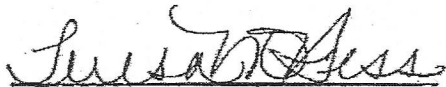


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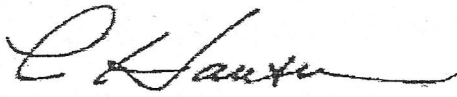
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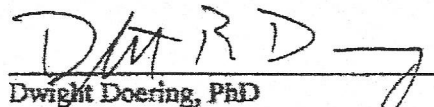


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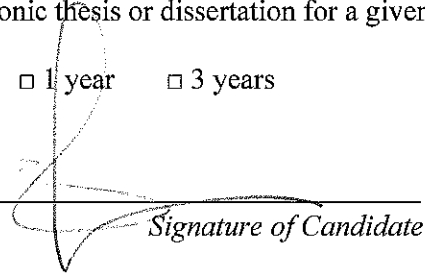
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A MIXED METHODS STUDY OF CHARTER SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS'
PERSPECTIVES OF EFFECTIVE INCLUSION PRACTICES

by

Nnenna Okpara

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ABSTRACT

In the early 1990s, the educational system in the U.S. began to change with the advent of publicly-operated charter schools. In recent years, there has been a surge in parents opting for this type of alternative educational setting to meet the needs of their students. This increase in enrollment did not preclude students with disabilities. This research study specifically examined charter school leadership perspectives regarding the inclusion model as it relates to accountability standards, service delivery trends and models, and general education professional development. It is important to measure the efficacy of these elements and their compliance with education law as it relates to students with disabilities. Few studies have been conducted in the area of compliance of programs for students with disabilities in charter schools, and therefore, this study serves as an exploration into these publicly run but misunderstood segments of the educational environment. The major findings of this study report that from the perspective of the charter school administrators, there is compliance with the method used to serve students with disabilities. In terms of the scope of the study, 38 participants completed this study with a 100% completion rate. The service delivery models differ from site to site, but in essence, all operate in good faith to serve their students with disabilities.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Across the United States in the last two or three decades, charter schools have increasingly become one of the most frequently used alternative educational settings for parents to send their children (Schneider & Buckley, 2003). Charter schools are described as settings that have more autonomy than traditional public schools; they determine their own budgets, class and school size, staffing levels, curriculum choices and the length of the school day and year (Bifulco, Ladd, & Duke Univ., 2004; Crane, Edwards, & EdSource, 2007; Shober, Manna, & Witte, 2006). There are two types of charter schools: (a) public schools that are part of a school district and (b) private charter schools run by a company that competes for the same funding as public schools. The charter schools that are affiliated with public school districts are open and free of charge to all grades K-12 or any combination of those grades (Algozzine, 2005; Finn, Caldwell, & Raub, 2006; Shealy, Sparks, & Thomas, 2012; Zollers & Ramanathan, 1998). The scope of this study will include only charter schools affiliated with public school districts. The increase in parents opting for the charter school setting for their students has been attributed to a general dissatisfaction with the public school setting and, therefore, parents are seeking alternative choices (Shober et. al, 2006). They cite reasons such as desiring smaller class size or schools with specific expertise that appeal to them or their children. Charter schools typically establish some admission requirement related to curriculum complements, such as art or dance, or other criteria not generally related to academic proficiency that sets them apart from the other schools in the area. Parents and students sign a contract indicating they support the school's standards. Enrollment at these schools is not limited to "typically" functioning students but is also inclusive of students with disabilities. This pattern of students with disabilities enrolling at charter schools must be adequately investigated to ensure that both the legal and academic requirements are being met.

Statement of the Problem

With charter school enrollment on the rise in schools across the United States, it is important to explore the efficacy of special education services provided to students with disabilities in charter school settings. All charter schools, like other public schools, are charged with the delivery comparable educational programs. The federal guidelines and mandates that guide public education must be followed. The researcher will explore the service delivery models implemented in charter schools from the perspective of charter school site administrators. The practice of students who are disabled learning in inclusive environments with their non-disabled peers has been found to be out of compliance in many public schools around where the researcher works in an administrative capacity. Students with disabilities show an achievement rate that is lower than the national expectations and practices. Districts have therefore begun to work to improve this trend of low achievement amongst students with disabilities. In 1997, California was found to be out of compliance by the federal government with their rate of inclusive practices (Adams, n.d.). Specifically, as a state, they reported educating more students with disabilities in non-inclusive, segregated classrooms than other states (Adams, n.d.). They lagged behind other states, such as New York, which included students with special needs with their typical peers, in general education classrooms at a much higher rate (Adams, n.d.). California school districts concerned with this finding have begun examining strategies to improve their inclusive practices rate in traditional schools. Conversely, charter schools have included students with disabilities at a higher rate. It is for this reason that their inclusion practices could potentially serve as a model for other public schools (Adams, n.d.).- Implementation routines and norms at these charter school sites could further improve the knowledge of other public school administrators who are beginning to explore this protocol.

Purpose of the Study

Inclusion of students with learning disabilities with their peers in a general education classroom is a critical element of the inclusive education model (Kirby, 2017). Inclusion provides students with disabilities the opportunity to learn side by side with other general education peers. Additionally, peers without disabilities equally develop character, tolerance, and awareness of diversity (Kirby, 2017). With legislation, such as the new Elementary and Secondary Act, schools are moving towards integrating and incorporating a mixture of general and special education students into assimilated classrooms more than they ever have in the past (Salend & Duhaney, 1999). According to data from the U.S. Department of Education (1996), there were approximately 73% of students with disabilities who received their instructional program in both general education classroom and resource settings and another 95% of the students with disabilities who received their education in solely general education settings (Salend & Duhaney, 1999). “The percentage of total public school enrollment that represents children served by federally supported special education programs increased from 8.3 percent to 13.8 percent between 1976–77 and 2004–05. Much of this overall increase can be attributed to a rise in the percentage of students identified as having specific learning disabilities from 1976–77 (1.8 percent) to 2004–05 (5.7 percent). The overall percentage of students being served in programs for those with disabilities decreased between 2004–05 (13.8 percent) and 2012–13 (12.9 percent)” (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). This research study will examine administrators’ perspectives on effective inclusion practices for students designated as special education students in charter schools.

Inclusion in special education further represents a philosophy of acceptance where diversity among all people is welcomed, valued, and respected. It has been suggested that

inclusion of students with special needs in schools (known as inclusive education) should be observed as an educational practice where all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, ethnic, cultural or economic conditions, are supported and accommodated for them to achieve their potential as students (Wah, 2010). According to Wah (2010), inclusive education represents the provision of equal educational and social opportunities to all children in schools. While the practice of inclusion in public schools is less prevalent than in charter schools, its implementation nonetheless varies in the latter because of the spectrum of school sizes and available resources represented.

This research study aims to interview charter school administrators for their perspective on inclusive practices at their school sites. This research study will examine the effectiveness and efficacy of the inclusion of students with disabilities in the charter school setting. The discrepancies between the principles and goals of inclusion for special education students and their actual practice will be a particular area of focus.

