pepperdine University and by Alternative Designs for Special Education, LLC. Databases which included Christian school organizations throughout the country were used for both traditional and virtual advertising. Participants registered for the summer institute through Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology website. Registration information was automatically sent to the researcher. The researcher contacted each participant individually to confirm registration. Participants were then added to a group contact list for all further communications pre-summer institute.

During the summer institute, participants were informed that the pre and post conference survey (see Appendix I) and the post summer institute virtual forums would be a part of a doctoral study. Participants were provided with a consent form (see Appendix G). Participants were provided with the option as to whether or not to participate in the study. All summer institute participants were allowed to participate in the 3-month virtual forum; however, in order to participate in the study, summer institute participants had to have attended the entire 5-day institute.

### **Data Collection**

Data regarding each individual school's demographics was gathered during the summer institute. This data is shared in Chapter 4; however, the data was not used as analytical data, rather as informative data. In order to sort data without bias by the researcher, participants were provided a code in place of a name on the pre and post conference survey (see Appendix I). This code was indicated on the demographic

information and consent forms. The code and corresponding information was stored by the researcher in a locked filing cabinet.

The pre and post conference survey (see Appendix I) was designed by the researcher. The survey addressed each of the topics presented at the summer institute. The purpose of the survey was to determine the level of confidence participants held regarding each of these, topics prior to and following the summer institute. The survey was designed as a 5-point Likert scale; the confidence levels were defined by this 5-point scale, by which 5 represented high confidence and 1 represented low confidence. Data collected from the survey that is used to suggest trends between pre and post results for an item or group of items is computed as the sum all values on this scale for that item or group of items, across participants.

The post virtual forum survey (see Appendix G) was provided to each participant electronically. Each participant received a link via surveymonkey.com. The survey was completed anonymously. The survey was designed to provide further insight as to the application of information learned at the summer institute. Participants were also asked about any additional obstacles or life experiences that occurred while implementing their strategic plan which may not have reported during the virtual forums. The post virtual forum survey probed the benefits or drawbacks of the two virtual forums; Skype and the communication board.

**Human factors.** Prior to September 1, all virtual support participants received an email reminding them of the URL, Skype information, username, password, and expectations. This email was sent to all summer institute participants regardless of their participation in the study.

Through the communication board, the researcher provided support and guidance to each participant. The URL for the asynchronous communication board was also provided. Participants were able to post comments and questions with other participants. The study examined information gathered virtually from September 1, 2011 – November 30, 2011. How often and to what degree participants choose to participate in the study was at their own discretion. The researcher encouraged each participant to post one question or comment each week on the communication board. Comments and questions were to relate directly to the participant's strategic plan. Participants were encouraged to respond to other participants' questions or comments. The researcher responded at least once a week to all communication board postings individually.

Synchronous communication was also provided through Skype technology. Times for online meetings were provided to the participants prior to departure from the institute. Skype sessions consisted of verbal communication and served as an open discussion period during which participants and the researcher interacted as a group. There were two Skype sessions per month. Days and times varied in order to accommodate all participants' schedules. All participants were assisted through online communication in downloading the Skype technology 2 weeks prior to the start of synchronous communication. The researcher contacted participants who missed 2 consecutive Skype sessions to determine if she could assist them in participating in the next upcoming session. The researcher's email address was provided to each participant.

At the conclusion of the 3 months of virtual forum communication, participants were provided with an online Post Virtual Forum survey (see Appendix J). Surveys were delivered electronically. Once the post virtual forum survey link was sent to each of the

participants, the researcher did email the participants as a group on a regular basis to remind and encourage each of them to complete the survey. The survey was completed anonymously and the data was analyzed.

### **Instrumentation and Data Collection**

The researcher used an Excel spreadsheet to enter categories that included Skype session attendance and postings on the communication board. Categories for types of obstacles incurred were developed as based on comments and questions were determined as based on the data collected. Qualitative data were categorized as information was disseminated.

### **Converting Data to Information**

With the completion of the on-line forum, quantitative data was compiled and finalized. Qualitative data was then categorized and analyzed. Questions and answers from the virtual forums were recorded in manuscript form. From the data gathered, categories were developed.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Participant Demographics

Of the 17 participants from the summer institute, only 9 elected to participate in the study. These 9 participants represented six schools. Two were on the east coast, one in the Rocky Mountain region, and three from the west coast of the United States. All direct quotes were obtained from participants of this study, and most of the quotes are identified by the school. This may help readers put the comments in context. For confidentiality purposes, or where the identification would merely become distracting, some comments expressing challenges are not identified even by school.

**School A.** School A is located on the east coast and was represented by two summer institute participants: the current principal and special needs program coordinator. The school is a Catholic Grade K-8 school. Due to the recent economic downturn, two Catholic schools merged to create one new school, with plans to open in the fall. This is a new school site for both participants. Faculty members from the two schools were merged together. Some faculty members were released from their teaching assignments. The school has a formal special needs program designed around a resource program model and a full inclusion model. The program is coordinated by a licensed school counselor. The total school population is approximately 325 students, of which 30 to 50 are formally identified with special needs. The school currently serves children with autism spectrum disorders, Down's syndrome, cognitive disabilities/mental retardation, specific learning disabilities, and speech and language disorders. The faculty has policies and procedures to identify and support special education students who have

not yet been identified and they have established a relationship with their local public school districts to request testing.

**School B.** School B is located on the west coast and was represented by the current program coordinator. The school is a Lutheran Grade pre-8 school. It has a formal resource program special needs program. The program operates as a one-on-one reading instruction program only. It also has a full inclusion design. The program is overseen by an individual who has licensing in general education. The total school population of approximately 230 students includes 30 to 40 students who are served within the special needs program. The school currently serves children with autism spectrum disorders and specific learning disabilities. The school is currently developing policies and procedures to identify and support students. Faculty members have an established relationship with their local public school districts to request testing.

**School C.** School C is located on the west coast and was represented by the current school principal and two general education teachers. The school is a Catholic Grade K-8 school. It has a formal special needs program based on a resource program and full inclusion model. No one with special education credentialing oversees the program. The total school population is approximately 265, of which 20 to 29 students are served within the special needs program. The school currently serves children with autism spectrum disorders, behavioral challenges, hearing impaired, orthopedic impairment, specific learning disabilities, and speech and language disorders. The school is in the process of developing policies and procedures to identify and support students. Faculty members have an established relationship with their local public school districts to request testing.



**School D.** School D is located on the west coast and was represented by the current resource specialist. The school is a Lutheran Grade K-8 school. It has a formal special needs program that has a resource program and full inclusion design. The program is overseen by the full-time resource specialist. The total school population is approximately 415, of which 30 to 50 students are served within the special needs program. The school currently serves children with autism spectrum disorders, Down's syndrome, hearing impairments, cognitive disabilities/mental retardation, specific learning disabilities, speech and language disorders, and visual impairments. The school has a set of policies and procedures established with which to identify and support students. The faculty has an established relationship with the local public school districts to request testing.

**School E.** School E is located on the east coast and was represented by a general education teacher. The school is a Catholic Grade pre-8 school. It is in the process of developing a special needs program based on a resource program model. A trained special education teacher will oversee the program. The total school population is approximately 300, with plans to accommodate 20 to 29 in their special needs program. The school currently serves children with specific learning disabilities and speech and language disorders. The school does not have policies or procedures established in which to identify and support students with special needs. The faculty has an established relationship with their local public school districts to request testing.

**School F.** School F is located in the Rocky Mountain region and was represented by a licensed special education teacher. The school is a Lutheran Grade 6-12 school. It has a program that serves children with mild to moderate disabilities. However, the

special education teacher who participated in the study oversees a second program that serves children with moderate disabilities. The total school population is approximately 1300, of which 1 to 9 students are served by the moderate disability program. The program design is a full-inclusion program that serves children with autism spectrum disorders and Down's syndrome. The school has set policies or procedures established by which to identify and support students with mild disabilities. Children who have moderate disabilities enroll in the program after being identified. The faculty has an established relationship with their local public school districts to request testing.

**Schools overview.** Table 1 shows the summary of the school and participant profiles. This table allows comparison of school data between schools. Five out of the six schools had at least 20 students identified as disabled and had a general student population between 230 and 415. For the largest of the schools, School F with 1300 students, the participant represented only one of the programs for students with mild to moderate disabilities. It should not be concluded that this school has only offered special education services to such a small ratio as might appear from the table.

Table 1

*Comparison of Relevant School Data*

School	A	B	C	D	E	F
Type	Catholic K-6	Lutheran Pre-6	Catholic K-8	Lutheran K-8	Catholic K-8	Lutheran 6-12

(table continues)

School	A	B	C	D	E	F
Particip- ant Credenti- al	School principal & licensed school counselor	General education teacher	School principal & 2 general education teachers	Resource specialist	General education	Special education teacher
Type of Program	Resource program and full inclusion	1:1 reading instruction and full inclusion	Resource program and full inclusion	Resource program and full inclusion	Under develop- ment: resource program and full inclusion	Full inclusion
Disa- bilities Served	Autism spectrum disorders, Down's syndrome, cognitive disabilitie s/ mental retardatio n, specific learning disabilitie s, speech and language disorders	Autism spectrum disorders & specific learning disabilitie s	Autism spectrum disorders, behavioral challenge, hearing impaired, orthopedic impairme nt, specific learning disability, speech and language disorders	Autism spectrum disorders, Down's syndrome, hearing impaired, cognitive disability, specific learning disability, speech & language disorders, visually impaired	Specific learning disabilitie s and speech and language disorders	Autism spectrum disorders and Down's syndrome
School Enroll- ment	325, with 30 to 39 students identified disabled	230, with 30 - 50 students identified disabled	265, with 20 - 29 students identified disabled	415, with 30 - 39 students identified disabled	300, with 20 - 29 students identified disabled	1300, with 1 - 9 students identified disabled
Policies & Pro- cedures	Yes	In process	In process	Yes	No	Yes

### Participant Learning as Reflected in the Pre and Post Survey

Participants completed a survey to determine their personal confidence regarding the topics taught at the summer institute. The pre-institute survey was completed prior to the first summer institute session and the post-institute survey was completed at the summer institute's conclusion. A Likert scale with a range of 1 to 5 was used. The total score for each question reflects that participants overall increased their confidence in each topic area. Tables 2 through 9 show participant responses in each topic area. Although the sum of scores does not address the individual scores of each participant, it does reflect an overall increase in confidence regarding the topics addressed at the summer institute.

Table 2

#### *Leadership Confidence Survey*

Question	Pre-Institute	Post Institute
How confident are you in understanding your personal leadership style?	31	37
What is your knowledge base as to the different types of leadership styles?	27	35
How confident are you in recognizing those with different leadership styles than yourself?	38	38
How confident are you in your ability to adapt to different leadership styles when working alongside colleagues?	26	35

Table 3

*Program Development*

Question	Pre-Institute	Post Institute
What is your knowledge in developing a strategic plan for a new program at your school?	29	36
What is your knowledge in taking a needs assessment at your school?	29	31
How confident are you in leading a new program at your school?	30	37
What is your knowledge in moving a strategic plan forward towards the vision?	27	34

Table 4

*Special Education Law*

Question	Pre-Institute	Post Institute
To what degree is your knowledge of the federal law: Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)?	29	37
To what degree is your knowledge of how this law impacts children placed in private schools by their parents?	29	38
How confident are you in assisting a family at your school with the assessment process at their public school site?	33	39
How confident do you feel about your knowledge regarding the law so that you can confront a school who is not complying with the law as it applies to Child Find.	28	35
How confident are you in understanding the process of an initial assessment and determining whether or not a child qualifies for special education services under IDEA?	35	37

Table 5

*Student Study Teams*

Question	Pre-Institute	Post Institute
To what degree is your knowledge as to the Student Study Team process?	35	39
How confident are you in establishing a new or maintaining a current student study team at your school?	31	39
How confident are you in leading a student study team?	30	38
How confident are you in analyzing school-wide assessment data?	28	36
How confident are you in knowing what information to look at in a child's education file when developing an action plan for an individual child?	33	36

Table 6

*Educational Psychological Reports*

Question	Pre-Institute	Post Institute
What is your knowledge in understanding an educational evaluation?	33	38
What is your degree of confidence in understanding the scores in an educational evaluation?	29	36
What is your degree of confidence in implementing the recommendations in an educational evaluation?	35	41

Table 7

*Speech and Language Development*

Question	Pre-Institute	Post Institute
What is your knowledge in understanding a speech and language assessment?	29	33
What is your degree of confidence in understanding the scores in a speech and language assessment?	29	30
What is your degree of confidence in implementing the recommendations in a speech and language assessment?	32	38
How confident are you in understanding typical language usage development in children?	27	33
How confident are you in understanding typical articulation development in children?	26	33

Table 8

*Learning Disabilities*

Question	Pre-Institute	Post Institute
What is your knowledge base as to the definition of a learning disability?	36	39
What is your knowledge base as to the characteristics of learning disabilities?	36	40

Table 9

*ADD and AD/HD*

Question	Pre-Institute	Post Institute
What is your knowledge base as to the characteristics of ADD?	38	41
What is your knowledge base as to the characteristics of AD/HD?	38	41
How confident are you in knowing the differences/similarities between these two disorders?	36	39
What is your knowledge base as to how ADD/ADHD impacts a person's ability to focus?	34	40
How confident are you in understanding the differences between highly distractible and the ability to pay attention?	31	40

**Vision and Purpose Statements**

Each participating school representative developed a vision and purpose statement during the summer institute. Each indicated that a formal vision and purpose statement did not currently exist for their special needs programs. School A indicated that there had been discussion regarding the purpose of their program and bullet point statements had been recorded.

Participants began developing vision statements on the first day of the summer institute (see Appendices A - F). The researcher presented information regarding what a vision statement should encompass. The school representatives formulated their respective school vision statements while the researcher provided guidance to each school. Participants were provided time to re-work their vision statements with individual guidance by the researcher on 4 out of 5 days during the summer institute.



Participants began developing purpose statements on the second day of the summer institute (see Appendices A - F). The researcher presented information regarding what a purpose statement should encompass and how it is different from a vision statement. The school representatives worked on their respective school purpose statements while the researcher provided guidance to each school individually. Participants were provided time to revise their purpose statement with individual guidance by the researcher on 3 out of the 5 days during the summer institute.

The rationale for developing a vision and purpose statement was multi-faceted. Participants learned about the importance of having a clearly defined direction to move their programs forward, and it provided the justification for developing a special needs program within their school. However, the researcher emphasized the importance of taking their vision and purpose statement final drafts back to their schools to share with the school community. Participants were to gather further input from school community members and then develop final vision and purpose statements. Consequently, the school community could adopt the vision and purpose statements, resulting in buy-in from all members. The final rationale for the development of a vision and purpose statement was to lay a foundation for the development of a strategic plan.

### **Strategic Plan Development**

Participants were required to draft a strategic plan by the final day of the summer institute. The week-long summer institute provided sessions that addressed each of the key areas of developing a special needs program. The strategic plans addressed each of the areas. Schools A, B, D, E, and F submitted e-copies of their strategic plan to the researcher (see Appendices A - F). School C did not submit a strategic plan. The

researcher provided feedback to representatives of the submitting schools. Participants were to use their strategic plan to move their special needs programs forward, and the research used the strategic plans as one basis for communication with the school representatives.

### **Communication Data**

**Virtual communication with Skype.** Each participant was provided with the download link for Skype, a free software program for audio, video, and written chat communication. Each participant created his or her own Skype username. The researcher provided dates for the Skype sessions via email and two emails were sent previous to each meeting date: a week prior to the meeting and the day before the meeting. A change of day and time was needed in order to accommodate changes in participant schedules. Table 10 shows the participants' willingness to communicate with the researcher using Skype audio during the seven sessions that were scheduled, as determined by the researcher's observations.

Table 10

#### *Skype Participation*

School	Number of Skype Sessions Attended Out of the 7 Possible
A	6
B	5
C	1
D	5
E	5
F	5

The researcher sent emails to those who did not attend the Skype sessions. Reasons for not participating included: stuck in traffic, forgot about the session, or personal obligations came up at the last minute. The last minute change of dates to the November 11<sup>th</sup> session was due to technical issues on the part of the researcher, so only one participant was able to attend. School C participants were contacted by email to determine if dates and times were not convenient. School C participants indicated that the school year had become very busy and times after school were difficult to attend. School C did continue to receive email reminders for each scheduled session.

**Virtual communication chalkboard.** The virtual communication chalkboard is an online forum that allows all participants to simultaneously write to each other member of the group and view the written communications of each other member of the group (see Appendix K). The link and information was provided to all participants via a group email. Following the group email, each participant received a username and password that provided him or her access to the site. Each school had its own thread in which to post questions and comments. Participants were encouraged to respond to one another's posts as well. The researcher initially created each thread. The researcher made responses to each posting in a timely manner. Participants were also reminded about the virtual communication chalkboard at the conclusion of each Skype session. If communication was not occurring via the chalkboard, the researcher sent emails to those participants. Table 11 shows the participants' willingness to communicate with the researcher using the chalkboard, as determined by the researcher's observations.

Table 11

*Communication Chalkboard Participation*

School	# of Participant(s) Postings	# of Researcher Postings	# of Response-Postings by Other Participants
A	11	11	0
B	2	4	0
C	0	1	0
D	6	6	1
E	6	7	0
F	5	5	0

Several emails were sent to School C participants in order to encourage communication and to ask if there were connections issues regarding the link, username, or password. No response was received. During the summer institute, the participant representing School B indicated that she procrastinates and requested on-going reminders about the virtual communication chalkboard.

**Data Reporting for Research Question 1: Application of Concepts Learned**

The first objective of this study was to determine the lived experiences of participants as they applied the concepts learned during the summer institute. Data from the participants fell into three categories:

1. Administration and general education
2. Questions and inquiries for the researcher

3. School community (parents, students, coaches, board members, and community professionals)

Findings from each of these categories are reported by school site in the following sections. Findings were also disaggregated by synchronous and asynchronous communication tools.

**School A: Administration and general education.** School A reported their experiences with general education through the virtual communication chalkboard. Five of the six comments were positive. Comments reflected that (a) teachers have come far in such a short period of time, (b) general education teachers are really excited, and (c) the superintendent is fully supportive and would like a wish list from the school as it applies to the special needs program. The school's principal (a participant in study) was also trying to find ways to reward teachers who are moving forward while trying to support teachers still needing assistance and support.

**School A: School community.** School A participants made six school community comments, two through Skype and four through the virtual communication chalkboard. Due to the success of the program at the school site, the superintendent of the Archdioceses has requested that a second program be developed. The program at School A has filled to capacity and has been well received by the school community at-large. A second program will be developed at a nearby Catholic school and students on the waiting list not yet served by the current program, along with their siblings, will have priority admissions. In addition, School A participants have begun to provide professional development to school counselors who serve other Catholic schools within the community.

School A participants also shared through the virtual communication chalkboard that they have reached out to Catholic school administrators in their area and provided professional development seminars regarding special education at the beginning of the new school year. Eleven schools were represented. Their superintendent is asking them to provide more professional development opportunities for the Catholic schools in the area. The participants have also connected with a school psychologist who is providing professional development to School A's faculty and staff.

**School A: Questions and inquiries for the researcher.** School A participants asked three questions during the Skype communication sessions. Two questions addressed special education law as indicated under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). During the summer institute, the participants shared concerns regarding a local public school district that appeared to be out of compliance with regulations around a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). The participants asked how they might address these issues. One participant asked a question regarding the legality of tape recording a classroom lecture. The participants reported that one faculty member argued that taping classroom lectures was against the law and was refusing to implement this accommodation for an identified student. The third question was an inquiry concerning how public school administrators evaluate special education teachers.

School A participants asked six questions through the virtual communication board. The question regarding tape recording that was also asked during the Skype sessions surfaced on the virtual communication chalkboard twice. Conversations regarding the tape recording led to a discussion about how to develop an accommodation

form that listed specific accommodations that would be created based on the school's ability. The conversation expanded further regarding how to communicate these needs to the school community. Thoughts included an addendum to the parent/student handbooks, an article in the school newsletter, and development of a page on the school website. Participants asked the researcher for suggestions for follow up activities or reinforcers following a professional development day, which was based on Richard Lavoie's *F.A.T. City* video. Participants also inquired about how to address a kindergarten student's lack of hand dominance and if the researcher had any suggestions to address the concern. Participant also asked philosophical questions about how to move teachers towards the acceptance of best practices and evidence-based teaching tools.

**School B: Administration and general education.** All comments and questions gathered from the participant at School B were primarily gathered through Skype. School B participant only posted two comments on the Communication Chalkboard. The School B participant indicated that she did not feel supported by her colleagues. She said she felt that she was "being thrown under the bus" by her general education colleagues.