Research Questions

This research study will specifically examine charter school leadership perspectives regarding inclusive education as it relates to standards accountability, service delivery trends and models, and general education professional development. The questions of this research study are:

1. How do charter school administrators implement and address the special education program at their school site?
2. What are the different strategies and dynamics charter school administrators cultivate with respect to other public school practices?

3. How do charter schools align with the law of inclusive practices for special needs students?

Theoretical Framework

With the emphasis on accountability in special education programs in California, school administrators are faced with the challenge of developing and implementing balanced inclusive educational programs for their students who are designated as having special education needs. Mayo (2015) discusses the need to examine issues specifically relating to compliance in California's various charter schools. Mayo analyzes how charter schools endeavor to be compliant with the Education Code and other relevant laws that guide the charter oversight. Compliance is also a central issue for the federal law, IDEA, which directs the instructions of children with disabilities who are at the root of this study. This law requires that a significant effort to be made in educating students with disabilities in inclusive environments (Stodden, 2011). To address the theoretical framework for this study, the researcher will specifically examine the requirements of IDEA.

IDEA

Revised in 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) does not explicitly require inclusion practices (Archived: History of the IDEA, n.d.). The law requires that students with special education needs be instructed in the least restrictive environment appropriate to match their unique educational needs. The law asserts that the least restrictive environment should begin with a regular classroom and then the trajectory moves to an environment with embedded supports. It also recognizes that, due the severity of some students' (Archived: History of the IDEA, n.d.) disabilities, it may not be possible to educate them in the general classroom; as a result, a continuum of placements exists in special education. The law therefore requires that

school districts offer a variety of placements to meet the needs of the students with disabilities in order to accommodate their unique educational needs. Using the continuum concept, students are placed in an educational setting that would be most appropriate to meet their specific learning need (Hunt, 2011). The law indicates an expectation that students with disabilities be educated in the least restrictive environments. The primary driving focus in developing Individualized Educational Programs (IEP) is student educational need (13 Conditions, n.d.). The IEP team, comprised of educators, parents and relevant service providers, must begin consideration for student placement in regular education classrooms and then move through the continuum of placements should the regular education classroom not be appropriate (Baker, 2010). An explanation is required when a general education setting is not appropriate. The purpose of these requirements is to carry out the intention of the IDEA, which is to instruct all students with disabilities as plausible in the regular education classroom, while still meeting their unique, individual needs. It has, therefore, become important that charter school administrators, as well as public school administrators, develop special policies and procedures that exemplify appropriate and sufficient inclusive practices.

Significance of the Study

Given the continued growth of the charter school sector (Estimated Charter, 2017) and the relative prevalence of inclusive education in this alternative setting, the efficacy of such systems as it relate to students with special educational needs to be examined in a more in-depth manner. With California exploring strategies to better serve students with disabilities in the inclusive setting (Crank & Deshler, 2001), this study contributes to the range of possible strategies for school districts implementing or beginning to implement inclusive practices. Students with disabilities often have more academic and social discrepancies (Crank & Deshler, 2001), and this

is a vulnerable population. Services for students who are disabled need to be methodically carefully evaluated to assure effectiveness and efficacy. It is critical to assess these systems to determine whether the service delivery trends and quality of instruction that students with disabilities are receiving in charter schools are equivalent to the public schools and the expectation of the law.

Definition of Terms

To avoid confusion, this study provides definitions and delineations to distinguish between special education terms and other education terms discussed in the study.

Charter Schools (in North America) are publicly-funded independent schools established by teachers, parents, or community groups under the terms of a charter with a local or national authority.

Terms and definitions not identified as relating to charter schools only are understood to be applicable to all schools.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): NCLB is legislation passed in 2001 that emphasized the importance of students with disabilities having access to general education and participating in the same state and district accountability systems as their classmates who do not have disabilities. NCLB was a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Every Student Succeeds, 2017).

IDEA: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a legal mandate which addresses the educational needs of children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2016),

Inclusion: Inclusion education is an educational format in which students with disabilities are instructed in an environment with their non-disabled peers. It includes delivering support services to the student and expects only that the student benefits from being in the class.

Mainstreaming: Mainstreaming is terminology used to describe the selective placement of special education students in one or more “regular” education classes. This service delivery model serves to integrate students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers in a learning environment. There are benefits for both student populations, disabled and non-disabled (Johnson & Busby, 2015; Bakken, 2016; Stanovich, 1999).

Full Inclusion: Full inclusion is a service delivery model where all students, regardless of a handicapping condition or severity of such condition, are placed in a regular classroom/program full time. In this environment, there is an expectation that all services must be provided to the student in that setting. *Co-Teaching:* This term refers to a teaching partnership between a general education teacher and a special education teacher in which both teachers have equal responsibility for delivering content-level instruction to both general education students and special education students.

General Education Students: These students are characterized as typical learners without Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs).

General Educator: A general educator is a teacher certified to teach a specific subject matter in the classroom and does not necessarily include a special education population.

English Language Learner (ELL): This is a student who has not demonstrated proficiency in English. This student typically benefits from specially designed academic program as part of their educational program.

Typical Learner: This is a student who is not designated as an English Learner (EL) and who does not have an IEP.

Special Education Students: These are students who receive an individualized educational program, also known as IEPs. These students qualify for such programming based on a designation of a disability(ies) that shows a discrepancy between student ability and performance.

Special Educator: This is a teacher (education specialist) who is certified to instruct students with IEPs.

Charter School: A charter school is any public school operating under a performance contract with an authorizer, regardless of school management structure—for example whether a local group, an educational management organization, etc. manage the school.

Charter School Board: This term refers to a group of people, whether elected or appointed, that have the authority to govern the school, usually accountable to the authorizer. They are also referred to as the charter holder.

Limitations of the Study

There were limitations to this research study due to the sample size of the number of charter school administrators in California that were available to be surveyed. This research study focused on a specific geographical area in Southern California. Despite the aforementioned limitations, this research study provided important insight into the opinions of charter school administrators in regard to their current inclusion practices for students designated as disabled. The practice of combining students with disabilities in the general education classroom is a practice that is increasing (Marston & Heistad, 1994; Orakci, Aktan, Toraman, & Cevik, 2016; Kirby, 2017), and therefore, it is critical that educators find an effective and efficient means of maintaining this system.

Delimitations of the Study

The delimitations utilized by the researcher in this research study were determined by a desire to gain a better understanding of the practices of charter schools in regard to-inclusive education for students that are disabled. In order to gain the perspective of charter school administrators, the researcher only sought participants in the study who were administrators in charter schools. The focus on charter school administrators in this research study was limited to public charter schools in California.

A second delimitation used by the researcher was the use of only schools in Southern California. This study does not explore other school administrator perspectives from neighboring counties outside of the Southern California region.

Assumptions

The following assumptions are included in this research study: (a) the selected charter school site administrators responded to the survey accurately and indicated their perceptions of inclusive practice and adherence to the laws regarding special education at their respective sites; (b) the selected charter school administrators understood the vocabulary and concepts associated with the special education services being analyzed; (c) the data collected measured accountability, service delivery trends and models of services provided to students with disabilities.

Organization of the Study

This research study is divided into five distinctive chapters. Chapter 1 reviews the background of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, definition of terms, theoretical framework, research questions, limitations, delimitations, and the assumptions related to the study.

Chapter 2 presents a comprehensive review of the literature, which explores the historical background of charter schools, the role of the administrator, inclusion practices, mainstreaming efficacy and charter school inclusion practices. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology and protocol used in this study. It includes sections that describe the selection of participants, instrumentation, data collection and data analysis procedures.

Chapter 4 displays the study's findings, which includes demographic information, testing the research questions, confirmatory factor analysis and results of the data analysis for the three research questions. Chapter 5 provides a thorough summary of the entire study, discussion of the findings, implications of the findings for theory and practice, recommendations for further research, and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Charter schools often have varying levels of regulatory relief that other public schools do not always have (Howe & Welner, 2002; McLaughlin & Rhim, 2007). The charter school is free from many existing mandates that typical districts follow, with the notable exception of mandates related to special education. Interestingly, even though they have some level of autonomy from existing educational mandates, they are subject to an increased accountability, which is driven by charter contracts (McLaughlin & Rhim, 2007). Each school is designed and operated by a unique board that implements its vision of a public school within a policy climate shaped by state charter and local practice (McLaughlin & Rhim, 2007). These are at the most basic level public entities funded by public tax dollars, and they must offer enrollment to all (Downing, Spencer, & Cavallaro, 2004; Howe & Welner, 2002; McLaughlin & Rhim, 2007).

Parents' ability to choose schools creates an environment that fosters the creation of successful new schools, which consequently drives existing public schools to improve to compete for students (McLaughlin & Rhim, 2007). Charter schools are developed at the state level with lawmakers drafting bills that allow for the creation of any number of charter schools throughout their respective states (EdReform, 2015). The laws passed by these individual states articulate the legal parameters within which charter schools can operate (Rhim, Ahearn, & Lange, 2006). Once the laws have been passed, then the respective charter schools, in turn, interpret and implement the educational policies into practice (EdReform, 2015). Consequently, the content of the charter law plays a large role in the relative success or failure of the charter schools that open within that state.

In reviewing the literature, four themes emerged. These themes include (a) role of the administrator, (b) inclusion practices at charter schools and typical public schools, (c) funding practices, and (d) educational law.

Historical Background of Charter Schools

Charter schools are a growing segment of the public education sector (Mayo, 2015; Rhim et al., 2006). The concept of charter schools began in the 1980s when school reform efforts were the focus of the public (Baily, 2004; Fierros & Blomberg, 2005; Howe & Welner, 2002; McLaughlin & Rhim, 2007; Nicotera, Teasley, Berends, & Vanderbilt University, 2007; Rhim et al., 2007). The charter school model that exists today arose from a law passed in Minnesota in 1991 (McLaughlin & Rhim, 2007). This law allowed parents to send their children to other public schools with state funding. At the time of its inception, it was the broadest open enrollment plan in the nation. Currently, forty-three states and the District of Columbia have enacted charter school laws, with Alabama being the latest in March 2015 (EdReform, 2015). There are, however, a total of seven states—Kentucky, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and West Virginia—that do not have charter school laws and, therefore, do not have such settings in their states. Following the Charter Schools Act of 1992, California became the second state, after Minnesota, to permit charters (Diamond, 1994; Dianda, 1995; Schnaiberg, 1998), and as of 2014, the charter school population numbered 1,180 schools, the largest in the nation and nearly eleven percent of all public schools in the state (Downing et al., 2004). Fifty-four of California's fifty-eight counties have charter options, and charters now serve more than 500,000 students, approximately seven percent of public school enrollment in the state (Mayo, 2015).

Charter School Authorizers

According to Fordham Urban Law Journal (2016), the California Education Code allows three entities the authority to approve and oversee charter schools. These entities are boards of local school districts, county school boards, and the State Board of Education. According to data from 2014, there are approximately 332 distinct charter authorizers in operation in California, with 282 operated and managed by local school districts (Fordham, 2016). Typically, the local school districts receive the bulk of initial charter petitions, with a few choosing to apply through the county or the State Board. Those seeking authorization through the state or county for initial authorization are required to provide additional evidence as to why the local district was not suitable for them.

Process for Initial Authorization and Renewal

The application process for the charter schools is lengthy. "Applicant charters in California fall primarily into two categories: (1) new "start-up" charters, which include single-sited schools run both by a group of individuals (colloquially known as "mom and pop" charters) and those under the supervision of charter management organizations (CMOs); and (2) traditional public schools that convert to charter status, or "conversion" charters" (Fordham, 2016). The start-up charter schools are required to submit an initial petition to the authorizer board notifying them of proposed location. They must also include at least 50% of the parents of the potential student body or faculty. In regard to schools that are being converted from a public school to a charter, 50% or more of the teachers at the site are required to endorse the petition (Fordham, 2016). Once a petition has been received and has met the preliminary requirements, the district is required to hold a public meeting inquiry within 30 days, and a decision is made to approve or deny the petition for a charter within 60 days. For denials, school boards are required to give

detailed reasons for the basis of denial. If approved, charters are granted a maximum term of five years, after which they must renew their charter with the authorizer (Fordham, 2016). The renewal process is a more in-depth and thorough performance review. Charters are required to demonstrate compliance with the educational, financial, and operational criteria that were required for initial authorization. It is important to note that student academic performance (as measured by the state-issued academic performance index [API] scores over time and by subgroup) is cited in the Education Code as the “most important factor” in determining renewal (Mayo, 2015).

Role of the Administrator

“The preparation of educational leaders contributes significantly to the quality of any school system” (Schaaf, Williamson, & Novak, 2015). Administrators at a school site are responsible for addressing the needs of a diverse student and teacher population (Schaaf et al., 2015). School leadership hierarchy is typically focused on instruction and curriculum management, beginning with the principal and ending with the classroom teacher (Schulz, Mundy, Kupczynski, & Jones, 2016). DuFour believes the principalship requires: (a) leadership with a shared vision and values, (b) the ability to empower stakeholders to take action toward the accomplishment of goals, (c) the ability to measure themselves on their ability to achieve goals, (d) the ability to provide teachers with information, training, and parameters to make good decisions, and (d) the capacity to provide guidance toward organic solutions (1999). In the recent years, an emphasis on improving effective leadership has been a focus in academic literature (Schaaf et. al, 2015). With this knowledge in the foreground, it is, therefore, critical that the role of an administrator within a school site be examined to provide further evidence for effective practices. Of all the roles that site administrators are responsible for, school leaders ranked the

administration of special programs and serving students with exceptional needs amongst the most of their responsibilities (Petzko, 2008). Understanding the current skill sets required of school leaders, especially when examining inclusive practices, would help ensure that the delivery models are effective.

Administrative leadership's attitude towards their population of students with disabilities is an important predictor of the school climate (Billingsley, 1993; Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002). The school leader's attitude reveals the school's values and has an effect on the type of climate that all their learners are exposed to. Research shows that effective school leaders concentrate on fundamental instructional issues, demonstrate substantial support for special education, and implement ongoing professional development. The academic outcomes for all students, especially those students with disabilities and others at risk, are dependent on those factors (Benz, Lindstrom, & Yovanoff, 2000; Brownell, Ross, Colon, & McCallum, 2003; Klingner, Arguelles, Hughes, & Vaughn, 2001).