**School B: School community.** The participant did report support from the school community in regards to a fundraiser that was held to draw funds for the special needs program. The participant reported that the community was supportive and students were able to raise \$800 for the program.

**School B: Questions and inquiries for the researcher.** School B's participant inquired about math curriculum programs during the Skype session. Participants and the researcher provided feedback based on their own experiences and research.

**School C: Technical difficulties.** Due to technical challenges, School C participants participated in only one Skype session. They were not able to participate orally due to technical difficulties on their end and elected—through typing via Skype—to listen to the session in hopes of being able to participate at a later date.

**School D: Administration and general education.** School D's participant reported seven items in this category. Two were reported through Skype session. The participant reported that her teachers were beginning to realize that they cannot fix students with special needs in a way that will enable them to function as other students. This provided the participant with a sense of success because she was beginning to reach her teachers. She also reported that a local educational therapist was completing assessments and writing reports that diagnose students, but because the educational therapist is not licensed to do so, these diagnoses were causing miscommunications and misdiagnoses to general education teachers and parents regarding the needs of students.

Through the virtual communication chalkboard, the participant conveyed her frustrations in trying to complete the many tasks that are involved in running a program while meeting the needs of her students and parents along with the demands of her general education teacher. Participants reported general education teachers made improvements. However, a participant also reported a sense of frustration as to the time it took for her general education teachers to respond to the needs of students. The participant also felt as if “everyone is taking from her,” and she wondered “what have they learned in the last 10 years” since the program's inception. She also felt overwhelmed as six new students were referred to the resource program as a result of parent teacher conferences.



**School D: School community.** The participant reported that a new parent group was being developed by parents whose children are in the program. The parent group's goal is to provide support for one another while finding ways to raise funds for the program. The participant also reported that she has a speech and language pathologist from the local community visiting the school once a week to provide services to an identified student. This communication was provided through Skype and the virtual communication chalkboard.

**School D: Questions and inquiries for the researcher.** School D's participant had three questions for the researcher. Two questions were asked through both discussion forums. The participants asked about information on the fund raising information that was shared at the summer institute. The researcher provided the website link for additional information to the participants. In addition, a participant inquired about reading and teaching strategy recommendations for children with fetal alcohol syndrome. The researcher provided websites along with a link to the novel, *The Broken Cord*, by Michael Dorris.

**School E: Administration and general education.** School E's participant reported that the administration and general education faculty were "moving smoothly forward" and that "things were falling into place." The principal was reported as supportive of the student study team (SST). Concerning the SST, the participant reported that it "sounds like they are interested and motivated in setting up the team." The resource specialist teacher also reported to be eager to get started in fully developing the special needs program. All these statements were made on the virtual communication chalkboard.

**School E: School community.** Through the virtual communication chalkboard, the participant from School E shared that her school has a development team that is highly effective in writing and obtaining grants. As a result, the school had received a \$40,000 grant award that would be used to hire an additional resource specialist. This information was announced also during a Skype session. All participants in the study were enthusiastic and congratulatory of School E's participant.

**School E: Questions and inquiries for the researcher.** The School E participant reported that a parent was upset when they received a letter regarding their child's need for support through the resource program. This statement raised the question of how to make initial contact with families regarding their child's need for support. Through the virtual communication chalkboard the participant inquired as to how to make initial contact with families. The researcher shared with the participant that the child's general education teacher should have been working with the family to address the child's educational concerns. If, after implementing appropriate accommodations, modifications, or interventions, the child needs additional support, the general education teacher should meet with the family and recommend the special needs program. At that point in time, the resource specialist may connect with the family and take the next steps in identifying and serving the child. During chalkboard communication regarding this question, the participant also asked for sample letters to send to parents regarding the need for program placement.

Several additional questions were asked through the communication chalkboard. The participant inquired about how to handle an influx of students who had not yet been identified, but who were red flagged through parent teacher conferences. The participant

was informed that this is a typical trend; however, through professional development and as the program grows, there will be a smaller influx of students following parent teacher conferences.

The participant inquired about how to set up confidential files required by the Individuals with Disabilities Act. School A provided insight as to how their files are set up. The researcher also provided methods by which to set up files along with the legal expectations for confidentiality of information.

A participant asked whether parent communication through a letter regarding methodologies used in the program was mandatory prior to offering additional services and whether or not resource specialist services should not be formally started prior to parent contact. The researcher also indicated that families must be notified and an agreement must be made prior to the start of services. The researcher indicated that ongoing communication with parents is ideal. Sharing best practices in teaching methodologies would also help to develop a sense of teamwork when working with students. Lastly, the participant asked how to move the program forward at a quicker pace during the initial year. The researcher indicated that the initial year of a program takes time as policy and procedures are established and adhered to by all members of the school community. The more that is in place and formalized, the more quickly the program will grow and move forward. This question also was addressed during a Skype session. Skype participants provided insight from their own experiences.

School E's participant also asked two questions during Skype sessions. She inquired about how to report modified curriculum on report cards. The researchers shared with all Skype participants the need for confidentiality. Modification of

assignments may not appear prominently on the main pages of high school transcripts as these transcripts are sent to vocational schools and colleges. For Grade K-8 report cards, there is no written law regarding how accommodations and modifications are reported as they apply to private schools. Schools should take careful precautions in reporting this information on report cards. A school policy and procedure should be developed in order to establish a consistent practice. Lastly, the school's participant asked as to implementation of recommendations from a school psychologist's report. The researcher indicated that following individual education plan meetings or meetings between private schools and educational psychologists, private schools should hold a second meeting. This meeting provides time to revisit the initial meeting and share thoughts and expectations of parents and school members. School or educational psychologists often have several recommendations. During the follow up meeting, parents and school members should select two to three recommendations to be implemented. If clarification is needed concerning the recommendations, parents should either contact the school or education psychologist or provide the private school members with written consent to contact the psychologist and discuss findings and recommendations.

**School F: Administration and general education.** School F's participant reported one comment through Skype and three through the virtual communication chalkboard. She indicated that she is receiving excellent feedback from her administration and general education faculty. "Teachers are wonderfully supportive of our program. They are willing to try whatever we ask of them." She reported that teachers have a try-it-and-see attitude, which is providing them with the opportunity to try new ideas. The participant reported that they are off to a good start as they transition

their middle school students into the high school setting, but movement is slow as the school is undergoing accreditation. As previously reported, the School F program serves the needs of children with autism spectrum disorders and Down's syndrome. The participant reported that she is receiving positive feedback from the high school teachers as students transitioned into the new setting.

**School F: School community.** School F's participant reported several community support issues. Five comments were received during Skype communication. The participant reported that she had received positive feedback from the parents of typical high school students at back-to-school night. However, parents of high school students who are in the program are expressing concerns regarding their students' participation in high school sports. During the middle school years, students were able to participate in athletic programs, as there are not state requirements as to academic requirements. Students who are enrolled in the program wish to continue to participate in competitive sports, yet state requirements limit these students. Parents of typical students have also expressed concerns as they feel that students with special needs will negatively impact the athletic program from a competitive standpoint. Students are also receiving great peer support. Typical students are also developing a series of three chapel videos, which will address "doing away with the *R*-word," meaning using the term *retarded* in a derogatory manner.

School F's participant also reported through the virtual communication chalkboard regarding the school community. She clearly outlined the peer mentoring program that is in place to assist her students throughout the school day. Student mentors are thoroughly trained and, as reported by the participant, training "takes a lot of work."

She indicated that her peer mentors are doing a fabulous job. Due to her thorough explanation of her mentoring program, School A's participants have indicated that they may implement her idea in their own school.

Another focus of School F's participant is fundraising. During the summer months she wrote and was awarded a \$4,000 grant for tuition assistance for her students. During the initial months of the school year, her goal had been to develop a fund raising group to assist with fund raising and the annual BBQ Fundraising Event. The participant reported that her program aide had volunteered to be an active participant in the fundraising efforts. The school newsletter included an article to attract others who might be interested in supporting the fundraising efforts for the program. The participant indicated that she received board approval for the annual BBQ event.

**School F: Questions and inquiries for the researcher.** The participant only posed one question, through Skype. She asked how to address the needs of her students who want to be involved in competitive sports. The researcher made suggestions for those who would meet the state academic requirements. Individual competitive sports such as cross country running, swimming, and tennis were suggested. Students interested in support roles for sports such as football, basketball, volleyball, and soccer and who do not meet the state requirements may take on roles such as team manager, team mascot, or honorary team member.

**Catholic and Lutheran school leadership.** Data reported by the two Catholic schools which participated in the study reflect a supportive superintendent and board of education. The school participants were more effective in implementing their strategic plans. The researcher believes that this is reflected in the leadership and governance of

Catholic schools. The superintendent of Catholic schools in any archdiocese holds governing power. As special needs program development is required by the superintendents, support of all school community members is also required. As a result, school community members seek out information regarding the program and want to learn how they can assist in the program's development.

Two of the 3 Lutheran schools in the study consistently did not reflect support of administration and faculty/staff members. The researcher believes this is reflected in Lutheran school governance. Lutheran schools are divided into regional districts and a director of school ministries does oversee the schools in that district. However, the school ministry director does not have governing power as does the Catholic superintendent. Therefore, Lutheran schools may elect whether or not to develop a program. This may be the reason why two of the Lutheran schools inability to move their programs forward. School administrators had been supportive of program development, but this support had not been clearly shared with the general education teachers by the administrator. Participants had not been given time to share their vision, purpose, and strategic plans with the school community nor had their administrators clearly shared expectations of general education teachers. As a result, participants had felt isolated and unsupported by their general education peers. General education teachers did not take an interest in serving these children and put the expectation of educating the child on the special education teacher. Participants also indicated that they had not been given professional development time to empower general education teachers. The one Lutheran school participant who did have success in implementing her strategic plan represented a Lutheran school that already had a successful and well-established special

needs program for mild disabilities. Her effort to develop a program for moderate disabilities was far more easily accepted by the school community.

### **Data Reporting for Research Question 2: Overcoming Obstacles**

The second objective of this study was to determine what steps participants take as they experience obstacles in the implementation of their special education knowledge. Unique obstacles as reported by each school site appear first. Thematic data is then reported.

**School A.** Participants reported on the virtual communication chalkboard that their most significant obstacle was the issue of fairness. General education teachers and administrators often struggle when providing accommodation, modification, or interventions for one student, as this is perceived as not fair for the other students in the class. Participants learned during the summer institute that fairness is what each individual needs, and just because one student needs it does not mean that every student receives it. This issue is being addressed through professional development opportunities.

Through Skype session, School A participants reported one of their obstacles is the lack of trust. As previously reported, School A participants were moved to a new school this school year when two schools were consolidated due to economic need. With the blending of two school faculties, trust must be developed amongst all community members. Participants are addressing this obstacle through providing support and guidance.

**School B.** The participant from School B reported her obstacles through Skype and the virtual communication chalkboard. During Skype sessions, she indicated that



although her teachers are willing to try something new, her teachers are feeling overwhelmed. Her sixth grade classes have a high enrollment of children with special needs. She is not being informed when her students with special needs are failing classes.

The participant posted comments about obstacles regarding the student study team (SST) process on the chalkboard. She indicated that the SST process is not moving forward because “if I ask one more person to add one more thing to their job, I will be summarily hung.” She is also encountering obstacles as they relate to communication and problem solving. In order to address this obstacle, she is providing opportunities for guided discovery through the development of problem solving teams.

**School C.** No data to report.

**School D.** School D’s participant reported obstacles through Skype and the virtual communication chalkboard. Both communication forums revealed themes of program perceptions, resource teacher support, and general education concerns.

General education teachers have expressed concerns regarding the negative perception that the program brings to the school. Teachers have indicated that students enrolled in the program have behavior problems. As reported by the participant, general education teachers are also inflexible regarding general education teacher’s classroom instruction schedules and the alignment with resource specialist services. The participant who serves as the resource specialist stated that a lack of administrative support. She believes that this is due to the administrator being stretched thin with added duties as pastor, as the church associated with the school does not have a full-time pastor. She also

reports that general education teachers are in a power struggle with students in the program.

**School E.** No data to report.

**School F.** School F's participant primarily reported her obstacles through Skype sessions. She indicated that the school community at large more easily accepts the Down's syndrome population than students who fall on the autism syndrome spectrum. She is working with the school community through professional development and with classroom peers through the mentoring program to address these obstacles. She also indicated that there seems to be a continuing theme of collaboration with general and special education faculty. She states, "General education and special education teachers are learning from each other."

The second obstacle that she is encountering was previously expressed. She continues to have conversations with coaches who are conflicted with how her students will fit in with the athletic program. To initially address this concern, the participant is working to build positive relationships with the coaches.

**Thematic data.** Three themes were revealed: policy and procedure, student study teams, and professional development. Data was reported in the Communication Chalkboard electronic threads with each school having its own thread.

**Policy and procedure.** School A reported that guidance from the superintendent of schools is needed. Participants are beginning to establish initial policy and procedures; however, they have asked for guidance from the superintendent and legal team.

School B reported that no policy is in place regarding students who are failing core curriculum and who are enrolled in the resource program. This is causing conflict

with general education teachers. School B also has reported that the vision and purpose of the program that was developed during the summer institute was shared with the school administrator, but not with the faculty and staff. This may be impacting her ability to work collaboratively with general education teachers. The participant is meeting regularly with the school administration to address her concerns.

School D reported that policy and procedures regarding student assessment are not formally in place. This has resulted in students being assessed without the knowledge of the participant. The participant has acknowledged that formal policies and procedures need to be written and published in order to address this obstacle. The participant also reported that the vision and purpose of the program that was developed during the summer institute was shared with the school administrator. It is now posted in the main office and the resource program site. However, the general education teachers were not given the opportunity to discuss or contribute to the vision and purpose. In addition, the vision and purpose were not shared with faculty or staff members prior to it being released to the school community at large. The participant acknowledges that time to share and discuss with faculty and staff is needed. She has also indicated that it would be beneficial to have an outside special education consultant work with the general education teachers.

**Student study teams.** School B, D, and F participants reported on the SST process. As previously stated, the School B participant indicated that she does not believe that her school will implement SST due to the constraints of an overloaded teaching staff. School D reported that general education teachers are not willing to participate on the SST as it is the general education teachers' perception that SSTs are the

responsibility of special education. Bringing in an outside special education consultant may assist in helping general education teachers understand the SST process and their role. School D's participant is developing forms for general education teachers to complete when referring students to the SST. School F's participant reported that it has been difficult to establish a SST due to the constraints of the accreditation meetings. However, she does have one general education teacher who has volunteered to be on the team. She reported that she will continue to speak with general education teachers in hopes of recruiting two more members.

**Professional development.** Schools A, B, and E reported that they are providing professional development opportunities to overcome obstacles. School A reported that they have provided SST training for their general education teachers. For those teachers who have "not gotten on board with the program," School A participants have "provided resources and information without pressure." Participants believe that in doing so they are creating a forum for discussion, which will eventually lead to a change of thought and instruction. Lastly, School A participants report that a faculty book club was established. During the summer break, the school's principal chose a book that addressed a special education topic. A Facebook page was established for the faculty. The faculty members were expected to ask questions and provide reflective thoughts on the Facebook page as they read the book.

School B reported that they have connected with a local school psychologist. The psychologist is providing consultant services to the school. The school psychologist presented to the faculty interventions, response to intervention, and application of assessment recommendations. School B's participants report that general education

teachers now being implement modifications for the first time. The school also provides professional development in reading. However, the participant reports that the “vast majority of teachers are yet to avail themselves” of the training.

School E’s participant reports that professional development was held regarding the SST process. As a result, the SST has been established and the general education teachers are pleased that there is a consistent process. Professional development has also been provided in the area of new reading instruction methodologies. It is hoped that general education teachers will be able to use these skills to identify and assist students before they fall behind in their coursework and need to be enrolled in the resource program.

### **Responses to the Post-Virtual-Forum Electronic Survey**

The nine participants were sent an electronic survey following the completion of the 3-month virtual forum. Participants received the link to the survey 5 weeks following the conclusion of the virtual forums, and these surveys were completed within 2 weeks. Eight participants completed the anonymous survey. A colleague of the ninth participant emailed the researcher to indicate that the remaining participant would not be able to complete the survey due to an on-going family health emergency. However, each of the six school sites was represented through the survey.

Participants were asked questions regarding each of the sessions provided at the summer institute. Each session was designed to educate each of the participants regarding the need for implementation in their school. The surveys were designed to gather data regarding experiences and obstacles encountered while implementing plans based on each session topic.

**Leadership.** Participants attended a session on leadership and how to understand their leadership skills. Participants were asked, “To what degree do you believe that your leadership skills have been impacted by this experience?” Table 12 shows the participants’ responses to this question.

Table 12

*Participant Responses to Question About Leadership Skills Gained*

Answer Options	Response Count
Highest degree	0
High degree	5
Medium degree	3
Low degree	0
Lowest degree	0

Participants were asked about their experiences in implementing their individual strategic plans as related to the leadership skills taught during the summer institute. Five participants reported that their administrators were the primary person to support or block their efforts. Two participants reported that the program is already well established in the school and well received by faculty and staff; however, both these participants reported that the information learned during the institute has empowered them in supporting the continued growth of their programs.

Participants were asked about their experiences encountered as they shared the vision and purpose for their special education programs that were developed during the

summer institute. Seven of the participants reported that they had effectively shared the vision and purpose with school board members, administrators, faculty, or the school community at large. Each reported that the vision and purpose have been well received and that these also provided a clearer picture of the program. One participant did not directly report on the vision and purpose, but rather reported on personal conviction to educate children with special needs within her school.

Participants were asked about the obstacles they had to overcome in sharing the vision and purpose of their special needs programs. Six of the participants indicated that their school board, administrator, faculty, or the school community at large were fully supportive. Therefore, no obstacles were reported in this area. Two of the participants indicated that the obstacles pertained to getting buy-in from the school community at large. Participants reported that it will take time to fully integrate a special needs program into the community. Some school community members are not comfortable around children with special needs, and there is a need to continue to educate the school community before everyone has bought in to the program's strategic plan.

**Strategic plan.** Participants developed a draft strategic plan during the summer institute. The strategic plan focused on each of the educational sessions. Participants were to further develop and execute their plans once they had returned to their school site. Participants were asked, "To what degree did you refer to the strategic plan during the past 3 months?" Table 13 shows the participants' responses to this question.

Table 13

*Participant Responses to Question About Referring to the Strategic Plan*

Answer Options	Response Count
Highest degree	0
High degree	4
Medium degree	3
Low degree	1
Lowest degree	0

As a related question, participants were asked, “To what degree have you been able to adhere to the overall strategic plan?” Table 14 shows the participants’ responses.

Table 14

*Participant Responses to Question About Adhering to the Strategic Plan*

Answer Options	Response Count
Highest degree	0
High degree	2
Medium degree	4
Low degree	2
Lowest degree	0



Table 15

*Descriptions of Participant Experiences With Their Strategic Plans*

School	Response Text Quotes
A	The plan as created in July is too far-reaching for our current resources.
B	All seem to understand the need, yet other initiatives are given priority.
C	A roadblock from two of the one-grade teachers. The other has been that the parents that I thought would be on my committee have been unable to fulfill that, so I am back to square one in trying to get a support group formed.
D	Schools where we have done training have been grateful. New superintendent is trying to implement several things at once (and is still only interim), so progress is slow.
E	My experiences have been very positive.
F	I think the plan has been going well so far. I have a 2-year time frame, so I know that there is still more time to go and we still have a lot more to do. However, I feel that I have been learning a lot and can use that information in the future, which will make the next year easier and make the resource program stronger overall.
G	Our families heave a sigh of relief at having their children at a school that embraces their children in a creative challenging environment.
H	We still struggle with the size of our staff that carries the burden of the [special education] plan, in addition to teaching and the already multiple additional responsibilities. The teachers have accessed wonderful resources to assist in moving toward more inclusive classrooms. We have been able to implement small elements of the program that are new, and continue what we already had in place.

Participants were asked about the obstacles they encountered in further developing and executing their strategic plans. One participant reported no obstacles. Three of the participants reported that their obstacle was the lack of leadership. The lack

of leadership was due to either a change in administration or the lack of the participant's ability to implement the plan without support. Three participants reported that they had difficulty executing their strategic plans due to their lack of time. Other areas within their job responsibilities pulled them away from executing the plan. Participants were asked about the negative, positive, or neutral experiences with their strategic plans. Responses varied greatly, as indicated in Table 15.

**Child Find.** Participants learned about the Child Find process under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as it applied to private schools. Participants were asked, "To what degree have you been able to establish a positive relationship with your public school district in this process?" Table 16 shows the participants' responses to this question.

Table 16

*Participant Responses to Question About Establishing a Positive Relationship With the Public School District*

Answer Options	Response Count
Highest degree	1
High degree	3
Medium degree	3
Low degree	0
Lowest degree	1

Participants were asked about their experience in working with their public school districts as it relates to Child Find. One participant reported that this was not applicable

to her school. A second participant indicated that her students have already been identified prior to coming to her school, therefore Child Find is not applicable. The remaining 6 participants indicated that they have positive working relationships with their public school districts. It was reported that this positive relationship appears to stem from the participants having professionally represented themselves with their school districts, and a mutual respect had been established.

Participants were asked as to the obstacles they have encountered in working with their public schools. Three participants indicated the question was not applicable. Two participants reported obstacles such as (a) having parents and teachers follow protocol when it comes to requesting an assessment and (b) correctly completing the requested paperwork from the public schools. Two participants reported that their obstacles have been in assisting the public schools in understanding the private schools' programs. The public school personnel sometimes fail to understand the private schools' expectations and limitations in serving children with special needs.

**Educational psychological reports.** When public schools complete an assessment, private school parents and teachers receive an educational psychological report. Included in the report are the findings of the assessments along with recommendations. These reports are typically overwhelming to those who are not well versed in the statistical data revealed and how to implement the recommendations. Participants were asked, "To what degree have you become comfortable with reading and implementing an educational psychological report as it pertains to individual students at your school?" Table 17 shows the participants' responses to this question.

Table 17

*Participant Responses to Question About Becoming Comfortable With Reading and Implementing an Educational Psychological Report*

Answer Options	Response Count
Highest degree	4
High degree	3
Medium degree	1
Low degree	0
Lowest degree	0

Participants were asked about their experiences in assisting fellow faculty members in understanding and implementing these reports. All participants reported that the faculty has been very supportive and appreciative. Two participants also reported that they were appreciative of the insight given during the summer institute regarding educational psychological reports.

Participants indicated very few personal or working obstacles in regards to implementing the information from the reports. Three participants indicated there were no obstacles. One participant reported the need to have her teachers realize the information in the reports is confidential and not to be talked about while “on the playground or around each other.” Another participant indicated that she has had difficulty “obtaining full reports from parents.” Two participants indicated that the reports can be overwhelming for her regular education teachers. However, when reports are explained thoroughly, their faculty is more receptive.

**Student study teams.** During the summer institute, participants learned how to effectively implement student study teams. Participants were asked, “To what degree do you believe you were successful in establishing a student study team?” Table 18 shows the participants’ responses to this question.

Table 18

*Participant Responses to Question About Success in Establishing a Student Study Team*

Answer Options	Response Count
Highest degree	1
High degree	3
Medium degree	1
Low degree	1
Lowest degree	2

Participants were asked about their experiences in developing and executing a student study team. One participant reported that it was unsuccessful. A second participant also indicated that she has not been able to implement a student study team. She reported that the special needs program has “procedures that effectively address the needs of students. Teacher, administrators, and counselors collaborate as needed to address issues as they arise.” She also reports that there has not been a need to implement a formal student study team. Five participants reported a student study team had been in place prior to the summer institute. One participant reported she is in the process of

developing a student study team. She reported that they are in-servicing faculty on the student study team process.

Participants also reported on the obstacles in the implementation of the student study team. One participant reported no obstacles. Two participants reported concerns regarding regular education teachers ignoring the student study team process. Four participants reported they have not been given the time for professional development and collaboration with faculty. One participant reported a highly successful professional development period with all faculty members, in the passage that follows:

We are in the process of setting up the team. We have had professional development for our entire faculty and staff to train them on the purpose of the team, asked for volunteers to be a part of the team, and have established the team members. This month we will have training for the team and will have our first team meeting. Teachers are going to begin completing referrals next week. After the faculty training, I received a lot of positive feedback from teachers and staff about establishing the team. Many teachers were looking forward to having this team and have students in mind that they want to refer. We also had more than enough teachers volunteer to be a part of the team. Our principal has been very supportive and sees the team as an excellent resource that will help our school meet the needs of our students better.

**High incidence disabilities.** Participants attended a session regarding high incidence disabilities during the summer institute. Participants were asked, “To what degree have you become comfortable in providing guidance to your colleagues

concerning children with high incidence disabilities?” Table 19 shows the participants’ responses to this question.

Table 19

*Participant Responses to Question About Providing Guidance to Colleagues*

Answer Options	Response Count
Highest degree	2
High degree	2
Medium degree	4
Low degree	0
Lowest degree	0

Participants were asked about their experience in assisting fellow faculty members in understanding the needs of high incidence disabilities. Participants were also asked about their experiences in implementing appropriate instruction for this student population. All 8 participants reported that their faculty members were receptive to suggestions and direction in teaching children with high incidence disabilities. However, 1 participant reported that although most of her teachers listen to her, they also “ignore anything that appears to cause them more work.” In addition, 1 participant reported that she has been able to “develop a successful plan for continued professional growth.”

Participants were asked about the obstacles they had to overcome both personally and in working with others as it applied to the implementation of instruction for children with high incidence disabilities. Four participants reported obstacles as being faculty not

willing to meet the needs of individual students. The rationale given for this is a belief system of one-size-fits-all. This teaching model does not address the individual needs of any one student. Another obstacle is with teachers not thoroughly understanding differentiated instruction. Two participants reported on the need of expanding teachers' professional growth goals while establishing a culture of meeting the needs of all students. Two participants reported that they needed additional instruction on high incidence disabilities and time to organize their own teaching environments.

**Social skills.** Participants learned about social skills instruction during the summer institute. Participants were asked, "To what degree have you become comfortable in identifying real-life opportunities to teach social skills to your students?"

Table 20 shows the participants' responses to this question.

Table 20

*Participant Responses to Question About Identifying Opportunities to Teach Social Skills to Students*

Answer Options	Response Count
Highest degree	0
High degree	6
Medium degree	1
Low degree	0
Lowest degree	1

Participants were asked about their experiences in assisting faculty member in understanding and implementing social skills instruction. Two of the participants



reported that they have in-serviced their faculty on how to do a *social autopsy* as taught during the summer institute. Three participants reported that faculty does discuss the need for assisting students with social skills. All three reported that conversations amongst faculty members do take place. Faculty members seem to learn from one another. One of these participants indicated that faculty members are “afraid of saying or doing something wrong” and therefore “tend to let students get away with using inappropriate social skills.” One participant indicated that there appears to be a need for social skill instruction; however, situations have not been brought to her attention this school year. Two other participants have implemented the *flex program* while providing ongoing support and help for teachers.

Participants also reported obstacles regarding social skills instruction, although one participant reported no obstacles. One participant indicated that she speaks up when she hears about parents being overwhelmed with their children’s social skills. Four participants reported the lack of time to do social skills instruction. One reported that parents are unwilling to seek outside assistance to help their child. One participant reported the need for a curriculum that fits a given student’s needs. She also expressed that the curriculum that is currently available often times does not fit the given situation, lacks age appropriateness, and is time consuming.

**Virtual forums.** The electronic survey was also used to collect data regarding the virtual forums. The questions asked reflect the third research question of this study. The third objective of this study was to determine to what degree, if any, does virtual forum support following professional development benefit participants? Participants were

provided with questions that specifically address both of the virtual forums (Skype and virtual communication chalkboard).

**Skype.** Participants were asked to what degree the Skype system supported and assisted them beyond their summer institute experience. Table 21 shows the participants' responses to this question.

Table 21

*Participant Responses to Question About Skype Supporting Them Beyond the Summer Institute*

Answer Options	Response Count
Highest degree	2
High degree	0
Medium degree	2
Low degree	4
Lowest degree	0

Participants were also asked for additional comments regarding the benefits or drawbacks regarding Skype as a tool for professional development. Two participants only participated once in a Skype session, therefore, they had little feedback. Three participants indicated that Skype was more beneficial when more people participated in the session. One participant indicated that it provided a deadline and a social opportunity that helped her. One participant reported, "I think Skype was a brilliant idea. Your implementation was terrific." Lastly, 1 participant indicated that the Skype sessions were "very helpful because I could ask a question and receive feedback right away."

Immediate feedback was really important because it helped me to return to school with information as soon as possible. It was helpful to “hear from other people in the program and to hear about their successes and challenges, too.”

**Virtual communication chalkboard.** Participants were asked to what degree the virtual communication chalkboard assisted them in learning beyond the summer institute experience. Table 22 shows the participants’ responses to this question.

Table 22

*Participant Responses to Question About Virtual Communication Chalkboard Supporting Them Beyond the Summer Institute*

Answer Options	Response Count
Highest degree	1
High degree	1
Medium degree	2
Low degree	4
Lowest degree	0

Participants were also asked about the benefits and or drawbacks regarding the virtual communication chalkboard. Two participants indicated that they did not participate on the communication chalkboard. One participant reported that the communication threads were “cumbersome,” so she focused on her own thread. Four comments were made which support the use of a chalkboard:

1. “The chalkboard allowed for an opportunity to dialogue, which was enhanced by email alerts, but at times the dialogue was slow.”

2. "I really like the chalkboard and the sites linked to it. Hoping it will continue to be available."
3. "It was helpful to post questions as they came up during the school year and to receive feedback for those questions. Once posts were sent to our email, the chalkboard became even more beneficial because we would know when someone responded to our post or posted on their own page."
4. "I just didn't utilize it as fully as I could have. I think this would have been valuable if I had used it more."

As indicated in comment three, email notices were added in order to inform participants that someone had posted a comment on the chalkboard.

**Additional experiences and obstacles.** The final question on the virtual forum survey asked participants to share any additional experiences and obstacles that they have encountered during the 3-month virtual forum. One participant did not post a response. Two participants indicated they did not have additional comments. Three participants expressed concerns regarding time and scheduling conflicts on Skype due to the time zones that were encompassed for Skype scheduling. However, one of those participants also indicated regret with not being able to actively participate in the virtual forums. Two participants reported positive experiences from the virtual forums:

1. "Overall, the constant reminder that I am not the only one experiencing this mayhem was fabulous!"
2. "I think providing the support through the virtual forum was very helpful because it provided me with a resource that I could refer to while I was working at my school implementing the strategic plan."

**Summary**

All 9 participants from the summer institute participated in the virtual forums. However, 3 participants only participated in one Skype session due to scheduling conflicts. These participants also did not participate on the virtual communication chalkboard. Of the 9 participants, 8 completed the virtual forum survey. One participant was not able to participate due to an ongoing family medical issue. The 8 participants thoroughly responded to all questions asked on the virtual forum survey with only two questions not being answered by one participant.

## Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

### Overview

**Special education history.** Prior to 1975, children with special needs did not have the right to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). However, the passing of P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, ensured that all children with disabilities did have the right to FAPE. Now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the law provides every child who qualifies for special education with appropriate individualized services. Prior to 1997, a child who had been electively placed in private schools by their parents had the same educational rights as their public school peers. However, the Supreme Court ruling on *Aguilar v. Felton*, in 1985 brought into question the delivery of funding to religiously affiliated schools. When IDEA was reauthorized in 1997, children placed in private schools by their parents lost the right to special education services and parents had to decide whether or not to return their children to their public school in order to receive services. In 2004, services for private school children were impacted again. IDEA 2004 shifted the Child Find responsibility to the public school district in which the private school is located and no longer the child's school district of residence. This has further complicated the Child Find process for parents and private school educators. Independent of which school district identifies a child and which one will provide services, families must decide whether to return their child to their local public school for special education service or maintain their enrollment in a private school.

**Availability of special education programs for Christian schools.** Special education programs in Christian schools do exist across the country. However, the types

or number of special education programs that may be available in Christian schools is unclear. High incidence disabilities are typically served in Christian schools (Eigenbrood, 2005). Information regarding neither the training of those identified as special education teachers in Christian schools nor the professional development of the general education teachers in serving these children have been identified. A national database would assist Christian schools. However, a database does not exist and indeed there is no federal reporting mandate for private schools to report information. Consequently, private school special education program information has not been compiled. A lengthy search turned up few if any graduate level programs or professional development opportunities specifically designed to assist Christian school professionals in special education program development. In order to assist Christian schools in developing special education programs, private school educators need opportunities to learn about special education programming, identification, and best practices. Taylor's (2005) research emphasizes the need for private school leaders to learn about special education law and private school implications.

**Implementing professional development.** Based on the recommendations of Joyce et al. (1987), successful implementation of knowledge acquired through professional development is reflective of the participants' involvement in that professional development. Therefore, professional development must take into account (a) the attitudes of the participants towards the material being covered; (b) insight to the approach or theory; and (c) the content of not only the material, but the methodology to implement what is learned (Joyce et al., 1987, p. 79). In addition, professional development is most successful when school administrators also engage and support the

implementation of knowledge learned (Taylor, 2005; Wall, 1993). The National Center on Staff Development (NCSD, 2010) also argues that professional development must be supported by the school systems themselves and must support networking opportunities.

Special education program development is cumbersome. In creating a week-long professional development opportunity for Christian schools, one must draw from numerous experts in the field of special education. DeWert et al. (2003) assert the fact that professional development must be led by an experienced and trained facilitator who has a full grasp of a special education topic. Following the professional development, NCSD (2010) has reported that professional development must have support beyond the initial development period. The benefits of virtual forum communication can provide this support. DeWert et al. (2003) state that in a peer support community, collaboration, and consultation are developed when virtual forum support is utilized.

**Vision, purpose, strategic plan, and program development.** Special education program development must have a vision. This shared vision provides a clearly defined picture to assist Christian educators in understanding where the program is headed (Senge, 2006). It should provide for the organizational norms of the school and the expectations of all school community members (Baker et al., 2006; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Senge, 2006). The vision also provides the rationale for the program's development and will create a moral and unified school community (Sergiovanni, 1996). Therefore, in order to develop a Christian special needs program and vision for the program, a vision statement will assist all school community members to clearly see where they are headed and when they have achieved the vision.



Once a vision has been defined clearly, the school community needs to develop a purpose for their special needs programs that flows from that vision. Purpose answers the questions regarding why the program is being developed. Expectations for instruction methodology, intervention plan development, support systems, and types of disabilities served will provide general education teachers with a clear understanding as to what is expected of them.

Strategic planning is an on-going process that guides the step-by-step procedures to develop a special needs program. Through strategic planning organizations are able to evaluate and overcome obstacles that occur as their programs are developed (Schein, 2004). In order to develop a strategic plan, Christian school educators must decide on a special education program design for their school. Program design may reflect models typically found in public schools: inclusion, resource specialist program, and special day class.

**Purpose of the study.** In part as a result of Taylor's (2003, 2005) research a one-week summer institute was developed to empower private schools in the development of special education programming. This study sought to identify the lived experiences and obstacles that teachers encounter as they implement their professional development knowledge into their schools. In addition, the study sought to reveal whether or not on-going virtual forum support following the summer institute provided needed support for program development. The pre-institute and post-institute surveys provided insight as the confidence of participants in implementing the information learned during the summer institute. The synchronous and asynchronous communication and post-virtual-forum

communication survey combined to produce 61 separate narrative entries. These entries, coupled with the seven strategic plans, form the basis for the study's empirical analysis.

**Summer institute.** The summer institute took place over 1 week at Pepperdine University's Malibu Campus. The summer institute provided participants with the opportunity to increase their knowledge and skills in special education program development. Participants reported that their confidence levels increased in all special education topics of the of the summer institute. Summer institute workshops also provided direct instruction in vision, purpose, and strategic plan development. Participants developed draft statements and strategic plans that allowed them to return to their schools with a clearer picture of where their programs were headed. Participants were to share and discuss their vision and purpose statements with their school administrator and general education teachers. In addition, participants created a strategic plan. The strategic plan provided participants with a road map as to next steps in program development. The strategic plans were developed over the course of the week. Following each presentation, participants were provided with time to reflect on learned information and how it impacted their vision, purpose, and strategic plan.

The researcher drew summer institute educational topics from previous research by Eigenbrood (2004) and Taylor (2003, 2005) along with the 20 years of experiences of the researcher. Five special education experts were selected by the researcher to speak on each topic. Each speaker was an expert in their designated field(s). Presenters spoke on their topic for 4 hours using lecture, class discussion, and group work activities. Educational topics were (a) leadership, (b) special education law as it applies to private schools, (c) student study team development, (d) educational psychological reports, (e)

speech and language development, (f) attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, (g) social skills development, and (h) high incidence disabilities.

**Post-summer institute virtual forum.** Finally, participants were provided with on-going support through asynchronous and synchronous communication for 3 months, September 1 through November 1. Participants were provided with a link, username, and password to the virtual communication chalkboard. The researcher developed the initial communication threads for each of the participating schools. Participants posted questions and comments on their related thread. The researcher replied to questions and comments posted at least two times a week. The researcher also emailed participants on a weekly basis to remind them to post their questions and comments on the chalkboard and to contribute to their peers' threads.

Participants also had the opportunity to participate in live virtual chats through Skype communication software. The researcher scheduled six Skype sessions. Each participant was provided with the Skype download link. Participants developed their own usernames and passwords. The researcher emailed participants the week prior to each meeting along with the day prior to the scheduled session.

### **Participants**

Faculty from three Catholic and three Lutheran schools participated in this study. Five of the six schools had special education programs established, and one school was in the progress of developing a program. An administrator and two teachers represented School A. School B was represented by a special education teacher, School C was represented by an administrator and two teachers, School D was represented by a special education teacher, School E was represented by a general education teacher, and School

F was represented by a special education teacher. School C did not participate in either virtual forum, and based on the data collected from the *Post Virtual Forum Survey*, it is apparent that this school did not implement the vision, purpose, and strategic plan following the summer institute. School C indicated that it was unable to participate in the virtual forums and was unable to implement their strategic plan due to time constraints.

## **Conclusions**

**Research question 1: What is the lived experience of participants as they apply their special education knowledge to their school sites?** Based on the qualitative data that was gathered, the lived experiences of participants fell into three categories: administrators and general education teachers, school community, and questions for the researcher. Each participant's data also provided individual summaries of their lived experiences.

**Administration and general education.** Lutheran and Catholic schools are governed differently. The success of the Catholic schools may be reflected in the way in which Catholic schools are governed in comparison to Lutheran schools. Superintendents oversee Catholic schools. The superintendent does have governing power over the schools. All three Catholic school superintendents have indicated the need for special education program development. Catholic school communities realize that they must recognize the need to serve special needs children. Therefore, Catholic schools may find more success in implementing special needs program development due to the mandates of the superintendents.

Consequently, Lutheran schools are divided into districts and a director of school ministries oversees the schools. However, the director of school ministries does not have

governing power over the schools. Special needs program development in Lutheran schools cannot be mandated by the director of school ministries. If programs are developed it is done so on an individual school basis. Therefore, 2 of the 3 Lutheran schools did not find success in implementing their strategic plans. The school that did find success in implementing a more significant program already had a special needs program in place serving mild disabilities.

**School community.** Participants reported more success when they had buy-in from the school community at large. Parent support groups, community member involvement, and board member support are reflected in two Catholic schools and one Lutheran school. These parent groups spread the word about the positive impact the program is having on typical and atypical students. School community teams played a key role as grant writers that helped in acquiring two substantial grants. Buy-in from parents of typical students was also reported as important. Parents of typical students modeled and supported their children as peer mentors. This occurred through parent education opportunities and chapel presentations, which assisted parents and students in understanding the unique gifts of particular students. Therefore, educating the school community provides the avenue for special education program development to occur. All community members play a role in the success of these programs.

**Questions for the researcher.** There were numerous questions and comments posted on the virtual communication chalkboard and asked during Skype sessions. Questions varied greatly from legal issues, participation in school sports, initial identification of students, when services should begin, responsibilities of general education teachers, and where to locate specific resources. The participants indicated that

the value of virtual forum communication increased when participants consistently participate. In addition, the virtual forums also provided a sense of community and support between the participants. This has led to the conclusion that the follow-up virtual forum provided the summer institute participants with a reliable avenue to seek support and guidance. In addition, future summer institute participants will be informed of this impact when participating in the virtual forums.

**School A.** The first participant reported that the first month of the school year was a time for growth and re-grouping. Two schools had been combined. Faculty members who had come with her from her previous school were well versed and accepting of a special needs program. Faculty members from the other school had not had this experience. The participant had provided time for special education professional development and time to speak with teachers about the program. Most faculty members were pleased with the program. She reported that there had been some disagreements from one or two faculty members. She would continue to dialogue with these faculty members while reminding them that they must abide by the policies and procedures for the program. The participant also reported the superintendent has been fully supportive. The participant had enjoyed meetings with the superintendent and was eager to meet again.

The second participant reported a positive experience. She attributed this to a supportive administrator and superintendent. She enjoyed providing professional development for the faculty as well as in-servicing other region schools about special education. She indicated that she has accepted that some faculty members would struggle with serving children with special needs. However, through professional development

she has created the opportunity for conversation. She was looking forward to additional program growth and assisting another school in special education program development.