The job of an effective principal is multifaceted, and there are key areas that must receive special leadership attention and support. First is the internal environment, which involves the students and staff on-site. Principals must ensure that the curriculum being implemented is appropriate and comprehensive to meet the needs of all the learners. The second area an effective leader must attend to is interaction with community stakeholders (Elmore, 2000; Tschannen-Moran, 2004). To be an efficient school leader, one must be able to manage these different components to ensure the ultimate goal of any school, which is to support student achievement, is being implemented.

Administrators' Training on Special Education Issues

As reported for schools in general, “A majority of administrators reported that they would have benefited from additional coursework regarding students with exceptionalities during their leadership preparation program” (Schaaf et al., 2015). They desired additional coursework focusing on behavior modification techniques, methods of instruction, assessments of exceptional students, IDEA, and other legal aspects of special education (Schaaf et al., 2015). Studies by Schaaf et. al (2015) and Karge and Lasky (2009) found that nearly half of administrators studied reported that they exited their leadership programs unprepared or only somewhat prepared for (a) facilitation of inclusive schedules, (b) collection of data for special education, (c) oversight of curriculum and alternative assessments for students with disabilities, (d) participation in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, and (e) addressing behavioral concerns. This leaves a question in the mind of the researcher as to how these ill-prepared administrators can evaluate the effective practice of inclusion at their respective sites. Administrators need and deserve adequate training when working with students who are disabled. Universities need to comprehensively educate administrative candidates so that they are prepared to meet the unique needs of such students. It is important that administrators have a clear understanding of their roles when working with this population. Ignorance about this sector of education could be indeed very costly to the respective sites, regarding financial and credibility costs. Schaaf et al. (2015) reported that special education was the most litigated educational issue. Parents and the law have an expectation that their students with special needs receive the appropriate services that they are entitled to under the law; if these expectations are not being met, school districts can and should be held accountable. Failure to adhere to the law can lead to negative consequences for the districts.

Leadership Role with Students with Disabilities

In recent times, there has been an observable shift from past practices of placing students with disabilities in socially isolated and segregated environments (Turnbull & Cilley, 1999). The current trend in many areas of the U.S., in response to national mandates, is for students with disabilities to be educated in environments that are integrated and inclusive. Unfortunately, California has been lacking in this area, and therefore non-compliant. The inclusive environment provides an opportunity for students who are disabled to learn in the same environment as their non-disabled peers (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future [NCTAF], 1996; Kirby, 2017; Parsons, Miller, & Deris, 2016). Therefore, with the immense effects that school leadership has on their entire school population, it is important that school leaders implement proven and research-based practices to improve all student performance (Embich, 2001; Noell & Witt, 1999). With regard to working specifically with students who are disabled, Lasky and Karge (2006) explicitly state that school principals must perform activities to be effective. These include having knowledge of special education parameters with regard to (a) effective instruction, (b) assessment and discipline protocols (c) the ability to support instructional teams, and (d) the ability to sustain a collaborative group involved where change agents are developed. In addition to the research by Karge & Lasky (2006), Goor, Schwenn, and Boyer (1997) discuss other crucial elements that school principals must have when working with their students that are disabled. According to Beyer and Johnson, the role of the school leader in the administration of special education programs has become more complex and multifaceted (2005). Beyer and Johnson (2005) discuss that the role of the school principal with special education programming must include: (a) appropriation of necessary space and resources; (b) participation in IEP meetings; (c) supervision of special education personnel; (d) management of student programming; (e)

knowledge of legal and ethical practices in special education programming; (f) implementation of current best practices; (g) creation of a supportive and accepting environment between all stakeholders; (h) supervision of the referral, eligibility, and placement process for students requiring specialized services; and (i) leadership skills especially in the areas of relationship-forming, problem-solving methods, conflict resolution, and outsourcing for expertise and assistance. Instructional leaders who understand all the nuances of working with students with disabilities, IDEA and NCLB requirements and effective practice are more able to provide students and teachers with a more balanced support. The recognition of the importance of more comprehensive academic planning, continued monitoring of progress, and making data-based decisions regarding students' programs supports the student population of their students with disabilities. Principals that follow the above-mentioned traits shows that they are committed to exhibiting structural integrity in classrooms for all of their learners. It is noted that the specific duties vary from district to district, but overall, the principal is seen as a critical figure in managing the school environment (Lashley & Boscardin, 2003; Sage & Burrello, 1994). It is important that principals are familiar with the district and community resources that needed to provide the appropriate education for students with unique learning needs (Hughes, 1999; Pankake & Fullwood, 1999). Administrators that are inadequately prepared cannot promote special education services in their settings. Research suggests that few school leaders are prepared to provide effective special education leadership (Monteith, 2000; Walther-Thomas, DiPaola, & Butler, 2002). This is problematic because in order for overall student achievement to be attained, effective leaders must be able to address the needs of their diverse population. More research needs to be conducted to help prepare administrators with meeting the legal and moral expectation for working with their students with disabilities. The preparation for administrators

needs to feature a more comprehensive plan to capitalize on the professional skills, knowledge, and experience of their learning environments (Gupton, 2003; Hughes, 1999). This ultimately helps schools create environments that are productive and focused on engagement strategies that support students' achievement (Heifetz, 1994; Kouzes & Posner, 1995).

In summary, it is important to note that principals widely indicate various challenges that they are faced with when implementing programs for students with disabilities that meet the requirement of the law when serving this specialized population (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas 2003). The reality is that most learning environments are diverse and the challenges in those environments must be addressed adequately with fidelity to the legal principles. It is the duty of the school leaders to demonstrate a willingness to support and understand and refine their programs for their special education programs. McLaughlin (2009) identified three characteristics of effective leaders in special education. School administrators need to have knowledge of federal and state special education rules as well as an understanding of instructional strategies and techniques utilized by special educators to ensure student achievement. They also need to create a school-wide culture that accepts and integrates all students, and identifies special education services and supports that provide students with access to the curriculum. Finally, school administrators need to ensure that students receiving special education services participate in state and local assessments and that data are utilized in the school improvement process.

Comparison of Charter Versus Traditional Principal Roles

The work of the charter school principal has not been as studied as has the traditional role of the principal in the public school environment. Due to the autonomy of charter learning institutions, there are many variables that are yet to be explicitly examined. In contrast, the work of a traditional public school principal has been studied and, therefore, there is more of an

understanding of their roles and practices. An assumption can be made that the functions of the traditional principal are very similar to the roles of the charter school principal. Hallinger & Heck (1996) describe the work of the traditional school principal as complex; it includes the managerial tasks necessary for effective school operations and leadership that support student learning. In addition to acting as instructional leaders, they must assure their school site shows compliance with bureaucratic and legal issues, particularly related to students with disabilities. They are also charged with the responsibility of assuring that student testing, accountability issues and developing and hiring competent teachers (DiPaola, Tschannen-Moran, & Walther-Thomas, 2004; Protheroe, 2008). Interestingly, the literature suggests principals spend most of their time on management tasks rather than on leadership related to instruction (Camburn, Spillane, & Sebastian, 2010; Horng, Kalogrides, Loeb, & Urban Institute, 2009). In the literature reviewed, the researcher found that the majority of public school principals' time was spent on administrative tasks related to students. These activities included (a) administering testing, scheduling, discipline, and student activities; (b) personnel issues (hiring, communicating, and problems solving); (c) organizational tasks (financing, scheduling, compliance issues, and building maintenance); and (d) instructional issues (monitoring/observing instruction, supporting teachers' professional development, analyzing student, data or work, modeling instructional practices, and teaching a class) (Lavigne, Shakman, Zweig, Greller, & Regional Educational Laboratory, 2016)