**School B.** The participant reported that she struggled to implement the strategic plan. Even though the administrator was supportive of the vision, purpose, and strategic plan, she had not been given the opportunity to share with the faculty. During her 3 years at the school, the administrator has not talked with the faculty as a whole regarding the program and the vital role it plays in the school. The participant was leery to ask faculty members to take on additional roles such as student study team members as the faculty has indicated that they cannot take on any more responsibilities. Faculty members have not been communicating with her regarding student concerns, which had resulted in her spending much of her time resolving issues. The participant reported that she did not feel supported by the faculty nor were her assigned students those who had special needs academically, but instead had behavioral issues.

**School C.** The three participants from School C did not actively participate in the on-going virtual forums. However, two participants did complete the post-virtual-forum survey. Both participants reported that due to illness and an overwhelming school year that they were not able to implement their strategic plan. They were disappointed that they had not been able to move their strategic plan forward.

**School D.** The participant reported many factors. She had shared the vision, purpose, and strategic plan with her administrator who reportedly was supportive of her ideas. However, she was not provided time to share with faculty. She would like to provide professional development with her faculty, but her administrator is not providing her with this time. She was overwhelmed as she sees herself as the only teacher

responsible for educating her students. Faculty members do not communicate about how they could support these students. Rather, faculty members were eager to move academic and behavior responsibility to the participant. These have been ongoing issues since she arrived at the school 8 years ago.

**School E.** The participant reported that she was very pleased with the progress at her school. She was well supported by her school board, superintendent, and administrator. They had brought in professionals from the community to speak to the faculty regarding how to serve children with special needs. The school had hired a full-time resource specialist, and they would be hiring an additional resource specialist in the spring. She did not report any concerns regarding resistant colleagues. The participant had had positive experiences in developing and implementing the policies and procedures for the program.

**School F.** The participant reported a very positive experience. She has been fully supported from the school board, administrators, faculty members, parents, and students. The support has provided her with the financial resources and volunteers to keep moving the program moving forward. Parents have volunteered to assist with fundraising activities that have been an added benefit. Faculty members have been more than willing to have her students in their classrooms. Faculty members have volunteered to become members of the student study team. She reported that she does encounter conflict with her coaches, yet they continue to dialogue and look for ways to resolve their differences. Parents of typical and atypical students continue to communicate the value the program brings to all students. In addition, she continues to have more than enough typical



students who want to be mentors to her students. She reported that she is thoroughly enjoying her position and watching her students grow.

**Research question 2: What steps do participants take as they experience obstacles in the implementation of their special education knowledge?** Participants indicated a variety of obstacles to implementing their vision, purpose, and strategic plans. However, the disaggregated data isolated three consistent issues, discussed in the following paragraphs.

**Issues involving policy and procedure.** The participants reported that the lack of a developed and adopted vision and purpose for the program's existence played a significant role in the lack of policy and procedure development and implementation. In turn, this resulted in general education teachers not knowing how to make initial contact with families regarding concerns about the educational progress of their children. In addition, as based on the study, the summer institute workshop on educational psychological reports provided participants with solid information concerning how to serve students in this way. Yet, without the development of policies and procedures, the participants were not able to educate general education teachers how and when to use the information. Therefore, clearly defined policies and procedures regarding initial identification of a child must be created by each school. This provides the script from which general education teachers can work when making an initial referral for special services. In addition, professional development to help Christian school educators in understanding an educational psychological report is imperative. The information provided in these reports are key in assisting Christian schools in determining to what extent they can serve a child effectively and the general education teacher's role.

**Student study teams.** Without general education teachers having a clear understanding of the program and with the lack of policies and procedures in place, student study team development was blocked. School B and D participants indicated general education teachers were not willing or were reluctant about SST development. School administrators and general education teacher need to understand the pivotal importance of SSTs. SSTs provide for early intervention and the response to intervention model. In addition, SST recommendations provide the avenue for data collection and the possible referral to the public school for testing. Therefore, regardless of whether or not Christian school educators develop a special needs program, it is imperative that they understand, develop, and implement a SST process in their school.

**Professional development.** Special education study participants have not been provided the time to in-service their general education colleagues, nor have they been given the opportunity to bring in special education experts. Professional development provides opportunities for school faculty members to come together to learn, to ask questions and express concerns regarding a special needs program, and to learn how to serve children with special needs. Based on data gathered by four participants, professional development in the area of special education would assist them in assisting their school educators in overcoming many of the obstacles that they face in serving children with special needs.

**Research question 3: To what degree, if any, does virtual forum support following professional development benefit participants?** Conclusions can also be drawn regarding the virtual forums. Participants were asked to what degree Skype and the virtual communication chalkboard supported them in implementing the knowledge

learned at the summer institute. In response, 25% of participants indicated the Skype supported and assisted to the *highest degree* possible, 25% of participants indicated support to a *medium degree*, and 50% of participants indicated that the Skype system supported and assisted them to a *low degree*. Overall, participants reported Skype provided them immediate feedback, a sense of community, and held them to a deadline to report on progress.

The virtual communication chalkboard data indicates 25% of participants indicated a *highest degree* or *high degree* of assistance and support received through the chalkboard. In response, 25% of participants and 50% of participants reported a *medium degree* or *low degree*, respectively. From those who reported, the qualitative data regarding the chalkboard indicates that participants either regretted not participating in the forum, did not report, or found the chalkboard to be beneficial.

The Skype sessions did provide a sense of community amongst participants. Having a set date to meet via Skype provided participants with immediate feedback regarding issues as well as held them to a deadline in reporting their progress. Participants reported these sessions were more beneficial when more participants attended the session. The virtual communication chalkboard was reported to be a helpful tool to communicate and share electronic resources. Of the 3 participants who provided qualitative feedback, the chalkboard provided an avenue to post real time questions. Participants also indicated that having automatic posting notices to remind them to post questions and comments on the chalkboard was very helpful.

This data suggests that virtual forum support following professional development is beneficial. Participants are able to ask questions from a trained facilitator and learn

from other participants. It provides a sense of community and acknowledges that they are not alone in the process. Virtual forums are also more beneficial when more individuals participate on a consistent basis.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Statistical research about existing private school special needs programs.**

Current research about special education program development in Christian private schools does not yet provide a clear picture of the programs that do exist nor does it provide significant insight to the number and types of programs or their quality. Program design and development, disabilities served, special education teacher training, and school community in-service opportunities in such settings have not yet been formally identified. Therefore, statistical research to identify schools with special needs programs throughout the country is needed.

**Development of a national database.** A national private school database may provide the avenue to understand the leadership styles and traits of school administrators and special education teachers in Christian schools. Understanding such traits may provide more insight as to why some private schools have special needs programs and most do not. This information may assist in other private schools developing such programs. In addition, understanding the leadership traits may also shed light on how the school community embraces the program. School administrators are responsible for cultural changes in school communities and they are also responsible for the adoption and fulfillment of the vision and purpose throughout the school community (Cornwall, 2003; DuFour & Eaker, 1998). It is the experience of the researcher that school administrators play a key role in the success of special needs programs in their schools. The researcher

has noted in her own experiences that without the on-going support and dedication of administrators, the program will not be able to effectively and efficiently serve children with special needs nor will the school community fully support the program. With the collection of qualitative and quantitative data to validate these experiences, school administrators may be able to clearly understand their role in the success of special needs programming.

In addition to school administrators serving as key leaders in their schools, special education teachers also serve as key program leaders, consultants, and collaborators. Understanding their leadership traits may provide further information regarding the success and sustainability of such programs, why general education teachers may or may not want to work alongside a special needs teacher, and the acceptance of these children by general education peers. Understanding these key traits will first allow the researcher to further refine the summer institute in assisting participants in understanding their leadership role in their school and how to refine those traits so that they may be effective leaders. Secondly, school communities may be able to cultivate leaders in their school who can lead such change while serving as leaders, consultants, and collaborators.

Currently private schools that house special education programs are isolated. During the past 20 years, the researcher has learned that schools are concerned that they must “reinvent the wheel” and learn from their own mistakes and successes. Private school personnel report that they cannot find neighboring or similar schools in which to network with in developing their programs. A national database would allow school leaders, both administrators and special education teachers, to connect with one another and learn from one another. Networking will not only benefit schools, but will also

populate a national database. The data gathered will continue to answer questions regarding private school programs while bringing a clearer picture as to what is available in private schools.

Lastly, a national database would provide the information needed to develop an effective professional development program for Christian school educators. Although research has demonstrated the types of disabilities typically served in private education, how students are served and by whom are not clear. Having this data will allow private school personnel in understanding what types of programs to develop and the qualifications they should seek in selecting a special needs educator. The data collected will also assist the researcher in refining the summer institute and other professional development opportunities for private school educators. Data collected through these types of professional development opportunities will continue to define the needs of private schools and give further insight to the research to author further texts to assist private schools. Professional development will also provide Christian school personnel the opportunity to network and learn from one another.

Further research is necessary in order to understand the cultures and communities in which these programs are successful. As previously mentioned, the researcher plans to visit individual school sites to garner additional data regarding programs. However, the researcher would like to collect data through each school's denominational group to further understand the characteristics of why some school communities embrace special needs programs and why some do not. The researcher has noted that the view of parents of typical children in having children with special needs in private schools as both detrimental and beneficial. Collecting data which support one or both of these views may

provide insight to school boards and administrators in helping to shape the culture of their schools in accepting such programs.

The practical implications for the field of special education in Christian schools in having such a database would allow for understanding how programs are developed within private schools and what characteristics contribute to their success or failure. If schools can be identified and placed in a database, the researcher will no longer have to comb through private school organizations and make one on one contact with school personnel to determine if a special needs program exists within the school. Knowing which schools do have programs allows the researcher to begin dialogue to understand how each schools' program are structured through policy and procedure, leadership traits, community buy-in, and disabilities served. With this information, the researcher can begin further investigation into these schools. School visits and the opportunity to observe will allow for qualitative and quantitative data collection. Through this data collection process the researcher may be able to compare and contrast the data against her own twenty years of experience in developing and refining such programs. As a result of the data collected, the researcher would be able to provide private schools with step by step procedures to effectively develop successful and sustainable programs.

**Regular summer institutes supporting special needs program development.**

Data gathered in the areas indicated throughout Chapter 5 will assist the researcher in further refining the summer institute. In addition to special needs educators attending the summer institute, a continued effort will be made to encourage school administrators to attend the summer institute alongside their special needs and general education teachers. Future summer institutes by the researcher will further address the leadership role

administrators and special education teachers play in developing such programs. The strategic planning tool used at this summer institute will be more defined as to how to guide administrators through the steps and will include an embedded chronological time frame as well as personnel and financial resources which will be needed to implement their plans. Participants will be provided time to develop a formal presentation for their school faculty members and the community in general. The presentation will include their final drafts of their vision and purpose statements. Participants will be strongly urged to participate in the virtual forums that will follow the week-long institute.

Reflection on the data collected thus far provides the rationale as to why participants need to participate more fully. Further reporting on the data collected from future summer institutes will continue to shed light as to the needs of Christian schools and the role that they play in serving children with special needs.



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## APPENDIX A

## School A Vision, Purpose, and Plan

**Vision**

Draft #1: Students who can understand and articulate how they learn as their giftedness from God.

- SAT in every school
- On-going system-wide PD
- Advocates at-large in every school
- Special needs advisory to each curriculum committee
- Student Advocacy Advisory Committee for the school board
- Training for the archdioceses administration
- Dedicated archdioceses positions

Draft #2: The archdioceses will foster a climate where students, parents, educators, and the greater community understand, articulate, and embrace how we learn is our giftedness from God.

Draft #3: The archdioceses will foster a climate where parents, educators and the greater faith community support and embrace a commitment to help every student self-advocate by understanding and confidently articulating how they learn.

Draft #4: Impelled by the belief that all students are made in the image and likeness of God, the archdiocese will strive to serve a broader range of academic abilities and needs.

Draft #5: The uniqueness of each student and mutual respect for each other will be embraced as the catalyst that will generate the spirit of discipleship that will ultimately enrich church and community.

## Purpose

Draft #1: World – Better way to build the kingdom. Church – Intentional reclaiming of our discipleship. Individual – Awareness and acceptance of gifts and confidence to use them. Schools – Honor to say “come sit by me”. Evangelization.

Draft #2: To provide the opportunity for every child to reach their full potential in a Catholic environment. To foster Catholic faith communities that embraces the unique nature of individual gifts.

Draft #3: (The school participants elected not to write a third draft as they had determined that their draft #2 would serve as their final purpose statement.)

## Planning #1

1. Who is on my committee? (Nothing noted)
2. What is my time frame? (Nothing noted)
3. What will our program look like? (Nothing noted)

## Leadership

1. What is our role in developing a program? Under the direction of the Division of Schools, our role is to determine the need, type, sequence, and timing of professional development opportunities in an effort to lead the archdiocesan schools forward in the vision.
2. Who else would take on a leadership role? What do they bring to the table?  
Interim Superintendent
3. What members of my school community will struggle with the concept of a program for special needs? How will I help them? We will continue to have challenges from pastors, principals, and parents throughout this process. We will

help them by providing clear, detailed information, expectations, and not expecting all schools to be on the same page on the same day.

4. How will this impact our school and church/temple community? See purpose

#### Special Education Law

1. What steps will I take to develop a relationship with my school district? We will continue to attend consultative meetings and communicate with our LEAs in an effort to strengthen relationships AND advocate for our students.

2. Who will assist me in developing the policies and procedures for our school?

Archdioceses

3. How can I use the allocated funds from the district to assist my faculty/staff?

Title money to provide professional development

#### Student Study Teams

1. Who will be on my committee? SAT will vary with each school, but with recommendations from our committee.

2. What forms do we need to develop? Who will help me? Done

3. Who will resist SST? How will I help them? Some schools, but no expectation for them all to be on-board initially. As we grow, more schools may feel the need to implement the idea

4. How much time will I need to set aside for professional development? What types of professional development will benefit my school? A broad range of professional development, archdioceses wide- concentrated opportunities in the summer



### Ed/Psych Reports

1. Where will I house confidential file information? Who will help me comb through our existing records? Locked file in a locked room (my office). I can manage this with help from Michelle.
2. How will I assist my teachers in understanding these reports? On-going discussion through SAT and with teachers as reports come in, developing the language in advance
3. When a student is assessed, how will we, as a school, review these reports and implement best practices? SAT

### Common Disabilities in my school

1. Which of the common disabilities discussed exist in my school? How will I address each with my school community? SLD, Autism Spectrum, ADHD, Down's Syndrome, Physical disabilities, speech/language, hearing, vision
2. Learning Disabilities? yes
3. Attention Deficit Disorder? yes
4. Speech and Language Disorder? yes
5. Oppositional Defiant Disorder? yes
6. Tourette's Syndrome? yes
7. Asperger Syndrome? yes
8. Social Skills Development? yes

Planning #2

1. How will I develop a sense of community so that the children with special needs will be provided with a supportive and caring environment? Parent meetings; Teacher meetings; On-going intervention with students, as needed
2. Board Members? Information
3. Faculty/Staff? More information
4. Parents? On-going discussions
5. Students? Opportunities to display the gifts of all students
6. Church/Temple Community? Involvement

Additional Thoughts and Comments as I move forward? (Nothing noted)

## APPENDIX B

## School B Vision, Purpose, and Plan

**Vision**

Draft #1: Everyone will want all the children to hear about Jesus. Each teacher will want to understand learning differences/need and seek and apply best practices = differentiation. We need to become a place with consequences. We will meet the academic therapy needs of those enrolled post identification = dyslexia, Asperger. Two full-time positions for student support will be funded. Teachers will become the experts: pick according to passion and identify and collaborate. Students become their own advocates. Private practice options available on campus.

Draft #2: The community of our school chooses to focus our effort and energy toward each child's spiritual, academic, physical and social growth; through valuing each student's individuals with diverse gifts; our school will provide the support and guidance needed for all students to reach their full potential. We will make a personal investment in each child that enriches daily life. Teachers will have the opportunity to pursue their passions and become "faculty experts;" parents will understand that their child's needs are both important and being met; and students will become contributing members of the community.

Draft #3: The Student Success Program chooses to focus its energy and effort toward each child's spiritual, academic, social and physical growth. The school community will provide faculty and parents with the tools needed to access and develop each child's God-given gifts.

## Purpose

Draft #1: Student become adults who ask for help when they need it and give help where their talents lie for Christ. Our school reflects community - not ideal. Independent yet active and collaborative. Self-advocacy creates adults who contribute, not drain. Fulfill parent hopes/expectations of a “bright future” for their child.

Draft #2: The purpose of our schools’ student success program is to fulfill parent hopes and expectations of a bright future for their child by providing the opportunity (choice) for Christian education, embracing the whole family while inspiring life-long learners and cultivating Christ-like character.

Draft #3: The purpose of our school’s student success program is to fulfill parent hopes and expectations of a brighter future for their child. Building on a Christ-centered education, families will be embraced, while we inspire life-long learners and cultivate Christ-like character.

## Planning #1

1. Who is on my committee?
  - a. Already my part-time partner in crime
  - b. Me
  - c. Ask “person A” (3<sup>rd</sup>)
  - d. Ask ”person B” (4<sup>th</sup>)
  - e. Ask “person C” (7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>)
  - f. Ask “person D” (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>)
  - g. Ask “person E” (5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>)
  - h. Ask Board members...hmmmm

- i. Ask principal
  - j. Another person??
2. What is my time frame? This year: Form SSP advisory/planning committee; Review current SSP students with the teachers; Shovel off the ramp--best practices/universal design/differentiated instruction—do we currently have a strong foundation?; sst procedures for referral/documentation, regularly scheduled meetings social skills for teachers; S/L when to refer and what for fundraising. Next year: Hmmm....
  3. What will our program look like? 2 full-time positions (1 full, 2 or 3 part?); Well trained faculty in Universal Design (shoveling off the ramp) /DI/best practices; Active and inquisitive parents; Early intervention; Highly documented SST practices; On site private speech & language, counseling; Math.

#### Leadership

1. What is our role in developing a program? Educating the faculty & staff as to how SSP makes life easier, & why SSP is important, necessary, and a conscious choice every day.
2. Who else would take on a leadership role? What do they bring to the table? KI—experience & success.
3. What members of my school community will struggle with the concept of a program for special needs? How will I help them?
  - a. JD—provide tools/documents to make it easier
  - b. BL—go to her & type up what she says
  - c. KW—ask her if she is asking for help

- d. PC & DO—praise
  - e. Parents of children who “have no special needs” and think “these kids” are holding their child back—need enrichment opportunities
4. How will this impact our school and church/temple community? We will be able to keep whole families, and more will hear about Jesus.

#### Special Education Law

1. What steps will I take to develop a relationship with my school district? I love my school district. I will continue to consult them. Our biggest gift to them would be accurate SST & anecdotal documentation
2. Who will assist me in developing the policies and procedures for our school?  
Mary, Kim, Natasha, Chris, Lori, Leigh, Chintana, Phylis Arkus
3. How can I use the allocated funds from the district to assist my faculty/staff?  
Professional development: V&V, FYT (project read)

#### Student Study Teams

1. Who will be on my committee? Connie, Kim, lori, leigh. Chris, natasha
2. What forms do we need to develop? Who will help me? SST request form; S&L checklists. Connie & Kim.
3. Who will resist SST? How will I help them? BL; KW; DO; Make it easy...hmmm
4. How much time will I need to set aside for professional development? What types of professional development will benefit my school? Social skills; S&L referral; SST; FYT; Ask for a snippet at each faculty meeting, ask to be at the beginning so I'm not bumped to the next week...see when/what is already designated for the Fridays.

### Ed/Psych Reports

1. Where will I house confidential file information? Who will help me comb through our existing records? Locking cabinet in ssp; Connie.
2. How will I assist my teachers in understanding these reports? Focus on the summary recommendations and match them with what they are already successfully doing THEN plan.
3. When a student is assessed, how will we, as a school, review these reports and implement best practices? SSP faculty will confer with Psychologist & parents & hopefully teacher to review best practices and recommendations.

### Common Disabilities in my school

1. Which of the common disabilities discussed exist in my school? How will I address each with my school community? AD/HD; Dyslexia/LD; Aspergers & Autism; Speech & Language. One step at a time...
2. Learning Disabilities? Accommodations; Differentiated instruction.
3. Attention Deficit Disorder? Documentation of behaviors for parental edification; Staff development of strategies for working with diagnosed students.
4. Speech and Language Disorder? When to refer checklists; Specific documentation for parents as to WHY the referral is being made.
5. Oppositional Defiant Disorder? Documentation of behavior for parental edification
6. Tourette's Syndrome? Hmmm...
7. Asperger Syndrome? Peer education; Direct contact between classroom teacher & professionals (Dr. Rhodes); Peer support group.

8. Social Skills Development? Social autopsy training.

#### Planning #2

1. How will I develop a sense of community so that the children with special needs will be provided with a supportive and caring environment? (nothing noted)
2. Board Members? Direct communication between me & the board needs to happen & be regularly scheduled
3. Faculty/Staff? All members need to have training & current information on how to best support the students at large in the community; EDC, office & custodial staffs
4. Parents? Parent info nights, meet & greet, support group (s)—email exchange
5. Students? Follow up with parents & teachers on current homework & classroom experiences
6. Church/Temple Community? Information needs to be published & disseminated

Additional Thoughts and Comments as I move forward



## APPENDIX C

## School C Vision, Purpose, and Plan

**Vision**

## Draft #1:

- Serves students in K – 8.
- Struggling student identified by teachers/parents (with or without I.E.P./Psycho-Ed. Eval.)
- Goal to satisfactorily meet their needs
  - Plant limitation
  - Support Limitations
- Possible avenues of support
  - Title I
  - Limited Pull-Out
  - Inclusion
- Professional Development on-going

Draft #2: The vision of our school's special needs program is to satisfactorily meet the needs of all students allowing them to realize their full potential by giving them avenues to expand their unique God given gifts and talents. The community of parents, students, educators, and caregivers are dedicated to embracing a spirit of cooperation, collaboration and support.

Draft #3: The vision of our school's special needs program is to satisfactorily meet the needs of all students understanding that "each person is created in God's image, yet there are variations in individual abilities." Our goal is to allow them to realize their full

potential by giving them avenues to expand their unique gifts and talents. The community of parents, students, educators, and caregivers are dedicated to embracing a spirit of cooperation, collaboration, and support.

**Purpose**

Draft #1: To give as many students as possible the advantage of a Catholic education; to realize that all children have gifts from God and we need to provide avenues and support to allow their talents to shine; in the age of declining enrollment we need to serve all those who want a Catholic education.

Draft #2: The purpose of our school's special needs program is to give as many students as possible the advantage of a Catholic education; to provide an inclusive environment for children where their god-given abilities are encouraged to grow, develop, and shine; to provide opportunities for all students to embrace those with learning differences thus witnessing Christ's image in every child.

Draft #3: (The school participants elected not to write a third draft as they had determined that their draft #2 would serve as their final purpose statement.)

## APPENDIX D

## School D Vision, Purpose, and Plan

**Vision**

Draft #1: All students will be able to achieve full potential. Professional development will be given twice a year. Focus, first on students with diagnosed learning “issues” as space permits struggling students served by paraprofessional. ?? student with severe behaviors. Resource specialist teacher included in all grade level monthly group levels. Speech/language professional added to staff. All teachers will read/communicate with resource teacher.

Draft #2: To provide special need learners with the tools which will allow a Christian academic environment in which all students will achieve their full potential. The school community will strive to be a collaborative, consultative, ?,? in which all members become active and contributing ?.

Draft #3: The resource program exists so that all learners will know that they are a “special” chosen people belonging to God and intended for them. The school community will strive to be a collaborative, consultative, and Christian community. The community will foster an environment in which special need learners will become active and contributing members of the society

**Purpose**

Draft #1: Provide a Christian academic environment for students previously served publically. Create a group of workers who are vital to and an integral part of society and work force. Create a group who advocate for the uniqueness of Christianity. Personally be a part of the growth and development of a, b, and c.

Draft #2: Enable people with special learning needs to receive an appropriate academic education in a Christ-centered supportive and embracing consistent environment in which students learn to strive for self-excellence and self-advocacy.

Draft #3: Provide a Christ centered academic socially accepting environment for child with learning disabilities. Equip students to strive for excellence and self-advocacy in a supportive embracing and consistent school community.

#### Planning #1

1. Who is on my committee? My committee will consist of 3-4 people: 1 parent rep, 1 teacher rep elem, 1 teacher rep middle/jr high, and some rep from the pre-school.
2. What is my time frame? For establishment of the committee- present plan to administrator in August - then present to staff, parents, and ptl- in Aug/Sept.
3. What will our program look like? First meeting would Nov 2010 (this year only - Oct is Gesell Testing Workshop, ITBS, and IDA convention). Second meeting would be March 2010.

#### Leadership

1. What is our role in developing a program? My role is that of the CEO- I am the director and the main teacher of the program. I would seek help from the committee to communicate with the PTL.
2. Who else would take on a leadership role? What do they bring to the table? The pre-school director/ or TH would be the conduit to the pre school. They bring the knowledge of public resources for evaluation of preschoolers, and the teachers personality and educational level

3. What members of my school community will struggle with the concept of a program for special needs? How will I help them? The teachers who believe that everyone needs to do the same thing at the same time. The teachers who believe only in a developmental program (eat, drink, sleep Gesell) The hardest point for us all is to know when we can effectively serve them anymore.
4. How will this impact our school and church/temple community I am hoping that this will make the educational programs of the church more aware of all types of learners and provide an effective environment in which they can achieve.

#### Special Education Law

1. What steps will I take to develop a relationship with my school district? I will continue to attend the consultation meeting in October and work with the school organizations resource group. I will also strive to make sure that our parents and teachers follow reasonable procedures before seeking a public school evaluation. In September, I will have my parent committee member check with the local public schools to get the name of the resource teacher, slp, psychologist, and principal.
2. Who will assist me in developing the policies and procedures for our school? They are already pretty much set, they are not in written form and this will be a task that will be given to the parent on the committee to put into computer document for review by me and administrator.
3. How can I use the allocated funds from the district to assist my faculty/staff? Our staff uses NCLB funds to attend conferences. The kindergarten teachers and myself are attending the Gesell Development Assessment.

### Student Study Teams

1. Who will be on my committee? The grade level teams already established will be asked to take on the role of SST.
2. What forms do we need to develop? Who will help me? We need to formalize a reference form , modification form - meeting form.
3. Who will resist SST? How will I help them? No one will resist the idea of the SST- they are doing the process already, but not calling it by the name SST- Chris and Darrin will resist the need to meet in person, they would want to do it all with computer and email.
4. How much time will I need to set aside for professional development? What types of professional development will benefit my school? I would like to set aside a meeting with the whole staff to review all the students in August. Since I am also in charge of testing- a meeting in October before ITBS. I need about 2 hours to present the nitty gritty of SST.

### Ed/Psych Reports

1. Where will I house confidential file information? Who will help me comb through our existing records? The reports are housed in the resource room files. I do need to make sure that the teachers do not have reports floating around. Tana, school secretary, who is in "charge" of the files in the office will help me go through them.
2. How will I assist my teachers in understanding these reports? I will continue to give the teachers the Student at a Glance sheet that refer to their specific students. I also make myself available to the teachers as needed to review reports.

3. When a student is assessed, how will we, as a school, review these reports and implement best practices? After an assessment is completed and the meeting is attended. Laura will report the results of the meeting to admin, meet with the general ed teacher that attended the meeting to complete the Student at a Glance form. This will then be presented to the teachers at the grade level meeting.

#### Common Disabilities in my school

1. Which of the common disabilities discussed exist in my school? How will I address each with my school community? ADD/HD, Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, Developmental Delay, Specific Learning Disability, Speech and Language Deficit.
2. Learning Disabilities? I ask SS to help develop strategies for reading development. Students come to the resource room for extra time for tests in their SLD area. Teachers are given a modification/accommodation sheet for these students.
3. Attention Deficit Disorder? Teachers are given a modification and accomodation sheet for these students.They are given the Sandra Rief and Silversein book of strategies to see what they might want to implement. Students are given the option of taking tests in the resource room.
4. Speech and Language Disorder? We will this year have a SLP on campus on Wed. She will present an in-service to the teachers on Aug 20th. She will be available for observation, screening, formal assessment, and therapy which parents will contract with her separately.
5. Oppositional Defiant Disorder? Not aware of this at this time.

6. Tourette's Syndrome? Not aware of this at this time.
7. Asperger Syndrome? The Asperger student meets with the 2 diagnosed autistic students once a week for 30 minutes to work on playing games, and doing role playing- working through the Navigating the Social World Curriculum by Jeanette McAfee.
8. Social Skills Development? I need to work on professional development with the staff including the aides who are out on the playground during lunch and recess times.

#### Planning #2

1. How will I develop a sense of community so that the children with special needs will be provided with a supportive and caring environment? (Nothing noted)
2. Board Members? Provide admin with positive information that is happening at the school- get parents to submit statements of positive interactions to the committee which can then be presented to the board.
3. Faculty/Staff? I think they overall do have the view of being caring and supportive. I need to find ways to compliment them on the things that they are doing well. Publicly acknowledge the great things happening.
4. Parents? Provide a liaison through the committee to the PTL. Meet with the parents of the special needs children as a group so they can realize they are not alone. Meet with the parents in the first grade to go over the program including the Down Syndrome child
5. Students? Present a chapel on the need to have all types of children (shoes) and how we all grow and develop.



6. Church/Temple Community? No ideas.

Additional Thoughts and Comments as I move forward? (Nothing noted)

## APPENDIX E

## School E Vision, Purpose, and Plan

**Vision**

Draft #1: Students referred to team as teachers for academic, social, emotional needs.

Team reviews student info and beings/lays-out an initial plan/route for the student. Try plan and re-evaluate and continue and modify plan as needed. Address both short-term student needs and long-term. Organized professional development. Classroom teachers and resource teachers and guidance counselor work together.

Draft #2: Our vision is to create a K – 8 program for students who are demonstrating academic, social or emotional difficulties that will utilize small-group or individualized instruction, in classroom and guidance services. Teachers or parents can refer students to a student study team which will review valuable information about the student and develop a course of action including a follow-up plan for the student. Faculty and staff inclusion support within the general education members will draw on the areas of their expertise to collaborate in the best interest of the child.

Draft #3: The vision of our school's resource program is to provide support for students in order to meet their needs as a whole child. Parents' students, educators, and community members guided by their faith will work together in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation to build discipleship among our students and to realize their full potential in an environment that is centered on the belief that God has blessed all children with unique gifts that He calls the community to embrace and appreciate.

## **Purpose**

Draft #1: To develop life-long learners. To develop respect among students for each other and their gifts and among teachers for varying students' and colleagues' gifts.

Draft #2: The purpose of our school's resource program is to provide a faith-filled learning environment that:

- Develops self-confidence
- Fosters a love of learning
- Aids students in reaching their potential
- Encourages respect within the school community for varying gifts and talents.

Draft #3: The purpose of our school's resource program is to create opportunities for learning that will allow our school community to serve as many families as possible desiring to give their children a Catholic education. The resource program aims to provide a faith-filled setting where students strive for excellence while developing self-confidence and a life-long love of learning. Our goal is to support students in reaching their potential and the school community in recognizing, respecting, and valuing diverse gifts and talents.

## **Planning #1**

1. Who is on my committee? Resource Teachers; Classroom Teacher.
2. What is my time frame? 2 years.
3. What will our program look like? Support for students who are demonstrating academic, social, or emotional difficulties. Possibly one day expanding to providing support for enrichment (gifted and talented students). Support would be provided in small-group, individualized, and inclusion settings. Primarily

focused on academic areas of language arts and math support and language arts support within the content areas. Also focused on social skills areas and emotional areas.

### Leadership

1. What is our role in developing a program? Provide direction for the program based on summer professional development– organize the steps to accomplishing the tasks; organize resources; share information with teachers.
2. Who else would take on a leadership role? What do they bring to the table?  
Resource Teachers – past experiences working with children with learning difficulties.
3. What members of my school community will struggle with the concept of a program for special needs? How will I help them? Possibly some teachers who see the value of accommodations but have trouble working them into their classroom. Provide ways/strategies that make it less overwhelming to implement accommodations while also affirming why the accommodations are necessary.
4. How will this impact our school and church/temple community It will make our school/parish community more welcoming and willing to recognize the good that is in each child and family and less quick to label a child with a reputation that is based on something the child did or was like at a young age which in the past may have followed him or her throughout the grades. It will also make our school community a more rich community that can share in more gifts and talents coming from a more diverse student body.

### Special Education Law

1. What steps will I take to develop a relationship with my school district? Be as professional as possible (prompt to meetings with pertinent information). Be appreciative of their strengths and their time spent working on our students.
2. Who will assist me in developing the policies and procedures for our school? Our principal, administrative team and members from the Archdiocesan special education committee will assist me.
3. How can I use the allocated funds from the district to assist my faculty/staff? I would first need to find out if we receive funds for special education from our school district. (I am not aware that we do.)

### Student Study Teams

1. Who will be on my committee? One classroom teacher from each grade level team (3 teachers), 1 special area teacher, 1 resource teacher, 1 guidance counselor, 1 nurse, 1 administrator, referring teacher(s).
2. What forms do we need to develop? Who will help me? A form that the classroom teacher would use to refer students to team. A form that the team would use to write a plan for the student. A form that the team would use to reevaluate the plan and continue the plan. A form to share the plan with parents? Or just use one form for everyone for the plan. We can use the forms in the student study team manual, which was recently created by the special education committee in the Archdiocese as a reference and starting point.
3. Who will resist SST? How will I help them? Possibly some teachers who have concerns that it will take too much time. It will take too much time to: review

students' information; make changes/see changes for students; reassure that a student can be reviewed and planned for in 20 minutes; reassure that intervention needs 4-6 weeks to see change (research based).

4. How much time will I need to set aside for professional development? What types of professional development will benefit my school? 3 days of professional development (can be broken down into sections) Whole Faculty – 1 Faculty Meeting: How the program will work; How to refer a student to team; How the team functions; 2 Hours on a Professional Development Day: Classroom strategies; Student Study Team 4 Hours: Team Training; 2-4 Hours: Team members observe another school's student study team

#### Ed/Psych Reports

1. Where will I house confidential file information? Who will help me comb through our existing records? Confidential file information will be kept in the principal's office. The principal will help go through the files.
2. How will I assist my teachers in understanding these reports? Our guidance counselor can sit down and review reports with individual teachers. I can help also. We could jointly do a professional development session on how to review reports going over what the numbers mean and what the tests mean to give the teachers more background information about the testing. We could also include professional development on how to implement the recommendations made in the report.

3. When a student is assessed, how will we, as a school, review these reports and implement best practices? Our student study team will review the reports and use the information in the reports to write our plan for the student.

#### Common Disabilities in my school

1. Which of the common disabilities discussed exist in my school? How will I address each with my school community? Which of the common disabilities discussed exist in my school? How will I address each with my school community? (Nothing noted)
2. Learning Disabilities? Yes; Through professional development.
3. Attention Deficit Disorder? Yes; Through professional development.
4. Speech and Language Disorder? Yes; Through professional development.
5. Oppositional Defiant Disorder? Not that I'm aware of.
6. Tourette's Syndrome? No.
7. Asperger Syndrome? I don't know if anyone has been diagnosed but students may exist. Through professional development.
8. Social Skills Development? I don't know if anyone has been diagnosed but students may exist. Through professional development.

#### Planning #2

1. How will I develop a sense of community so that the children with special needs will be provided with a supportive and caring environment? (Nothing noted)
2. Board Members? We will present information about the program to the board either in person, via our principal, or in writing. We would include our vision and

purpose statement and elaborate on them on how they tie into our school mission statement and school philosophy statement.

3. Faculty/Staff? We will use our mission statement to guide us and center us. We will use our Character Counts program to reinforce our mission with our students. We will use professional development to build our knowledge base of students with special needs and of best practices to serve them, which we can then use with all students as well.
4. Parents? We will use our mission statement to guide us and center us. We will share our vision and purpose of the program. We will share how we use our Character Counts program to reinforce our mission with the students. We will have parent information sessions to provide parents with information regarding topics that would be especially relevant to students and parents of students in the Resource Program and information about how to support their child in an effective way in school and at home. We will create a resource handbook for parents to be posted on the school's website that would include tips and ideas of how to best support their child and lists of resources such as helpful websites.
5. Students? We will use our mission statement to guide us and center us. We will use Religion class, class and school wide prayer and mass opportunities, and our Character Counts program to reinforce our mission with the students.
6. Church/Temple Community? We will use our mission statement to guide us and center us. We will promote how we serve the needs of children by sharing information about our Resource Program with the parish community.

Additional Thoughts and Comments as I move forward? (Nothing noted)



## APPENDIX F

## School F Vision, Purpose, and Plan

**Vision**

Draft #1: Our program will serve three students with significant special needs in each grade. They will attend a full schedule of general ed classes, receiving in class support as needed and using modified materials to access the general ed curriculum to the best of their abilities. They will also receive small group instruction in deficit skills. General ed teacher and typical students will be taught the reasons for inclusion and will feel fully supported and comfortable with our program students in their classrooms.

Draft #2: The program was created to provide students with significant developmental delays the opportunity to fully participate in classes and activities at our school, giving them the support they need to reach their full God given potential, while fostering relationships with their typical peers.

Draft #3: The vision of our program is to create an environment which welcomes students with significant developmental delays to participate fully in classes and activities alongside their typical peers receiving the support they need to reach their full God given potential.

**Purpose**

Draft #1: To help student fully realize their potential academically, functionally and socially so that they will best be prepared to function independently and be happy productive citizens as adults. To help typical students become wiser, or compassionate human beings who understand the value and dignity of individuals with special needs and are comfortable interacting with them.

Draft #2: The purpose of the program is to provide an inclusive Christian education for students with significant developmental disabilities so that they will have the opportunity to fully realize their potential academically, functionally and socially. To encourage typical students to develop awareness of the value and dignity of individuals with cognitive disabilities and build Christ-like character by having daily opportunities to demonstrate kindness helpfulness, and leadership.

Draft #3: The purpose of the program is to provide an inclusive Christian education for students with significant developmental delays; to create opportunities for these students to fully realize their potential academically, functionally and socially; to encourage typical students to develop an awareness of the value and dignity of individuals with disabilities while building Christ-like character.

#### Planning #1

1. Who is on my committee? High School teacher ? Gen Ed teacher KD?  
Administrator SH? Aide – JG? Aide – SG? Me?
2. What is my time frame? On-going.
3. What will our program look like? The program is already in place. The program currently consists of 6 students: 1 in Grade 6, 2 in Grade 7 and 3 in Grade 8. The program staff currently consists of 1 full time special ed teacher, 1 full time aide and 1 part time aide. Students attend a full schedule of general ed classes. They receive support in their classes as needed from Special Ed teacher, aide or High School mentor and use materials at their own reading level. Students are pulled out of a portion of classes that are overly lecture based or are otherwise inaccessible to them to receive one on one or small group instruction in reading,

writing, math and help with assignment completion in the program's Room. Plan for growth: add two students in each incoming 6<sup>th</sup> Grade class; add full time HS teacher next year and make 2<sup>nd</sup> aide full time; add aides as student number increases to keep ratio between 1:2 and 1:3

### Leadership

1. What is our role in developing a program? The program is mine to develop with administrative approval and parent input.
2. Who else would take on a leadership role? What do they bring to the table? A parent could take on a leadership role for fundraising. SG may take on a leadership role for a High school program if our 'plan for growth' is realized.
3. What members of my school community will struggle with the concept of a program for special needs? How will I help them? A few of the teachers have struggled, but most feedback has been very positive. Teachers who were apprehensive at first but had a positive experience have been our biggest supporters. I provide extra support for those teachers who are apprehensive, and do my best to check in with them often and to be sure they know I want them to communicate with me about any needs or concerns they have. They have my cell phone number. They know they can call me at any time and they can send my student to me at any time.
4. How will this impact our school and church/temple community Teachers have reported to me that the program has had a positive impact on our school community. Teachers have told me they notice that the students in the classes with the program's students are kinder and more 'other oriented'.

No additional information was noted beyond this point of the questionnaire.

#### Special Education Law

1. What steps will I take to develop a relationship with my school district?
4. Who will assist me in developing the policies and procedures for our school?
5. How can I use the allocated funds from the district to assist my faculty/staff?

#### Student Study Teams

5. Who will be on my committee?
6. What forms do we need to develop? Who will help me?
7. Who will resist SST? How will I help them?
8. How much time will I need to set aside for professional development? What types of professional development will benefit my school?

#### Ed/Psych Reports

4. Where will I house confidential file information? Who will help me comb through our existing records?
5. How will I assist my teachers in understanding these reports?
6. When a student is assessed, how will we, as a school, review these reports and implement best practices?

#### Common Disabilities in my school

9. Which of the common disabilities discussed exist in my school? How will I address each with my school community?
10. Learning Disabilities?
11. Attention Deficit Disorder?
12. Speech and Language Disorder?

13. Oppositional Defiant Disorder?

14. Tourette's Syndrome?

15. Asperger Syndrome?

16. Social Skills Development?

Planning #2

7. How will I develop a sense of community so that the children with special needs will be provided with a supportive and caring environment?