Comparatively, the role of a charter school principal is similar and different to some extent and, therefore, their concerns and use of their time may differ. Charter school principals, by the nature of their learning organizations, have more autonomy and, therefore, can show greater flexibility and variance in the decision-making at their school levels (Dressler, 2012). Charter

principals do not have the same structural supports that traditional principals have (Campbell, Gross, & Policy Innovators in Education Network, 2012; Dressler, 2001). Due to this lack of centralized support, charter principals often take on additional management responsibilities typically dedicated to district office personnel. Increasingly, however, research on student outcomes indicates that principals in general have a significant, albeit indirect, impact, particularly on student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Heck & Hallinger, 2010; K. A. Leithwood, 1992; K. Leithwood & Musella, 1991). In the current atmosphere of accountability, student academic achievement is clearly an important indicator of principal successful practices (Colton, 2003; Keller, 1998).

The Charter School Principal

Due to the unique roles of the charter school principal, their practices often extend further than the traditional counterparts. According to Leone, Warnimont, and Zimmerman (2009), “Charter schools operate outside the direct control of local school districts and, under a publicly issued charter that provides them greater autonomy than other public schools have over curriculum, instruction, and operation” (p. iii). The basic organization of charter schools is composed of a charter board that oversees single or small groups of charter schools. Although more charter schools are contracting with educational management organizations (EMOs) for support with operational issues, the vast majority of charter schools place management tasks with principals and give them significant autonomy on management and instructional decisions (Miron et al., 2010). As a result, charter principals are responsible for tasks or contractual agreements designated in public school environments to personnel in district central offices, such as human resource, accounting, transportation, or special education services (Campbell et al., 2012). These principals must engage in tasks unique to charter schools. Charter schools serve as market-driven

entities and, thus, must attract an adequate number of students to be financially viable. Promoting and marketing the school to attract students often becomes the charter principals' responsibility (Campbell et al., 2012). A parental/familial involvement might further have a different dynamic when parents and guardians are seen as customers/clients rather than as constituents. Although state laws vary, charter schools frequently do not have the same funding sources as traditional schools for facilities (Campbell et al., 2012). Therefore, charter principals often have responsibility for acquiring, financing, and managing facilities to a greater extent than have traditional principals (Campbell et al., 2012; Dressler, 2001). These additional tasks, however, do not abdicate charter principals from management and leadership responsibilities and tasks of traditional principals.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the educational practice of instructing students who are disabled in the same learning environments as their non-disabled peers. When IDEA was reauthorized in 1990, the title of the law was changed from the Law of the Handicapped Child Act to IDEA. The primary focus was on the individual first, and secondarily their disability (Kauffman, Anastasiou, Badar, Travers, & Wiley, 2016). Therefore, the concept of allowing the individual the right to free appropriate public education alongside their peers was given priority. In this model, disabled students needed to spend the majority of their school day in the general education classroom. Sebba and Ainscow (1996) defined an inclusive school model as a school that works from the principle that all communities should learn together. Sebba and Ainscow (1996) discussed schools that ranged from schools with an inclusive classroom to special units attached to schools with general education schools.

Today, inclusive education is still thought of as an approach to serving children with disabilities within the general education setting (Wah, 2010). It is most associated with the physical settings where students with Special Education Needs (SEN) receive their education. As of 2012, approximately 5.8 million school-age children in the United States receive special education services as a result of IDEA and approximately 2.3 million are students identified with a specific learning disability (Lee, 2016). The charter school model typically uses this model exclusively unless they are inducted as a special education site only. It is important to note that the physical location of students is but one dimension of inclusiveness. According to Friend (2005), inclusion is a belief system of the school being a learning community, which educates all children to reach their potential. Inclusion in schools is also viewed as an ongoing developmental process rather than as a static state. This implies that all schools can continue to develop towards greater inclusion whatever its current state, to respond to diversity. Thus, according to Sebba and Ainscow (1996), inclusion is better defined as:

A process by which a school attempts to respond to all students as individuals by reconsidering its curricular organization and provision and through this process, the school builds its capacity to accept all students from the local community who wish to attend and, in so doing, reduces the need to exclude pupils. (p. 9)

Sebba and Ainscow (1996) further state that inclusion should be defined as a process in which responding to diversity is more common and applicable. They believe that the differentiation from integration is helping the particular category of students who participate in a mainstreaming system.

The latest reauthorization of IDEA emphasized the importance of giving students who are disabled with access to the general education environments and settings. They also give these

students with special needs an opportunity to participate in the same state and district accountability systems as their typical peers (Salend & Duhaney, 1999). Inclusion as an educational practice gave students who were disabled an opportunity to be exposed to the general education curriculum and standards in the least restrictive environment (Browder et al., 2007).

Lindsay (2003) nonetheless posits that inclusion is a complex and contested concept, and its manifestation in practice is many and various. Lindsay's (2003) study raises some key distinctions between rights and efficacy. The study cites the doctrine of The Salamander Statement (UNESCO, 1994), which outlined the universal grounds by which this inclusion policy is derived. The UNESCO was comprised of delegates from 92 governments and 25 international organizations in June 1994 for the World Conference on Special Needs Education. The Statement provided five clauses that explicitly describe the optimum rights for individuals with special needs (Lindsay, 2003):

1. Every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning.
2. Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs.
3. Education systems should be designed and educational programs implemented to take into account the vast diversity of these characteristics and needs.
4. Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs,
5. Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective measures of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all: Moreover, they provide an effective

education to the majority of children and improve efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system. (p. 1)

This statement has been viewed as a defining and pivotal moment in inclusive education throughout the world (Lindsay, 2003). It attempted to make the international community more open to inclusive education and to assign it the highest of priorities. Despite the apparent unity in agreement of the philosophical roots of inclusive education, there has been much divergence in practice (Wah, 2010). In the two decades since the UNESCO (1994) Salamanca Statement, and the 2006 UNESCO's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, there has been a marked improvement of inclusive practices around the world (Tzivinikou, 2015).

In deference to the original parameters of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142), special education service providers, parents and researchers actively seek a balance for the concept of least restrictive environment (LRE) and providing education that provides students' access to typical peers (Blanchett, Brantlinger, & Shealey, 2005). Students with variety disabilities receive services in various settings, in addition to the general education contexts (McLesky & Pugach, 1995).

Ryndak, Jackson, and Billingsley (2000) added yet another dimension to the discussion of implementing inclusionary practice by arguing that access to general education needed to go beyond curriculum content by incorporating and including access to the same instructional and non-instructional activities, the same social experiences and the same highly qualified teachers across content areas as their general education classmates. Inclusion in education is defined by the movement in education which endeavors to create schools and other social institutions based on meeting the needs of all learners as well as respecting and learning from each other's differences in inclusive environments (Salend & Duhaney, 1999). Salend and Duhaney (1999)

explain that inclusionary schools establish communities of learners by educating all students together in grade- and age-appropriate schools in their designated neighborhood schools.