8. Board Members?

9. Faculty/Staff?

10. Parents?

11. Students?

12. Church/Temple Community?

Additional Thoughts and Comments as I move forward

## APPENDIX G

## Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator: Julie M. Lane

Title of Project: Open Hearts, Open Minds: Serving Students with Special Needs in Private Schools

1. I \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the research study being conducted by Julie M. Lane under the direction of Dr. Eric Hamilton, Associate Dean of GSEP and Dissertation Committee Chair.
2. The overall purpose of this research is to study the impact of how a 5-day institute specifically designed for school educators will assist school educators in the development of special education programming and services. In addition, this research is to study whether or not a 3-month virtual module will provide the participants with the support needed to implement their programs during the 2010 – 2011 school year.
3. My participation will involve attending the 5-day summer institute during the week of July 26<sup>th</sup> through July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010 either in person on the Pepperdine University Malibu Campus or via virtual live-feed participation. I will develop a strategic plan with assistance by the researcher in order to implement the information learned from each session and how I will apply it to my individual school site.

I will also participate in the 3-month virtual support module from my own community location. From September 1<sup>st</sup> through December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010, I will participate in bi-weekly Inner Pass sessions. During these sessions, I may ask questions of the researcher and others participating in the study as well as provide feedback as to how success and obstacles in the implementation of my strategic plan. I will also participate at least once a week on the virtual communication board by posting questions or comments as to the progress in implementing my strategic plan. I may make these postings at anytime during the week at my own discretion.

4. The possible benefits of my participation in this study are that I will receive support in implementing and developing a special needs program in my school. I also realize that this study may assist others in the development of such programs and will provide insight for professionals when assisting schools in program development.
5. I understand that the only known risks to this study are setting aside the time needed to implement my strategic plan and to share the obstacles and successes that I am experiencing. I understand that I will be sharing this information on a virtual communication board and through Inner Pass sessions. In doing so, I understand that other participants in the study will be able to read or hear my comments and questions. In addition, I realize I will be provided with a code number. This code number will represent my identity. Only the researcher will know who I am. I am not to reveal my identity to others in the study.
6. I understand that I may choose not to participate in this research.

7. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may refuse to participate and/or withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in the project or activity at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.
8. I understand that the investigator(s) will take all reasonable measures to protect the confidentiality of my records and my identity will not be revealed in any publication or during the virtual module that may result from this project. The confidentiality of my records will be maintained in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. Under California law, there are exceptions to confidentiality, including suspicion that a child, elder, or dependent adult is being abused, or if an individual discloses an intent to harm him/herself or others.
9. I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact Julie M. Lane or Dr. Eric Hamilton if I have other questions or concerns about this research. If I have questions about my rights as a research participant, I understand that I can contact Dr. Doug Leigh, Chairperson of the Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board, Pepperdine University, 6100 Center Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310.568.5600.
10. I will be informed of any significant new findings developed during the course of my participation in this research which may have a bearing on my willingness to continue in the study.
11. I understand that in the event of physical injury resulting from the research procedures in which I am to participate, no form of compensation is available.



Medical treatment may be provided at my own expense or at the expense of my health care insurer which may or may not provide coverage. If I have questions, I should contact my insurer.

12. I understand to my satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have received a copy of this informed consent form which I have read and understand.

I hereby consent to participate in the research described above.

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Participant's Signature

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Date

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Witness

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Date

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the subject has consented to participate. Having explained this and answered any questions, I am cosigning this form and accepting this person's consent.

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Principal Investigator

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Date

APPENDIX H

Questionnaire for Demographic Information

1. Please complete each item below.

Name of School \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Your Title \_\_\_\_\_

2. What term(s) best describes your school?

\_\_\_\_\_ Private, non-religious

\_\_\_\_\_ Private, Christian

\_\_\_\_\_ Private, Jewish

\_\_\_\_\_ Private, Other religious affiliation

\_\_\_\_\_ Private, Special Needs (no public funding)

\_\_\_\_\_ Private, Special Needs (receiving public funding)

3. Does your school belong to a larger private school organization? If so, which organization?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the total enrollment for your school?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What Grade Levels do you serve? (Check all that apply)

\_\_\_\_\_ Preschool

\_\_\_\_\_ Pre-K

\_\_\_\_\_ Kindergarten

\_\_\_\_\_ 1st

\_\_\_\_\_ 2nd

\_\_\_\_\_ 3rd

\_\_\_\_\_ 4th

\_\_\_\_\_ 5th

\_\_\_\_\_ 6th

\_\_\_\_\_ 7th

\_\_\_\_\_ 8th

\_\_\_\_\_ 9th

\_\_\_\_\_ 10th

\_\_\_\_\_ 11th

\_\_\_\_\_ 12th

6. Do you knowingly accept Children who have been formally identified with special needs?

(A formal diagnosis is one completed through an educational psychologist, physician, public school district, or counselor.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

7. Do you serve an identified special needs population at your school?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

8. Number of students served in the school's special education program?

\_\_\_\_\_ 1 - 9

\_\_\_\_\_ 10 - 19

\_\_\_\_\_ 20 - 29

\_\_\_\_\_ 30 - 50

\_\_\_\_\_ 51 - 75

\_\_\_\_\_ 76 - 100

\_\_\_\_\_ 101+

9. What types of disabilities/special needs do you serve? (Check all that apply.)

\_\_\_ Attention Deficit Disorders

\_\_\_ Autism Spectrum

\_\_\_ Behaviorally Challenged

\_\_\_ Down's Syndrome

\_\_\_ Hearing Impaired

\_\_\_ Hearing and Visual Impairment

\_\_\_ Developmentally Delayed

\_\_\_ Orthopedic Impairment

\_\_\_ Slow Learners

\_\_\_ Specific Learning disability

Speech and Language Disorder

Visually Impaired

Other

10. Do you have a formally structured program to serve the needs of your students. If so, what kind? (Check all that apply.)

None

Pull-Out/Resource

Full Inclusion

Self-Contained Classroom

Other (Please specify)

None

11. Do you have a trained special education professional(s) on staff? If so, full or part-time? (Check all that apply.)

Full-time

Part-time

None

12. Has your faculty been in-serviced as to best practices when working with children with special needs? If so, how recently?

None

Within the last 3 Months

Within the last 6 Months

Within the last year

More than one year ago

13. Are you interested in a professional development for your faculty regarding classroom strategies, best practices, or general support in any of the areas listed below?

(Check all that apply.)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder/Attention Deficit Disorder

Autism Spectrum/Asperger Syndrome

Behavior/Classroom Management

Conduct Disorders

Early Childhood Development

Fine Motor/Gross Motor Development

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Special Needs Curriculum and Instruction

Speech and Language Development

Specific Learning Disabilities

Tourette Syndrome

None

14. Does your school have an established procedure for identifying and supporting students who are struggling academically, socially, and/or behaviorally?

Yes

No

15. Does your school have a need to develop and establish a process for identifying and supporting students who are struggling academically, socially, and/or behaviorally?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

16. Does someone on your staff know how to request testing for a child through the public school system?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

17. Has your school requested testing through your public school and been unsuccessful with your request for testing?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

18. Does your school have a need to develop and sustain a program for children with special needs?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

19. If you desire, please feel free to express specific concerns or comments without sharing the true names of staff/faculty and/or students.

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## APPENDIX I

## Pre and Post Conference Survey

Range: 5 = High 1 = Low

**Personal Leadership**

1. How confident are you in understanding your personal leadership style?

5      4      3      2      1

2. What is your knowledge base as to the different types of leadership styles?

5      4      3      2      1

3. How confident are you in recognizing those with different leadership styles than yourself?

5      4      3      2      1

4. How confident are you in your ability to adapt to different leadership styles when working alongside colleagues?

5      4      3      2      1

**Program Development**

1. What is your knowledge in developing a strategic plan for a new program at your school?

5      4      3      2      1

2. What is your knowledge in taking a needs assessment at your school?

5      4      3      2      1

3. How confident are you in leading a new program at your school?

5      4      3      2      1

4. What is your knowledge in moving a strategic plan forward towards the vision?



5 4 3 2 1

**Special Education Law**

1. To what degree is your knowledge of the federal law: Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)?

5 4 3 2 1

2. To what degree is your knowledge of how this law impacts children placed in private schools by their parents?

5 4 3 2 1

3. How confident are you in assisting a family at your school with the assessment process at their public school site?

5 4 3 2 1

4. How confident do you feel about your knowledge regarding the law so that you can confront a school who is not complying with the law as it applies to *Child Find*.

5 4 3 2 1

5. How confident are you in understanding the process of an initial assessment and determining whether or not a child qualifies for special education services under IDEA?

5 4 3 2 1

**Student Study Team/Child Study Team**

1. To what degree is your knowledge as to the Student Study Team process?

5      4      3      2      1

2. How confident are you in establishing a new or maintaining a current student study team at your school?

5      4      3      2      1

3. How confident are you in leading a student study team?

5      4      3      2      1

4. How confident are you in analyzing school-wide assessment data?

5      4      3      2      1

5. How confident are you in knowing what information to look at in a child's education file when developing an action plan for an individual child?

5      4      3      2      1

**Interpreting Educational Assessments**

1. What is your knowledge in understanding an educational evaluation?

5      4      3      2      1

2. What is your degree of confidence in understanding the scores in an educational evaluation?

5      4      3      2      1

3. What is your degree of confidence in implementing the recommendations in an educational evaluation?

5      4      3      2      1

**Interpreting Speech/Language Assessments**

1. What is your knowledge in understanding a speech and language assessment?

5      4      3      2      1

2. What is your degree of confidence in understanding the scores in a speech and language assessment?

5      4      3      2      1

3. What is your degree of confidence in implementing the recommendations in a speech and language assessment?

5      4      3      2      1

4. How confident are you in understanding typical language usage development in children?

5      4      3      2      1

5. How confident are you in understanding typical articulation development in children?

5      4      3      2      1

**Learning Disabilities**

1. What is your knowledge base as to the definition of a learning disability?

5      4      3      2      1

2. What is your knowledge base as to the characteristics of learning disabilities?

5      4      3      2      1

**ADD/ADHD**

1. What is your knowledge base as to the characteristics of ADD?

5      4      3      2      1

2. What is your knowledge base as to the characteristics of AD/HD?

5      4      3      2      1

3. How confident are you in knowing the differences/similarities between these two disorders?

5      4      3      2      1

4. What is your knowledge base as to how ADD/ADHD impacts a person's ability to focus?

5      4      3      2      1

5. How confident are you in understanding the differences between *highly distractible* and the ability to *pay attention*?

5      4      3      2      1

APPENDIX J

Post Virtual Forum Survey

5 = To a High Degree

1= To a Low Degree

**Strategic Planning**

1. To what degree have you been able to adhere to your overall strategic plan?

5      4      3      2      1

2. What has been your experience in developing and executing a strategic plan?

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3. What have you experienced, negatively, positively, or neutrally, in implementing your plan?

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**Student Study Teams**

1. To what degree do you believe you were successful in an establishing a student study team?

5      4      3      2      1

2. What has been your experience in developing and executing a student study team?

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3. What have been the obstacles you have encounter in establishing a student study team?

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**Personal Leadership**

1. To what degree do you believe that our leadership skills have been impacted by this experience?

5      4      3      2      1

2. What has been your experience in leading the program development?

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3. What obstacles have you had to overcome in leading such a change in your school?

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**Special Education Law**

1. To what degree do you have been able to establish a positive relationship with your public school district?

5      4      3      2      1

2. What has been your experience since September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010 in working with those in public schools?

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3. What obstacles since September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010 have you had to overcome in working with your public school?

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**Educational Psychological Reports**

1. To what degree have you become comfortable with reading and implementing an educational psychological report?

5      4      3      2      1

2. What has been your experience in assisting fellow faculty members in understanding and implementing such reports?

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3. What obstacles have you had to overcome regarding the information in these reports?

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**School Community Development**

1. To what degree have you been able to move the school community forward in embracing a special needs program within their school?

5      4      3      2      1

2. What experiences have you encountered as you share the vision and purpose of the program?

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3. What obstacles have you had to overcome in sharing the vision and purpose of the program?

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4. What obstacles are still present that you have yet to overcome in sharing the vision and purpose of the program?

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**Social Skills Development**

1. To what degree have you become comfortable in identifying real life opportunities to teach social skills to your students?

5      4      3      2      1

2. What has been your experience in assisting fellow faculty members in understanding and implementing social skills instruction?

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3. What obstacles have you had to overcome to implement social skills instruction?

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**High Incidence Disabilities**

1. To what degree have you become comfortable in providing guidance to your colleagues in regards to children with high incident disabilities?

5      4      3      2      1

2. What has been your experience in assisting fellow faculty members in understanding and implementing instruction for high incident disabilities?

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3. What obstacles have you had to overcome in the implementation of instruction for children with high incident disabilities?

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### **Communication Chalkboard**

1. To what degree do you believe the virtual communication chalkboard has assisted you in on-going learning beyond the summer institute experience?

5      4      3      2      1

2. To what degree do believe the virtual communication chalkboard has assisted in supporting you beyond the summer institute experience?

5      4      3      2      1

### **Skype/InnerPass**

1. To what degree do believe the Skype/InnerPass system has assisted you in on-going learning beyond the summer institute experience?

5      4      3      2      1

2. To what degree do you believe the Skype/InnerPass system has assisted you in supporting you beyond the summer institute experience?

5      4      3      2      1

### **Additional Comments/Reflections**

In the space below, please share any additional experiences and obstacles which you have encountered during the three month virtual forum.

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## APPENDIX K

## Virtual Communication Forum

**CKBRD – Chalkboard****CKBRD/ September 2/All Participants**

Please post all of your questions and thoughts regarding your school on this thread. Feel free to give feedback and thoughts on other threads. However, this is your main forum to post specific information and questions regarding your school. Others may post their thoughts and suggestions here as well. Please let me know if you have any questions.

**CKBRD/Monday, September 6 - 1:50 PM/School A**

Plan looks good. You have definitely created some great short and long term goals. Can you share with us what you have accomplished thus far with the new school year? You indicated that you will be meeting with the interim superintendent. How did that meeting go? What was the feedback and thoughts for moving forward? I enjoyed reading that you realize not everyone in your school communities will be onboard. Also, you recognize each of your schools may be in a different place on any given day. How will you share the vision with those who may not be onboard? How will you share with all schools individual journeys? How can you create a team the bridges from school to school?

**CKBRD/Monday, September 6 - 2:06 PM/School B**

Hey! Enjoyed reading your plan. How is your committee coming along? You mentioned several people for your committee. How many have stepped up and taken on the task? What role do they play in the school community? You talked about getting your filing cabinet set up and confidential information properly stored. How is this going? Do you have any questions? You talked about two reading strategies: V/V and Project Read. I

know them both well. V/V has been proven to be quite successful. However, Project Read is not supported by best practices research. Is there something better out there that won't cost you money? Lastly, how was your plan received by your administration? Board? Teachers?

Researcher to School C: Hey! Enjoyed reading your plan. How is your committee coming along? You mentioned several people for your committee. How many have stepped up and taken on the task? What role do they play in the school community?

**CKBRD/Monday, September 6 - 2:11 PM/School D**

Enjoyed your plan. You've really worked on a time frame for executing different steps and to attend professional development. As I know your school and many of the faculty personally.....and since I have worked with some of them in the past.....I am really curious to know their thoughts on your plan. You don't have to reveal names, rather titles are fine. How did your administrator receive your vision and purpose? Have you been able to form a committee? You mentioned a meeting in November and a second in March. If you plan to have meetings this far apart, you are going to need to find a way to keep the momentum moving forward. Any ideas? Is it possible to schedule a meeting in January?

Researcher to School E: I'm really looking forward to seeing your program develop this fall! Tell me about your progress thus far. You indicated that you were forming a committee. Did that happen? Have you met? What have you discussed? For your student study team...you mentioned creating a team and developing policies and procedures. How is this coming along?

**CKBRD/Monday, September 6 - 2:25 PM/School F**

Enjoyed reading your strategic plan. I am really excited to see a school taking a bigger leap and working with those who are even extra special in God's Kingdom. So, how is your committee coming along? Has Katie gotten onboard with you? Be sure to tell her hi for me too. You mentioned a parent that could head up fund raising. Has this happened? If so, what steps is she taking to raise funds? Can you use any Title II funding to assist? You also mentioned transition services.....what have you learned? Is there anything I can assist with on this journey? Does your public school district provide professional development opportunities for you?

**CKBRD/Monday, September 6 - 2:30 PM/School F**

We are off to a good but very busy start. We held staffing meetings for each of our students during the week before school started. The teachers at Faith are wonderfully supportive of our program and so willing to try whatever we ask of them. They have provided excellent feedback for me during the first two weeks. We have 22 new high school mentors that we have trained and they are doing a FABULOUS job. The mentor program is one of the coolest parts of our program, but it takes a lot of work to get the mentors trained and feeling confident. Our new student is adjusting well and our other 5 are getting back in the swing of things. (some more willingly than others!) "A teacher" has agreed to be on my committee. I haven't gotten any farther than that. My aide has offered to take an active role in leading fundraising along with the parents. We put an article in the September Newsletter, coming out any day now, requesting a volunteer grant writer. Also, I wrote a little grant the week after summer institute and just found out that we will be getting \$4,000 in tuition assistance for our 4 families with autistic

children. We got \$0 for program expenses (I requested \$2500), but at least one of our families can REALLY use this tuition assistance, so it's a really good thing. I have not yet looked into transition services. Thanks!

**CKBRD/Monday, September 6 - 5:29 PM/School A**

We have had our hands full with opening a new site for the year, training our staff as well as administrators and staff from other schools, still trying to hire an assistant, etc.

Barbara has been equally crazy, so the meeting has not happened yet. We are hoping to get on her schedule in the next few weeks. We expect her to be excited about the plan and fully supportive.

As far as those who are not on board, my thought is that we continue to provide resources and information, without pressure. No good teachers/administrators will resist resources for the underserved. Even if all they do is pass the word along, it will land where it needs to land. Practically speaking, once there are some forums and opportunities for teachers to collaborate (and the teachers begin to see that they are useful), they will want to be involved on some level.

Hope everyone is having a great start to the year!

**SKYPE/September 9 - 4:00-5:00 PM/Participants A, B, D, E, & F**

Participants D: The participant reported that her administrator is positive about what she learned during the summer institute. He likes the strategic plan that she has developed however, the teachers have not been given time for input. She is moving forward anyway. She reported that she needs group support before she begins fund raising for the program. However, she reported that she feels that she is being “thrown under the bus” and not being supported by the regular ed teachers. She realizes that it is the start of the

school year. She has heard comments from the teachers though which reflect that they are beginning to realize that they cannot “fix” these students. She does not believe that the SST process belonging to the regular ed teachers will go over well. The regular ed teacher believe students who are struggling are the participants’ responsibility.

Participant A: Both participants from school A were on the Skype call. They were getting adjusted to a new school site. They have to work to re-establish trust in the school community. They reported they have one student with Down’s Syndrome who they have socialization concerns with. They have gotten the student involved with school safety program which seems to be helping. The participants reported that they did not know who they should take their strategic plan to. The researcher indicated that they should share it with their superintendent as this person seems to have the most insight as to direction of the schools in the archdioceses. They could also share it with their board and staff/faculty.

Participant B: She reported that she feels she is being “thrown under the bus” in several classrooms. They have a heavy saturation of children with special needs in sixth grade. These teachers feel overloaded. The researcher shared with the group that this is why there is a need for policy as to the numbers served in the school AND at each grade level. The participant indicated that she has not been given the opportunity to share her strategic time to the staff/faculty, but that her administrator did like it. She is looking into a funding/grant idea through her church organization.

Participant F: Her middle school students are now in high school. This is the first time for the school. It appears that the transition is smooth. The attitude amongst teachers has been “try it and see” She has received positive feedback from both parents of typical and

atypical children at the Back-to-School Night. Typical parents appreciate what the children with special needs bring to the school. She reported that the students with Down's Syndrome are more easily accepted than those students with autism. She has not presented the strategic plan to anyone. The researcher encouraged her to bring it to someone for approval.

Participant E: The participant reported that the RSP is off to a good start. They have over 100 new students to the school at-large. She has been busy with the start of the new school year and has not yet shared the strategic plan with anyone yet. She was encouraged to do so.

**CKBRD/Saturday, September 11 - 7:46 PM/Researcher to School F**

Sounds very exciting. Can you tell me more about your mentor program and the training that the students attend? I'm very interested in this aspect. So, what is your time line to get your committee together and hold your first meeting? You should also begin to think about your agenda for the first meeting. What are your initial thoughts? Keep me posted on the fundraising and grant writer request. Have you found any grants yet to pursue? Do you need ideas? CONGRATS! Way to go on the grant. Very exciting. Every little bit helps move the program in the right direction!

**CKBRD/Saturday, September 11 - 7:58 PM/Researcher to School A**

Sounds like you are very busy, yet off to a good start of the year. I am curious to know, what if any, training the staff received for the special needs populations in their school(s)? Were they receptive? I just in-serviced a school last week in San Diego on special needs. We had quite the discussions over the "fair" issue. Curious to know if you are running into any of these issues? I like your approach on keeping the information



flowing and seeing who you can connect with without forcing. You mentioned "forums and opportunities". You also mentioned time to "collaborate". Can you tell me more about this?

**CKBRD/Sunday, September 12 - 2:10/School A**

Busy,busy,busy!! But, it is good, at least no one is yelling at us! We invited all of the principals in the Archdiocese to come or send teachers to an in-service to kick off the year. We covered identification, classroom accommodations, and service acquisition for students with special needs (including an overview on the value of Student Advocacy Teams). We had about 10 schools represented, even one of our high schools. We gave away LOTS of cool stuff (thinking putty, graphic organizers, PRIMs, fidgets, etc). It was well-received and we have been asked to provide more once we get the year rolling.

Next in-service is 10/11 with a psychologist who is going to cover what to do with the kids once they are sitting in front of you. As teachers see that our seminars offer them valuable resources, we think they will be more like to attend and bring others. "Fair" is always an issue, especially with the middle school teachers. So far this year, it hasn't been THE issue. I do have a question for you. A teacher recently tried to convince me that we could not tape record her class unless we had written permission from the parent of each child in the class (on some shaky legal terms). I personally disagree, but I am not sure where to look for something that disproves her theory. Ideas?? Thanks!!

**CKBRD/Tuesday, September 14 - 2:27 PM/School D**

The biggest frustration has been trying to get everything accomplished. Trying to schedule students without teachers' schedules has been hard. The lower grades do not have as much aide time as they have in the past and this is a real sore point with them.

After spending the last week listening to many of the teachers say they are not at the same point as they were last year, or in the case of a second grader with severe memory issues, I think people dropped the ball and he should have been retained, and I want to fix it. I wonder what the teachers have really learned over the past 10 years that my school has had a resource program. I think if I can get the vision and purpose set it will be a good year. We have an informal type of student study team, but no one seems to want to do any more than they have to and to try and put that together seems miles away, and that is probably ok anyway...

**CKBRD/Tuesday, September 14 - 5:06 PM/School E**

We haven't formed a formal committee but the Resource teachers and I have been meeting to set up the program for the year. That will probably be the people on the committee unless our principal wants more people on it. We should formalize it so that we have that set into place. One of the Resource teachers and I also attended a professional development workshop in August on Resource programming and student study teams. So far we have been working on the immediate needs of starting a new school year. Our focus has been on assessing students to determine who needs support and then creating a schedule for the Resource teachers according to those needs. This is our third week of school now. Once the Resource schedule is established, our next step is to introduce the idea of student study teams and how they work to our faculty. Our principal spoke briefly about it at our first faculty meeting as something that we will be working on this year and I am hoping to have someone come in to speak to our faculty more at length at an upcoming faculty meeting or professional development day. From

there, we would form the team from volunteers or principal selected teachers and staff.

Then the team would be trained.

**CKBRD/Wednesday, September 15 - 3:25 PM/School F**

The mentor program currently consists of 22 students who applied, interviewed, got teacher recommendations, and were selected to be in our program. Mentoring is on their schedule as one of their classes. I have two to four mentors scheduled for each of our 8 schedule blocks. The mentors come to my room, get a folder with their instructions and either go to a classroom to observe and assist a student, or stay in my room to help with a student. I brought all the mentors in for a two hour evening training during the week before school started. We also have trainings every other week before school during this first month or two. After that, we will decrease to once a month or so. I am also do a lot of modeling and instructing in my classroom to teach the mentors how to do activities such as repeated timed readings, modeling fluent reading, reader's theater, phonetic activities, math activities, etc. My initial training focuses on: - understanding the beliefs behind our program - that inclusion is good for kids with disabilities and good for typical peers and it's what Jesus would do. - how to observe and document in the classroom - how to help without helping too much - how to coach typical peers in interactions with our students - safety and responsibility issues

Then we work from there. It was amazing - last year we had a few mentors who wound up having a real skill for modifying tasks on the fly in the classroom. It was so cool! I LOVE my mentors! My teachers love my mentors too. You're right - I need to be thinking about my agenda for my first meeting. I have no clue what should be on there yet. We are all knee deep in accreditation meetings right now. I have put "agenda for

first meeting" on my to-do list. I have submitted a request for approval for our BBQ fundraiser. Last year this netted over \$16,000. We are hoping to be approved to hold this one March 5 2011. We have not had any bites on the grant writer request. Thanks for your help Julie!

**CKBRD/Wednesday, September 15 - 4:55 PM/School A**

Glad to finally reconnect! Our world has been super busy. As "my colleague" said, we had a great kickoff event, which in turn has sparked a lot of interest among other principals who are looking for us to come talk/ help them plan. It's much harder than I anticipated moving forward when our ground is so much less firm than I am used to. My biggest approach right now is trying to catch teachers stretching themselves and rolling up their sleeves and getting dirty- and rewarding them BIG time with attention. I have found though that this is helping me ignore some of the teachers who I think will be the biggest hurdle and will cause this most issues. It's a whole lot more fun to reward than problem solve. Looking forward to meeting with the superintendent and getting a better read on the direction - while I love being left alone and I have plenty to do in my own school, I know there are issues that need to be tackled systemically! SAT (Student study team) meets this week to begin training- not quite sure what to do with an assistant principal who says she wants to learn but very resistant to change. On the other hand, our phys ed teacher is so excited to be included in something that he is giving of his free time to attend the meetings! "My colleague" has been great rounding up team members!!

Hope everyone else is doing well and hoping that most of you are having a fun September-that is hopefully a little less exciting than a gas leak and emergency evacuation that yields more paperwork than can be imagined!!

**CKBRD/Saturday, September 18 - 9:09 PM/Researcher to School D**

I hear your frustrations. I heard them on Skype too. Where to start....I think your last paragraph sums it up nicely. You have got to get the vision and purpose set so everyone on faculty knows where the program is heading and what it will look like when you arrive. Key in making this happen is getting “your administrator’s” backing. He has to do this upfront and personal with the entire faculty. I will never forget when I first arrived at “the high school” and addressed the faculty for the first time. Following my presentation “my administrator” got up and told staff in no uncertain terms that this is where we are heading. He closed by saying, and I quote, "If Julie tells you to do it, do it". That is where you need to get from “your administrator”. Help me understand the second grader. Are you wanting to retain or the teacher? Once I hear back, I can guide you there. As far as how much of the teachers have learned over the past 10 years, I am curious to know how much formal training have they had? How many times have you spend PD on the special needs population? Learning and applying can't happen without a culture change within the school. This goes back to the first paragraph and what has to happen to make a culture shift. In order for the program to be embraced and the culture changed, the entire school community must be addressed and informed. It is then that change can begin. Keep sharing!

**CKBRD/Saturday, September 18 - 9:21 PM/Researcher to School A**

Wonderful to hear from you on Wednesday! Always love your stories and can readily identify with you having been a school admin myself. Kudos on praising and giving attention to those who are getting it! If you are feeling confident with those who are leading the pack, then let them led those who are resistant. Now that you have buy-in,

those who remain are more likely to buy-in from peers rather than you as an administrator. Empower those who are leading the way. There are several ways you can do this....here are three ideas. Let me know what you think.

1. Have those who are finding success lead a PD time/day and have them share what they are doing and the successes they are seeing. That way you step back and let them lead and influence.

2. Pull together teachers you trust AND who are leading on this front and talk with them about your concerns about the need for everyone to buy-in so that you establish a culture of acceptance and success. You don't have to share with them who are or who is not complying, but encourage them to be leaders as they work and collaborate with other faculty members.

3. For those who are strong leaders on this topic, have them lead department meetings as to strategies to use in the classroom and to share their success stories.

One gift you have that the Lutheran school districts do not is a superintendent with power over the schools. Granted this can be a blessing and a curse. Lutheran school district directors have no power. Rather they oversee, support, and bring school personnel together. They do not have the ability to establish guidelines and rules for all schools to follow. I am eager to your superintendent's perspective.

Lastly, one of the most powerful videos I have ever seen is Rick Lavoie's FAT City. I don't know how many times I have shown it to schools. Yet, every time I have shown it, I have consistently received follow up conversations indicating how it has changed the mindset of so many on staff. It will not impact each and every one person,

but if you can get your VP to watch it, you may make an impact. Let me know what you think. Keep the information coming!

**CKBRD/Saturday, September 18 - 9:45 PM/Researcher to School A**

Okay. Here is the answer to your question....some of which you may like and others maybe not. Your state law indicates that you cannot tape record a conversation unless everyone involved in the conversation has given their consent. This is very apparent at the university level and even more so by the University of “your state” Law School website.

Tape recording IEP and/or 504 meetings must be done so with advance notice to all meeting participants and signed consent must be received. However, tape recording as part of a 504 plan or IEP accommodation is legal. Scroll down on this link to see ...

<http://www.ldonline.org/questions/accommodations>

In my professional opinion I would...

1. Make a school policy which is clearly stated in parent and faculty handbooks along with any other printed material which addresses the school culture that tape recording of class lessons may be permitted as based on the recommendations from professional testing to meet the needs of students with special needs.

2. As a school you will need to determine how you will address dialogue communicated which negatively impacts other students and/or faculty which just happens to be recorded yet has nothing to do with the lesson, e.g. inappropriate language by a student and/or faculty member and/or discipline of a student. In other words, can you use the tape recording against someone? Thoughts?

**CKBRD/Saturday, September 18 - 9:50 PM/Researcher to School F**

Oh my goodness! This is absolutely outstanding!!!! I am very impressed and very pleased. I can't put it into words. I already want to come and visit and will do so. I'm already thinking the first of next year. All I can say is WOW! If I may suggest...first agenda item for your meeting....visit the vision and purpose of the program. Get input and feedback. Next, come up with some points that you want to discuss with you team as to the "purpose of the team" itself. This is different than the purpose of the program. The team needs to come to a consensus as to its purpose so it can keep the vision and purpose the program moving in the writing direction and so that it can be leaders amongst the faculty. Wow!

**CKBRD/Saturday, September 18 - 9:55 PM/Researcher to School E**

Wonderful to hear the update. Just to make sure I on the same page, the "committee" is working to develop the program itself vs. the "student study team" being something separate. Yes? If so, I'd like to suggest that you get one or two regular education teacher on your "committee". Being inclusive from the start will help with buy-in from all of your teachers. They need to be heard as well as the program is developed. I'd enjoy hearing about the workshop you went to in August. Please do share! Did you learn additional information? Something contrary to what I shared with you? Can't wait to hear more!

**CKBRD/Wednesday, September 22 - 4:53 PM/School A**

Thanks for the information...Gives us a place to begin. Our diocesan lawyer also mentioned something about a classroom being a public forum so the usual privacy laws don't apply. In the past, we have had the parent review the notes with the child and then



delete the recording. It is not something we would use for discipline of a child or an adult. Also, we have not allowed recording in classes like religion where a student might reveal more sensitive information...mostly stick to lectures in science and social studies. Today's question of the day is related to the development of hand-dominance. We have a student in kindergarten that is a bit over-indulged and has never had formal education before now. He is showing no preference for handedness, no idea about how to hold a pencil, etc. While holding a pencil is a learned behavior, handedness seems to be a more neurological/developmental issue. Any thoughts?? The teacher isn't quite sure where to begin, but I wonder if he needs to see his doctor for a neurological check... Thanks-

**CKBRD/Wednesday, September 22 - 4:56 PM/School A**

We love FAT City, too...it is on the agenda for our next in-service day on 10/11. We also have a psychologist coming in to discuss some of the non-academic issues that tend to be common with a learning disabled/autistic population. I am really excited for it and will be running the FAT City piece. I plan to mostly stick to the discussion guide that comes with it, but send me any additional ideas you might have. Thanks-

**CKBRD/Wednesday, September 22 - 4:58 PM/School A to School F**

I love the mentoring idea...not something we have ever used, but I might steal it eventually! Good luck!

**CKBRD/Wednesday, September 22 - 5:54 PM/Researcher to School A**

Researcher to School A: Do you have "Beyond F.A.T. City"? Came out oh, maybe 5 years ago. Lavoie goes back and sees what we have learned since F.A.T. City was first released and what we have learned from that video. It isn't necessarily something to show the entire staff, but might be great for you to watch. Following F.A.T. City you

can discuss the findings since the 80s. As F.A.T. City becomes more and more "old" it will need to be reinforced with more current data.

**CKBRD/Thursday, September 23 - 11:58 AM/School A**

I do...will put watching it on my "To Do" list now that I am almost done Back to School Nights.

**CKBRD/Sunday, September 26 - 3:35 PM/School A**

We are still working on the recording issue. Do you have policies from schools you have worked with? I think seeing a policy that works would be great. Any thoughts on how to help a teacher understand that this is an important tool for students so that he/she is willing to be ok with it as opposed to forcing this issue.

**CKBRD/Sunday, September 26 - 2:48 PM/School F**

We would love to have you come visit - let us know when! Thanks for your suggestions about the meeting agenda items - I still have not scheduled this meeting - but I will. We have gotten two responses from our newsletter request for volunteer grant writers. We will be meeting with them soon to get them going. We have been approved for our BBQ fundraiser that will be held in March. I have a parent meeting scheduled for Thursday evening. Lots going on!

**CKBRD/Monday, September 27 - 4:00 PM/Researcher to School B**

I know Project Read very well too. Yes, the writing piece was the strongest section of the Project Read curriculum. Food for thought: When the gal is in from LBUSD.....ask her about evidence based research on Barton and VV. I believe you indicated that she will be teaching RTI. RTI is based on research-based best practices. As I anticipate that you may want to use Barton, Project Read, and/or VV as an intervention, ask her if and or

how to find out if these are best practices as based on research. In one of the courses I am teaching right now, I am asking my students to go back to their schools and look at the interventions they are using and find out if they are truly researched based best practices. This is giving them a great deal of insight as to what to use and what not to use. Hope that makes sense. Let me know if it does not.

**CKBRD/Monday, September 27 - 7:24 AM/School D**

Good morning, Regarding the previous post- the person talking about retention was the teacher and she wanted to retain the student (thinking that would help). It won't he is a January birthday already. So , I think finally we have her realizing that it is the lack of memory that impacts so much. The little guy is very verbal and very attention challenged, and wants to give up pretty easily when things get hard. Still he is enthusiastic and I see progress. Also we have a SLP who comes in one day a week and she is doing some testing and is very supportive of what we have been doing- so having her say what I have been saying helps greatly. Things are improving- maybe it was just getting the teachers used to the new school year, and less aide time than they had been accustomed to. Also I think it was my own pity me party. When everyone is taking from you --information, time, lesson plans, immediate help, giving me reasons for not making modifications, you get drained and tired and "low". Without having John to re energize me- it was "poor poor pitiful me". I still haven't found the total energizer piece, but my 26 year old son in MA said I can always call him. But I am putting on my big girl pants and moving forward...Parent teacher conferences next week and 4 new students have surfaced--so life here at my school is never dull...

**CKBRD/Monday, September 27 - 7:39 PM/Researcher to School B**

And you also asked about reading. To clarify, students in our pull-out program use Barton Reading & Spelling System (Orton-Gillingham) for their individualized decoding & encoding work. We have a site license for all 10 levels, and I have done all 10 of them myself. This curriculum and training is free to our teachers. The vast majority of them have yet to avail themselves of that opportunity. We also own class sets of the V&V for Grades K-4. I'm hoping that providing training and giving the materials to the classroom teachers will prove effective. I do not want our teachers to use the majority of Project Read. The portion of the Project Read that I would like our teachers to experience directly supports both of these multisensory programs and build upon their Step Up to Writing foundation. The Written Expression: Framing Your Thoughts Component is the most amazing grammar & writing I have taught. It truly is Universal Design. My most intelligent as well as diagnosed LD students were successful and loved it. The logic integral to the systematic approach is undeniable. It systematically teaches grammar, evaluation of sentence & multiparagraph text, AND it teaches expansion of written thought AS WELL AS distillation of written documents into their "bare bones," which is ideal for note taking and transferring to long-term memory. I have high school and college students who still use it. It's the ONE reason I regret leaving the regular classroom, because no one else knows how to do it but me. I am a walking Project Read: Framing Your Thoughts commercial.

**CKBRD/Monday, September 27 - 9:20 PM/Researcher to School B**

Hurray! You did it! So glad that you posted and shared.

Outstanding....you have someone coming in from the district. This is definitely a positive step and will contribute to your positive relationship with them. My question is whether or not your faculty/staff know the topic of this discussion and what to anticipate? If not, my suggestion is that you get a bit of info on your speaker - bio - and topic information. Shoot out a very uplifting positive email to your faculty/staff so that they are a bit more in the know. Include all of the positives that you are already doing on these topics in your school and how the in-service will help take your school a step further. You want to make sure that your faculty/staff know that they are doing a great job. Sometimes faculty/staff are threatened by outsiders as if to say they are NOT doing a great job. I like your idea of "guided discovery". I believe this is present in your grade level problem solving teams. Give food for thoughts before those meetings whenever possible. Drop hints about concepts from student study teams. You can do this simply through an email which you could entitle "Tips for Problem Solving". Just give them one or two sentences - bullets - that give them food for thought. What do you think? Keep posting. Love to hear from you!

**CKBRD/Monday, September 27 - 9:27 PM/Researcher to School B**

I know Project Read very well too. Yes, the writing piece was the strongest section of the Project Read curriculum. Food for thought: When the gal is in from LBUSD.....ask her about evidence based research on Barton and VV. I believe you indicated that she will be teaching RTI. RTI is based on researched based best practices. As I anticipate that you may want to use Barton, Project Read, and/or VV as an intervention, ask her if

and or how to find out if these are best practices as based on research. In one of the courses I am teaching right now, I am asking my students to go back to their schools and look at the interventions they are using and find out if they are truly researched based best practices. This is giving them a great deal of insight as to what to use and what not to use. Hope that makes sense. Let me know if it does not.

**CKBRD/Monday, September 27 - 9:32 PM/Researcher to School D**

Great to hear there is progress....and yes, you are correct....for a student with a diagnosed disability retaining them for a year will not miraculously fix the disability. I seldom, basically next to never, encourage retention past first grade. There are very rare exceptions, but for a child who has been in school, has a diagnosed special need, and age appropriate, I just don't recommend it. There is nothing in the research that supports retention as being beneficial after the age of 6 or 7. Keep your chin up. I know your journey is still difficult, but know that we are all keeping you in our prayers. Be sure to reach out via the chalkboard too. We are all here to support.

**CKBRD/Monday, September 27 – 9:34 PM/Researcher to School A**

All of his videos are outstanding. You can buy several of them now on amazon.com used for far less than new ones. Granted you take a risk of a glitch, but sharing them with faculty over time is a wonderful way to educate them. I will need to put together a former policy for you. I will work on that this week. As far as making your teachers more at easy, per my thought on F.A.T. City is still the best bet. At least, that is where I would start. If that doesn't work.....well, let me know if it does not.

**SKYPE/Tuesday, September 28 – 4:00 5:00 PM/Participants: School A, B, D & E**

Participant B: The participant reported that modifications in math are being made for the first time in sixth grade classrooms. The upper middle school team is beginning to open their eyes and are willing to try something new. She believes this is a success story. As the school year was still underway, she did not have any questions at this time.

Participant D: The participant indicated that she had lots of questions at her new student/parent meeting. It was a great time to clarify the program for families. She asked about a good resource for fetal alcohol syndrome. The researcher provided her with the information. The participant reported that she is working on getting the forms done which are needed to formalize steps of the program. She has not been able to establish a SST committee to assist in working with student prior to entering the program. She asked how to help a parent with memory issues. She needs to meet with the parent regularly, but the parent can't remember to visit the RSP room each day after school. The group shared the idea to have the regular ed teacher remind and possibly walk the parent over to the room as the participant can't get to the classroom each day.

Participant A: Both participants from school A participated in the Skype call. They had met with the superintendent and have been asked to bring a wish list for the program. One item they would like is a full-time speech pathologist. They also believe they do need to meet more frequently with the superintendent. They asked the researcher for a contact for website development. The researcher provided them with some names of people she knew. The participants reported on a successful due process which was held with the public schools. The parents had won the due process and the child will receive funding to attend their school. The researcher inquired about a comment made during the

summer institute regarding a school district in their area not offering FAPE prior to families having to make a decision about whether or not to return their child to public school for special education services. The participants reported that this will have to be dealt with by their archdioceses legal team.

Participant F: The participant indicated that she has been approved to seek fund raising for the program. She has two volunteers so far to assist her with this. She is thinking about using the *Best Buddy* program to assist her students in getting out into the community. The group shared their own experiences about using this group. In addition, the researcher shared that she believed there is a minimum number of students that she must have in order to access the program.