Efficiency of Inclusion

In recent years, some issues have been observed with the implementation of successful and adequate inclusionary practices. The need to measure and improve the quality of inclusive special education practices has been hindered by the lack of a common understanding of what is meant by inclusion to facilitate communication and offer a starting point from which to measure the success of inclusion efforts (Wah, 2010). In the absence of specifically focused research, charter school inclusion practices continue to be somewhat of an unknown and therefore further evaluation of that system must be conducted. Scruggs and Mastropieri (2007) discuss that providing educators with greater awareness of the range of inclusion programs in schools today is a first step toward measuring program success.

As highlighted by Florian and Linklater (2010), there is commonly a gap between policy and implementation that must be acknowledged and addressed to lessen the divide between policy and execution in our schools today. Debates continue, and concerns remain about the ability of schools to be adequately prepared and to adapt in the direction of inclusive education (Scruggs et al., 2007). Scruggs et al. (2007) report that there is often vagueness on how individual districts implement the conventional inclusion practices in their classrooms versus best inclusive practices. The reason for the ambiguities may be related to the fact that inclusive education, as aforementioned, is a complicated and multifaceted practice. It is a difficult task to plan and implement effective inclusion practice because so many districts follow different models for working with diverse learners and, in reality, some of the models are not as successful and effective in regard to instructing students who are deemed disabled.

The practice of inclusive education is performed and understood differently by the various participants involved in this practice. There exists a tremendous variation in the way that inclusive programs are implemented, and this is extensively discussed in the literature (Educational Resources Information Center, 1996). Studies on inclusive education have revealed that the interaction of certain key factors tends to determine the success of inclusion for students with special needs (Lipsky & Gartner, 1998). Booth et al. (2000) states that for inclusion to be more appropriate and effective, it should compose a clear and well-defined set of policies that support and encourage the communities, schools and education systems to be more open to the practice of mainstreaming. In the past, it had been believed that there should be separate policies for special education and general education (Booth, 2000). Booth (2000) discusses how these false notions have enabled the segregation and systematic elimination of students who are disabled from the general education classroom. Those who subscribe to those false notions believe that a separate special intervention system should be required to tend to the needs of students (Booth, 2000).

To be fair, many factors impact the effectiveness of inclusion. Factors such as the classroom constellations, duration, and frequency of instructional periods, as well as the number of core content area educators involved influence the nature of inclusive service delivery (Kilanowski, Foote, & Rianaldo, 2010). This is precisely the reason inclusion at the elementary level differs significantly from middle and high school levels, exemplifying the difficulty associated with understanding the nature of inclusion (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2007).

To compound the issue, the special education teacher, who is trained to work with students with diverse learning needs, is not always utilized effectively in some schools, and in charter schools such utilization is not precisely measured or discussed in academic literature. The

districts often use their special educators in inappropriate and ineffective roles. They are often utilized in a limited way in the general education classroom with some special educators serving only as assistants in regard to lesson planning and consultation with general educators to create educational programs for the students with disabilities (Kilanowski-Press, Foote, & Rinaldo, 2010).

The effectiveness of an inclusion practice is how cohesively general and special education are able to work together. Lipsky and Gartner (1998) posited that the relationship and the cooperation between the general education and special education teachers can be a significant factor that determines if an inclusive education program has been successfully implemented. It is reported by Kilanowski et al. (2010) that in many situations, special education teachers have the expert training for working and supporting students who are disabled. These special educators serve to support the general education teacher with lesson planning, hence individualizing lessons for students. Carpenter (2008) describes four criteria that need to be examined for an effective inclusion placement. The criteria include: (1) examining the qualifications and strengths of the teachers, (2) clarifying the role of the special educator in developing and implementing content instruction, (3) examining the professional development background and exposure teachers have had in regard to inclusive education practice, and (4) identifying the amount of time that is needed by the teachers for planning and consultation.

Different Inclusive Education Models for Disabled Students

Schools and districts use many different models when implementing inclusion practices. Some follow the consultative or consultant teacher model of service provision. This is when special educators may include students with special needs into the general education classroom for a predetermined amount of time and assist students in the attainment of goals and objectives

associated with their Individualized Education Program (IEP) (Scruggs et al., 2007). In this type of service delivery model, there are a variety of implementation modalities which materialize, such as one-to-one instruction with students, small group instruction, and co-teaching of academic material (Scruggs et al., 2007).

There are other contributing factors that affect the level of success a student may experience in an inclusion setting, including the nature and severity of the disabling condition. A teacher's experience in resolving problems related to special education has also been found to influence his/her attitude towards inclusion (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). With these extenuating factors, the effort required to support inclusion placement can be quite significant. Given this, according to Hallahan and Mercer (2001), many special educators have raised concerns about the ability of schools to implement effective inclusion programs. The variables can render implementation cumbersome and complicated. Involving disabled students into general education classrooms requires an enormous amount of planning, thought and flexibility (Kilanowski et al., 2010). Kilanowski et al., (2010) report that even though there are several federal mandates which encourage the inclusion movement in the United States, relatively little exploration of the current state of inclusive practice has been generated. The types of service models most often used and other relevant classroom characteristics of the successful inclusive program are yet to be comprehensively researched. (Kilanowski et al., 2010). Consequently, educators are unclear on the features and norms of a genuinely inclusive program.

Ford, Davern, and Schnorr (2001) studied the concept of including students with significant disabilities in a general education setting as it relates to academic content standards. They sought to address the educational accountability by conducting a meaningful review of the general education curriculum (Wehmeyer, 2007). Gurgur and Uzuner (2010) asserted that it was

necessary and essential to provide students both with and without special needs with classroom teachers who had sufficient special education support services to achieve successful inclusion applications. Inclusive communities, therefore, should give all students the opportunity to be successful learners by providing access to adaptable curricula that is also engaging, challenging, and enriching (Wah, 2010). It is nonetheless challenging to identify and highlight best practices toward this end because districts implement a varied form of inclusion-based practices. As a result, many general educators, both in public and charter schools, are frustrated and burdened with inclusive practices because they assert that they are not the best or most efficient service delivery models (Liu & Pearson, 1999). It is because some of these negative perceptions that the quality of results derived in inclusive classrooms are diminished (Liu & Pearson, 1999).

While the efficacy of charter school inclusion models is less researched and therefore less understood, it is notable that, a general practice of inclusion is more prevalent in charter schools; therefore, a study of inclusionary strategies at charter schools is warranted and is the focus of this study.