**CKBRD/Tuesday, September 28 - 6:50/Researcher to School D**

Per our conversation today, feel free to connect on one another's threads. Just be sure to put your school questions and comments on your thread so that I can address them accordingly. Hope that helps.

**CKBRD/Tuesday, September 28 – 8:39 PM/School D**

How do we "reach out via the chalkboard"? I missed that piece somehow. Thanks

**CKBRD/Monday, September 29 - 1:57 PM/School E**

I'm sorry I wasn't able to make it last night but hope everyone's discussion was good!

Our committee is working to develop the Resource program further and the student study team will be considered a part of the Resource program. I think it would be great to have a classroom teacher on the committee too. The workshop was actually run by “the participants from school A”. They did a great job. One of our Resource teachers was able to attend. That was great to give her a chance to hear about the student study teams.



Now, when we start talking about that more at school, there will be another person on the faculty that will have some background knowledge too. We'll be sending home letters to parents of children who will be receiving support from the Resource team on a regular basis. I'm guessing that you have sent similar letters to communicate with parents with the programs that you have worked with and I was wondering if you could share any samples that you have? Or if anyone else has any sample letters? Our Resource teachers are also using a new instructional method this year with some of our students within Language Arts called the Wilson Reading System. It involves taking the students off curriculum/grade level for phonics, spelling, and oral reading. So we need to send home an additional letter to these parents to explain how Wilson works and to give them some background information on Wilson. I was wondering if you have done anything like this before and if so, if you have any sample letters that you might be able to share.

**CKBRD/Wednesday, September 29 - 9:48 PM/School D**

Could you please give me the name of that book you referenced and some reputable sites to find information about this. I am still searching for my info, must be in the valley.

Thanks.

**CKBRD/Monday, October 4 - 7:52 PM/Researcher to School E**

Researcher to School E: Sounds like you are moving forward in a positive direction. I have a question before responding about the sample letters....Have the parents for both the resource program and the Wilson program been contacted personally? Sending out a letter with no fore warning or discussion can be very dangerous. So, I would highly recommend this be done first....and it should be done by the classroom teacher of each of the students along with rationale for the program placement.

**CKBRD/Monday, October 4 - 7:57 PM/Researcher to School D**

Per my email, I've been ill since we spoke. I did not go into the university today, and am on the road much of tomorrow. One of the books I am thinking of is on my bookshelf in my office. This one is available on amazon.com used for as little as a penny: The Broken Cord: A Family's Ongoing Struggle With Fetal Alcohol Syndrome by Michael Dorris.

As far as a reliable link: <http://www.nofas.org/>. Hope those help. Keep me posted.

**CKBRD/Thursday, October 7 - 3:06 PM/School E**

We sent home the letters on Monday but I would still be interested in seeing any samples that you have for next year. Some of the parents had been contacted before; some had not. One parent was very upset about not being contacted before but I hadn't heard of other parents. Most of the teachers were planning on sending an email or note home the same day or the next day if they hadn't already. Before we sent the letters, I had been thinking about how to best communicate the desire for a child to receive extra support through our Resource Program. What are your thoughts? We have done different things in the past so I wasn't sure what would be the best way but I knew that it would be important to communicate the need and our commitment as classroom teachers and resource teachers that we are working together as a team. I did think about whether the classroom teacher should make the first contact? Do we even need to send a formal letter from the school or is the classroom teacher's communication sufficient? Should Resource, including pushing-in, not begin until the parents are contacted? Our Resource Teachers are so eager to begin at the beginning of the school year. They will be waiting awhile to start while the classroom teacher is assessing the students to identify needs and then contacting the parents. It might just be that next year we won't start instruction

within Resource until sometime in October. Do you have any suggestions of how to get it going sooner? The Resource Teachers can help with the assessing but it will probably still take a couple of weeks to have a good sense of the children's abilities and needs. We haven't sent home any letters to the students in Grades 5-8 yet. But we will have the subject area teachers communicate to the parents about the need for Resource before a formal letter goes home. What should we do if the Resource teacher pushes into a classroom and works with some students on an occasional basis, like every other week? Would you recommend anything different if the Resource teacher works with students on an occasional basis but pulls-out instead of pushes-in? How should we go about communicating this to the parents?

**CKBRD/Friday, October 8 - 6:45 PM/Researcher to School E**

Thanks for your lengthy insight. It really is very important that communication regarding concerns first comes from the student's primary teacher. It does not surprise me that you have had a least on upset parent. Here is what I would suggest per your questions above....

1. If these students are struggling, their teachers should already be working with them and communicating with parents regarding their concerns.
2. If teachers are struggling to find ways to assist students, this is when the SST comes into play. This is where you begin to identify students and get parent involvement. That way, parents are not so surprised when they learned their child needs additional support.
3. As you identify students this year, they will continue to receive resource support as they start a new school year. So, your resource teachers will have a list of

students for the start of school. This is the only year you should find yourself with a slow start.

4. Resource teachers should go in to classrooms. Yes, they can do this without notification of all parents. If they are simply going in to assist teachers without singling out specific students, this is fine. It's great to as the resource teacher and the gen ed teacher learn from one another and can more easily collaborate.
5. I don't have any sample letters as I have not taken the approach that you are taking. Once parents have been working with their gen ed teachers and moved into the SST....this is when I would pick them up. I would meet with them personally by making a phone call and connecting with them. Remember that when you are telling a parent that their child may have a difficulty, you have started the grieving process for parent. I do not believe that a letter can provide parents with the warmth and understanding that they need. I found that meeting with them was highly beneficial and got us on the same page.

I know meetings take time, but this is when your resource teachers begin to make relationships with the families they are going to work with for probably quite some time. Let me know your thoughts.

**CKBRD/Monday, October 11 - 3:45 PM/School A**

We held a PD day today focused entirely on special needs! We began the day watching FAT City as a faculty and then debriefing the video. It was neat to see reactions from both those who have seen it before as well as those new to the video. We followed the video with a guest speaker, a psychologist who has tested and diagnosed many of our students. He shared some insight into "red flags" of LD's, strong descriptions of common

LD's, as well as a time for teachers to ask lots of great questions! It was also a great chance to affirm the faculty at our school on how far they have come in such a short time period. "My colleague" and I both have upcoming PD workshops at various schools around the Archdiocese... The goal for tonight- playing with Kurzweil and all that it can accomplish for our students!

**CKBRD/Wednesday, October 13 - 6:48/School E**

School E: Sounds good. Thanks for your ideas. I'm looking forward to setting up the SST so that we can have some continuity from year to year. I think that will help a lot.

**CKBRD/Sunday, October 17 - 1:39 PM/Researcher to School E**

Once you get a routine set up, yes things will become smoother and more dependable. Let me know what you decide to do with the letters. I am interested to see what you decide.

**CKBRD/Sunday, October 17 - 1:45 PM/Researcher to School A**

Wanted to get back to you on your tape recording question. You don't need to make a formal statement about taping recording lessons. If you include it as one of the accommodations you provide students that is all you need to do. Put it on the website and in the parent handbook. This is one of the programs I built: (website link provided). I left the school back in 2006, so they have made changes since that time. However, they have continued to provide accommodations. I believe there is more detail in the parent/student handbook, but this page on the website provides insight to those in your program as well as those who are not. It also provides teachers with the knowledge of expectations. Let me know what you think.

**CKBRD/Sunday, October 17 - 3:01 PM/School A**

Thanks Julie! I like the idea of listing out some of the accommodations that seem reasonable to us, as long as the list is not seen as exhaustive. “My colleague” and I will need to think about how we can best incorporate this information into our website (which we didn't build and can't change without going through the Powers That Be). We can definitely add something to the handbook for next year, as well. I wonder if an addendum is ever added to a handbook in situations like this???

**CKBRD/Monday, October 18 - 7:49 PM/Researcher to School A**

Kurzweil is incredible!!! You will need a wealth of volunteers though. Publishers have begun to create the books in a Kurzweil format so that you can simply upload the book into the program. For the most part though, most books have to be scanned in one at a time. Be sure to check with your Kurzweil rep though. My experience has been that schools are willing to share the files they have already scanned in to their systems. Your rep will probably know what is available.

Enjoy!

**CKBRD/Monday, October 18 – 7:55 PM/Researcher to School A**

Instead of an addendum, could you do an article in the school newsletter. Run it 3 or 4 times over the school year. Simply talk about what is happening in your program - a little different each time. Then add the list of reasonable accommodations. This would bring awareness about the program without sending up a red flag that something is changing.

Does that make sense?

**CKBRD/Tuesday, October 19, 5:32 PM**

School A: Sure...I will see what “my colleague” thinks. Thanks!

**CKBRD/Wednesday, October 20 - 6:02 PM/School E**

Hope that you are feeling better! We'll make sure that the general education teacher contacts the parents before any letter is sent home. For right now, I think we are planning to use the letters once an initial parent contact is made. We will evaluate the effectiveness of sending a letter and see if we want to make changes for the future. I wanted to see if you have any advice on how to set up confidential files well? I am starting to go through them. One of our Resource teachers and guidance counselor have also been helping. We already have a secure place and have some files set up for students who were with us last year but we had over 100 new students enroll this year. This is a good time for us to start any new practices.

**SKYPE/ October 26 – 4:00 – 5:00 PM/Participants: A & E**

Participant A: The participant indicated that she does not have any red flags to reported right now. She reported that the teacher who was refusing to have her lectures tape recorded was simply given no choice in the manner. The teacher was going to comply, but the participant indicated she anticipates some flack. She is looking into universal design as a teaching model. The researcher provided her with a website link on universal design. The participant is working on in-serving in January to begin to front load staff/faculty for the next school year.

Participant E: The participant asked about ideas on how to develop the confidential files for her students with special needs. The researcher shared some of the methods she had used in the past and indicated that she would attach files on the communication chalkboard. School A shared a color dot system which they have found beneficial.

Participant E then inquired about progress report forms for students in the program. The

researcher sent her suggestions/files via the communication chalkboard. It was also suggested that following an IEP meeting/assessment with the public schools that participant E should schedule a follow up meeting with the parents to review the report approximately one week after the public school meeting. This provides time for the parents to process the information and for the school to determine to what degree they can fulfill the recommendations from the public school.

**CKBRD/Wednesday, October 27 - 4:07 PM/Researcher to School E**

Great to chat with you yesterday. Per our conversation I have attached accommodation samples and file dividers. I always enjoy feedback, so do let me know your thoughts.

**CKBRD/Monday, November 8 -11:51 AM/School D**

October was a very busy month- there was standardized testing school wide, parent teacher conferences, and end of the first quarter. All of these things bring new student names up to the resource teacher. Also on the church level three perspective pastors were brought to my school for a few days by the call committee, so many meetings to get to meet them. Voters meeting in a week to maybe issue a call to one of the pastors. Then there was the major behavior incidents of one of our current students. All this just added a few more plates to the resource teacher's platter. What we wound up doing was having a meeting with all concerned with the behavior issues and the student and discussed the philosophy of why there is a resource program at my school and "what this says about Salem as a school." I actually had a teacher state the above question and it was not in a positive frame. (I believe the reason, is that they feel the student is threatening their power as teacher--my take on the situation) I also have had 2 meetings with "my local school district" regarding students- One was a student study team meeting where I was



successful in getting them to do a full psycho-educational eval on a fifth grader, who had a private psychologist do one in second grade, but needed to have it updated, and the second one is an evaluation on our down syndrome student. Mom really wants to see what her public options might be. Also began direct instruction of math to a 5th grader who is below in the 25th percentile in everything but geometry on the Key Math. Need to do some screenings on three students referred after p/t conferences. (Did not build testing time into my schedule at the beginning of the year, ouch.)

**SKYPE/November 10 – 4:00 – 4:30 PM/Participant D**

She indicated that information posted on the November 8<sup>th</sup> on the chalkboard was very helpful. Her staff/faculty continue to convey that the RSP students are bringing behavior problems to the school. Teachers are demonstrating that they are having power struggles with their students. In addition, a local educator has begun to assess students again. Yet, this educator is not using standardized assessments to diagnose students. The reports that this educator is producing are conflicting with the formal assessments already completed on students and is bringing the participant students who may not need the resource program. It was suggested that a strong policy/procedure be developed and posted so that parents know what is expected in educational assessments. The researcher and participant discussed the need to share the vision and purpose the program with the school community at-large. The participant reported that the vision and purpose are now posted in the office and newsletter, but she has not been given time to share at a staff/faculty meeting. She is beginning to put together a parent group to support the program and develop parents who can advocate for the program in the school community. The participant reported that holding teachers responsible for serving the children with

special needs falls to her as the RSP. When asked about getting administrative support and directive, she shared that the administrator has been doing double duty as the church is without a called pastor. She does believe the administrator would support her more fully if he was not so busy. Yet, she also indicated that the administrator seems to deal with the issues on the surface and not on a deeper level. She asked how she could get more support as the teachers do not always believe her – or at least that is what is perceived as the regular ed teachers do not carry out what she requests. The researcher suggested bringing in outside resources/professionals that can talk on needed topics and indicate what regular ed teachers need to be doing.

**CKBRD/Friday, November 12 - 4:47 PM/School F**

Oh gosh - I just realized I missed another Skype call on Wednesday right? I'm so sorry. I will be sure to be there for the next one! Things are pretty busy. We are launching a 'Spread the Word to End the R-Word' Campaign. We are producing 3 videos for chapel announcements, ordering t-shirts for the mentors and other stuff that sounds simpler ahead of time than it turns out to be. We're also beginning new sports seasons and trying to build relationships with new coaches. Things related to athletics are a lot more intense now that I have 3 students in high school!

**CKBRD/Friday, November 12 - 9:43 PM/Researcher to School F**

You continue to do amazing things! I would love to see the videos if you are willing to share. Although intense with the athletics, this is the best avenue for many of our students to connect with teams as water boys, bat boys...and girls, of course, too. Girls can also be great members of cheer teams. Share more about your campaign. Love the

title of the campaign. We have two Skype sessions still ahead. Wednesday the 17th and Tuesday the 23rd. Well, tell us more about the campaign!

**CKBRD/Tuesday, November 16 - 1:19 PM/School A to School D**

We have been dealing with some major behavioral stuff, too, with one of our students. I can't decide if it is medication related or the bigger environment, with so many more students to be irritated by. He has been physically aggressive and threatening (even though he is the smallest one in the room). We have a meeting coming up to put a specific plan in place that includes behavioral management, closer contact with the family, and regular contact with the outside therapist (who can then deal with the psychiatrist). If that doesn't work, who knows...I hate to write off a third grader! Good luck!

**CKBRD/Tuesday, November 16 – 6:23 PM/School E**

Thanks for the forms. The dividers may be helpful although most of our students do not have very large files just yet. As we progress, though, from year to year, we may need to use them. Thank you for the Planning Form, too. It is similar to the one from our Archdiocese, from the Mary Jos and Pam, that I have used in the past and will probably use school-wide soon.

Things are moving along for us and it has been reassuring to see some things start to fall into place. We are going to be setting up some professional development for our teachers soon on the student study teams. Speaking informally with my colleagues it sounds like they are interested and motivated in setting up the team. This evening I had an opportunity to speak with our School Board to give them a report on our Resource Program. I shared with them what our main purpose is for our Resource Program as well

as some of the new aspects to our Program for this year and where we are headed. We recently received a \$40,000 grant for our Resource Program so I was able to talk about that good news with the Board as well. We have an amazing Development Staff member who is very successful at writing grants and securing them for our school. This grant was written to help us expand our program from one part-time teacher to two teachers, one full-time and one part-time. One question that I had that as teachers we knew was bound to happen as we progressed through the school year is handling students who were performing satisfactorily earlier in the year but are now struggling. Do you have any advice on how to handle these cases especially when the Resource Teachers already have full schedules?

**SKYPE/November 17 – 4:00 – 5:00 PM/Participants A, B, D, E, & F**

Participant F: The participant shared about the “r-word” campaign. She indicated that there would be three video chapels shown to the student body and developed by her students’ mentors. She also shared that her high school students want to continue to play sports as they did in elementary and middle school. However, state laws regarding GPA and concerns from parents of typical parents are preventing this from happening. The high school coaches are also having difficulty in figuring out how to address these requests. Parents of the students with special needs want their child “in the game”.

Participant D suggested running scrimmages so that all could participate. Participant F indicated that parents want them in the real games. This is the first year she has high school students and realizes this will not be easily resolved. She also indicated that they have approval for their annual fundraiser – a BBQ – which brings in substantial funding for the program. She is also working on a “big” grant.

Participant B: The participant indicated that she had been given a large number of tickets to a community event, which she and her students were able to sell as a fundraiser. She had raised \$800 for the program. She had attended a special education conference the month before and reported on what she learned about working memory and the future of diagnosing learning disabilities through DNA and gene analysis. Per her report, this is cutting edge research that is occurring. Participant D reported that she also very frustrated. She asked the group for input about the math programs they are using and which ones they had found to be beneficial. Several math strategies and curriculums were shared. The participant reported that she is seeing “huge deficits” in the area of math. It was suggested that she group her students by achievement levels rather than by grade level in order to provide more intense instruction. The participant indicated that these students did not attend summer school to receive remediation instruction.

Participant E: She shared the big news about the \$40,000 grant she had received. Not everyone had read about it on the CC. They will use the grant to expand their staffing for the program. She inquired as to how to assist when student pop up in fall needing help. She wanted to know how to screen these students in August. The group shared that once the program becomes more established, this will occur less and less. In addition, the participant was remind that the learning curve changes at different grade levels and often students are able to maintain the academic growth until the learning curve becomes too great.

Participant A: She updated the group that the board has passed that at least one board member will be a parent of a special needs child. She was very excited about this update. The participant reported that the board had agreed to develop a webpage on the school’s

website to specifically address their special needs program. It will include a parent blog. As principal, she is requiring her staff/faculty to read an assigned book over the summer. She will set up a Facebook page in order to develop a conversation about the book with her staff/faculty. She asked how to evaluate special education teachers. She wanted to know how other schools do this – both public and private. She is not a special education expert and is unsure how to evaluate her teachers. The researcher shared with the group that this is a challenge in both public and private schools for all school administrators. Student progress, communication with parents, collaboration/consultation with staff/faculty and program development are areas that can be assessed to determine effectiveness.

Participant D: The participant reported that they are at the end of the quarter. She has six new students to assess based on the parent teacher conferences. She needs to meet with these parents. Primary concerns are attention. She currently has two students being tested by the public schools. She had an IEP with the public schools last week to discuss FAPE. Not much else to report. No questions at this time.

**SKYPE/November 30 – 4:00 – 5:00 PM/Participants School A, B, D, E, & F**

School D: Participant had just found out that she has a third grader being tested with the public school district. No one at the school knew that the family had been working with the public schools. The participant does not know the student. When asked if there was a published policy/procedure in place in the student/parent/faculty handbook, the participant indicated there was not. The researcher indicated that this needs to happen and the participant responded by indicating that the goal was to have policy/procedures in place for next year.

School F: The participant shared that the 3<sup>rd</sup> video chapel on getting rid of the “r-word” was shown to the student body. When asked to review the chapels, she indicated the first video was developed by the 22 mentors for her students. It focused on how offensive the “r-word” is. The second chapel video was about how siblings feel when their brothers and sisters are picked on for being different. The third video was a time for students to share their stories about how much they are alike rather than different. The participant was asked about her grant progress. She indicated that they were still working on the grants and will continue to do so. There is on-going discussion and question as to who to involve her students as athletes in the high school program. Currently her students are working out with the team. Typical peers are being very supportive and the students are learning from one another.

School E: The participants reported that her school is starting the SST process and training. She is hearing positives from her staff reflecting that having a process in place will be good. A more formal structured team will be beneficial as there will be consist steps. She also indicated that information previous provided about cross-grade input will be beneficial.

Participant: A: She indicated that they are busy, busy, busy. She has met up with the counseling group that consults with their catholic schools. She learned that the counselors in her Catholic school system did not know about the program at her school. She was surprised by this. She was looking forward to a meeting with the superintendent in order to outline next steps in developing a second program at another school. Her current school site program has a waiting list. The additional program will be open in the fall and students on the waiting list along with their siblings will have preferential

admission. Until the program opens, students on the waiting list must use outside resources. School A participant indicated that she is learning more about her staff/faculty. She has begun to identify which of her staff/faculty are implementing with their heart or who is not. Some staff/faculty were not on board at the beginning of the school year, but now more are getting on board.

Participant B: The participant shared her concerns about no one on her staff/faculty reaching out to her prior to parent/teacher conferences. She had expected some kind of communication in order to consult/collaborate regarding shared students. There are no policies in place as to students failing courses who are also enrolled in her special needs program. The group discussed and shared concerns that there are no policies in place and that this needs to occur. Participants who have such policies along with the researcher shared ideas.