In both charter and public schools, the rate of students who are disabled included in general education classrooms have been reported to have grown consistently in recent years (McLesky & Pugach, 1995). Inclusion has been reported to have both positive and adverse effects on the general and special education student population. The benefits include that students with special needs have opportunities for social interactions with typically developing peers, who, in most cases, provide positive role models and appropriate examples of classroom behaviors (Vakil, Welton, O'Connor, & Kline, 2009). Vakil et al. (2009) also reported that general education students developed academic and leadership skills through their interactions with the children with students with special needs. The unfavorable impacts of educational inclusion have

been reported from issues relating to more irregularities in classroom routines and frustration with interruptions caused by the students with special needs (Vakil et al., 2009). Copple and Bredekamp (2008) reported that even though educators believed that inclusion created a climate that increased sensitivity and acceptance of diversity, it required educators to plan for curriculum that was differentiated and to encourage an environment that fostered acceptance for all learners (Everett, 2017; Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017), requiring a significant increase in time and effort needed to cultivate this environment.

Teacher Attitudes Necessary to Serve Students in Special Education

Over the years, some debate over inclusion focused on the attitudes of the teachers and other members of the school community, and the students with special educational needs and their typical classmates within the same environment (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Despite recent political rhetoric towards strengthening equality and inclusion, empirical evidence has revealed the unwillingness of an inflexible and under-resourced system to negotiate educational processes and outcomes to meet the diverse needs of its pupils (Strogilos & Tragoulia, 2013). Earlier research suggested that teachers' attitudes are a significant determinant of success in inclusive classrooms, and that teachers' attitudes affect behaviors and in turn influence the classroom climate and students' opportunities for success (e.g., Avramidis & Norwich, 2002). Research findings indicate this impacts the effort teachers invest in teaching, the goals they set and their capacities for planning and organization (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). Finally, the collaboration of both special and general education teachers impacts effectiveness, as noted by the vast majority of researchers (Murawski & Lochner, 2011).

The viewpoint of general education teachers towards inclusive educational practices for students who are disabled has been evaluated using many tools, for example survey techniques

over the past 50 years (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 2007). It was understood that teachers' responses to inclusion programs were complex and shaped by multiple variables that changed over time. From the literature reviewed, the overall sentiment has been that general education teachers indicated that they did not have adequate training to work with students with special needs either in their teacher preparation programs or as part of ongoing in-service professional development workshops (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). General education teachers stated that they desired more personnel support in their inclusive classrooms with students that are disabled.

Other common concerns that led to less than positive perceptions toward including students with disabilities included the size of the class, severity of disability, teaching experience, and grade level (Wedell, 2005; 2008). Given teacher reports that indicated an overall lack of preparation for working with students with disabilities in their training programs or via in-service offerings, it is plausible that the quality of inclusion programs established in the schools may suffer as a result of both attitude, training, and administrative factors (Swain & Cook, 2001).

Wehmeyer (2007) noted that once students were placed in general education classrooms, many education teams were unclear about the scope of content instruction that students with disabilities should receive and what approaches to use in developing and implementing effective instruction in those content areas. This caused little consistency with instructional content and the services being provided for students with disabilities in inclusive general education contexts (Matzen, Ryndak, & Nakao, 2010). Instructional content and services provided to students with special needs in an inclusive environment were reliant on the teacher. Because of this factor, the inclusionary practice varied greatly. If a teacher was open, flexible and cooperative, the inclusive arrangement was beneficial to the students with special needs who were placed in that environment. However, if the teacher was hesitant and burdened by having a student with special

needs in their classroom, the necessary modifications and accommodations that the student required became monumental and subsequently resulted in the teacher not to be able to meet the needs of his or her unique students who are disabled. The inconsistency caused the inclusion arrangement to become unproductive and sometimes carried negative consequences for the child with special needs. Teachers who had negative perceptions of inclusion reported that their typical students in the general education population were negatively affected due to the fact they believed that instructional time was minimized by the time-consuming modifications and adaptations required for students with special needs (Matzen et al., 2010).

Numerous studies have identified both positive and negative outcomes for general education teachers who work in classrooms where students that are disabled and non-disabled learn together (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017; Hernandez, Hueck, & Charley, 2016; Bosch, 2016; Radic-Sestic et al., 2013; Pellegrino, Weiss, & Regan, 2015). Working in inclusive environments, general education teachers are reported to expand their expertise in meeting the needs of their students with special needs, being aware of the impact of teachers as positive role models for all students and developing increased confidence in their teaching ability (Swain & Cook, 2001). Conversely, some of the identified concerns by general educators included the: (a) negative attitudes of others; (b) fear that the education of students without disabilities might suffer; (c) inability of general education staff to address the serious health and medical needs, and behavioral challenges of students with disabilities; (d) lack of funds to support personnel and instructional needs; (e) rigid requirements associated with general education curriculum; (f) limited amount of time for collaboration and communication among staff members; and (g) limited amount of financial resources (Fullerton, Ruben, McBride, & Bert, 2011).

An attitudinal analysis of 70 inclusive elementary teachers found that students with disabilities were overrepresented among their populations, in terms of which teachers had the most concerns about instructing (Swain & Cook, 2001). Teachers with high levels of inclusive teaching experience indicated an increase in their concerns for their students that were disabled and in inclusive classrooms (Swain & Cook, 2001). Teachers' nominations (e.g., in the areas of concern and rejection) of included students with mild and severe disabilities revealed that teachers were more likely to choose included students with mild disabilities in the rejection category than students with severe disabilities (Swain & Cook, 2001). A large proportion of variables theoretically associated with expanding teachers' instructional tolerance, when analyzed in isolation, do not significantly affect teachers' positions towards their students who are disabled and included (Swain & Cook, 2001). It appears that relatively high or low levels of most of these individual variables do not significantly alter the behavioral or learning responses of students with disabilities to teachers' instruction, which may be necessary to alter teachers' attitudes toward students who are disabled. Teachers in classrooms in which paraprofessionals are present describe fewer issues with included students with disabilities in the rejection category, and this may be due to paraprofessionals improving students' problem behaviors (Young & Bittel, 2011). The presence of a paraprofessional can sometimes lead to misdiagnoses of the effectiveness of mainstreaming. Paraprofessionals at times become the primary responsible party for the students who is included (Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 2002). The success of inclusion mandate depends on several variables, including, in particular, the attitudes held by teachers and the quality of instruction they offer to their students (Bender, Vail, & Scott, 1995).

Results of studies on teacher beliefs about inclusion are mixed. There are educators who are supportive of inclusion and others who do not have favorable views on the practice. Scruggs

and Mastropieri (2007) concluded that, overall, teachers supported the concept of inclusion and their support depends on the degree of intensity of inclusion and the severity level of the student(s) with special needs. Some of the problems general education teachers have expressed included the fact that their typical instruction is geared towards a whole and large group, and not individually focused (Leyser & Kirk, 2004; Leyser, Zeiger, & Romi, 2011). Leyser et al. (2011) found that general education teachers did not use individually-focused teaching accommodations regularly, and, therefore, this was problematic for students with special needs who were included in their classrooms. The types of modifications and adaptations necessary to enhance the success of students with disabilities included modification of instructional strategies, textbooks, materials and tests (Leyser et al., 2004)

Inclusion Models

Inclusive programs are shaped by a variety of variables and change over time. These variables include but are not limited to (a) student characteristics, (b) the availability supports in terms of instructional and reserve support services, (c) training, and finally (d) administrative assistance which provides time to collaborate and communicate with others. Both general educators and special educators report that personality, teaching styles, school leadership, and policies all factor into how collaborative partnerships are developed (Sayeski, 2009). Sayeski (2009) noted that even though these factors are important, the strategic partnerships between special and general education preferably should begin with an examination of the classroom culture and its intersection with student needs (Sayeski, 2009).

In a study conducted by Klingner and Vaughn (2002), the special education teacher varied the ways in which she co-taught as she moved from classroom to classroom. The teacher described the challenge of role definition: “It [collaborative special educator] is a hard role

because the special education teacher continually has to adjust and change their style depending on the teacher that they are working with. I work in three classrooms very differently”(p.25).

Collaborative partnerships will take on different shapes. In preparation for developing a collaborative plan, special educators should prepare relevant fact sheets and then create individualized instructional planning guides for each student on their caseload (Sayeski, 2009). This information should be brought to the planning meeting, and it should clearly communicate the specialized content knowledge of the special education teacher. Sayeski (2009) advises general educators to come prepared to meetings with curriculum guides or maps as well as any information related to their typical classroom procedures. It is the duty of the special educator to understand and explore the context of each classroom and then to collaboratively plan ways to accommodate and/or modify for student success.

Inclusion, as it exists, is conducted in a varied, and a systematically undefined format with teachers not having a uniformed system or appropriate supports for students included in their classrooms. Special educators are entrusted to make sure that specially-designed instruction is delivered to students with unique needs. The interplay of these educator roles provides a context for examining some of the issues related to inclusion. Authors Friend and Cook (1993) identified and discussed the need for shared understanding between general and special educators regarding instructional beliefs, and the belief of both teachers—general and special education—as equally responsible for instruction, as critical components of the strong collaborative teaching program. However, underlying such efforts is the necessity for the educators, both the general and special education professionals, to work and coexist in an environment that is devoid of territoriality or power struggles (Friend & Cook, 1993; Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger, 2010). Fuchs and Fuchs (1998) also acknowledge that interpersonal interaction is important to

fostering a successful consultation model. They describe components of successful interpersonal interactions such as mutual respect, conflict resolution, problem-solving skills, and the development of strong communication skills to be critical aspects of co-instructional efforts (Cook, Tankersley, Cook, & Landrum, 2015).

The efficacy of inclusive practices for special education students has been debated in the special education scholarly literature. Of particular concern to some education scholars is the overall lack of evaluative research regarding the educational outcomes of students educated in inclusion programs (Scruggs et al., 2007). The diverse forms of inclusive placements/approaches inevitably influence the ability of researchers to evaluate their efficacy and to describe the best-practice-based instructional formats.

Coherence of Inclusion Practices at School Sites

Special education accountability policies require that educators individualize instruction for students with disabilities while concurrently assuring that these students are still aligned to the standards set by grade and assessment targets (Russell & Bray, 2013). Administrators are charged with the implementation of educational policies that some administrators view as complementary rather than contradictory (Russell & Bray, 2013). There is a dynamic interplay between policy and implementation practices of administrators. Though NCLB and IDEA offer consistent and specific guidelines for teachers and administrators (Russell & Bray, 2013), the implementation has been varied in different sites. On an issue where there was no specific guidance from NCLB—the placement of special education students—educators interpreted the law as promoting inclusion of more students, in general education courses, often to an extent that contradicted the guidance offered by IDEA (Russell & Bray, 2013). Therefore, there have been

some unintended consequences for students, resulting from the discrepancies of how the law in interpreted and implemented.

Federal Disability Law and Funding as it Relates to Charter Schools

Under federal law, charter schools do not receive preferential treatment; they are bound to address and adhere to the laws that relate to all students, and this includes students who are disabled. Federal law PL. 94–142 states that students who are disabled are entitled to attend schools that are funded by the public government, and to also have their special education services provided (Heubert, 1997). The federal government provides funding to the states for these services. Currently, all public schools, both public and charter, receive billions of dollars to provide a basic educational program—which includes teachers, instructional materials, academic support, and enrichment activities—for all students, including students with disabilities (LAO report, n.d.). Historically, special education, requiring additional resources, is funded at an inadequate level, forcing schools to compensate by using their local unrestricted general funds to account for the difference. Special education services were first federally mandated in 1975 by the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. This law later became designated as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The IDEA required states to provide children with special education needs equal access to the educational system. Under this law, students with disabilities were entitled to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). This is the educational right given to children with disabilities and is guaranteed by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the IDEA (Dept. of Education, 2010). At the inception of this law, the federal government concluded that the financial support needed to assist a student with a disability would roughly be twice the cost of educating a non-disabled student. With that tentative calculation in mind, the federal government agreed to fund 40% of the special education financial

needs. To date, this law has never been funded at the originally promised rate. According to the California Department of California, currently, the federal government contributes between 11-17 percent yearly towards funding special education services. The remaining unfunded share becomes the responsibility of the local school districts to fund. With charter schools being part of the public school system as well as constraints related to both their generally smaller size and a more complex governing dynamic, questions arise about how they can comply with the laws with such gross inadequacies with funding levels (Alberta Dept. of Education, 1997).

Disabled Students in Charter Schools

Charter schools are designed to be autonomous within the school district (Rhim & McLaughlin, 2007; Howe & Welner, 2002). They are nonetheless still regulated by local, state, and federal laws and statutes and, therefore, must meet performance standards to remain in operation. One of the most prevalent concerns for students who are categorized as disabled is that charter schools do not seem to accept such students in equivalent numbers as the typical public schools. Additionally, in cases where they have accepted some of these disabled students, the services provided to them are not comparable to the services required in their IEPs (Stern, Clonan, Jaffee, & Lee, 2015). The perception that these charter schools are ill-equipped with regard to properly trained teachers and administrators deserves further study. A common reason that charter schools are not seen as being able to support their disabled students is that the staff and administrative personnel are often under-qualified (Stern, Clonan, Jaffee & Lee, 2015). Rhim & McLaughlin (2007) concluded after a three-year nationwide study of charter schools found that many of these schools did not have working knowledge of special education laws and service provision. They also reported that the administrators at these sites also did not receive adequate guidance from the states when receiving their authorizations (Rhim & McLaughlin, 2007). A

study of Texas charter schools found that administrators did not have a clear idea of how to implement the pre-referral intervention services that were the first step in determining if students are in need of receiving services for their unique educational needs (Estes, 2004). In Wisconsin, significant numbers of charter schools were discovered to be hiring teachers who were not certified in special education to work with students with disabilities; in other notable instances, the schools did not have any special education teachers on staff at all (Drame, 2011).

Another common practice of charter schools reported in the literature was that they were recommending parents with children with disabilities to seek other public schools to meet the needs of their children with disabilities because they believed that their needs would be better served there. This practice is commonly known as counseling out. It inevitably leads to a smaller percentage of students with disabilities being accepted into charter schools (Estes, 2004). It is important to state that charter schools do accept students with disabilities; however, when they do accept students with disabilities, they often accept students with mild disabilities (Rhim & McLaughlin, 2007). With this backdrop of enrolling norms, it is clear that charter school practices in relation to students with disabilities deserve further evaluation.

Co-Teaching: Inclusive Practice

Co-teaching as an instructional practice has existed in the public school system since the 1960s. This practice involves the participation of a general and special education teacher in one classroom (Friend et al., 2010). The emergence of the open and inclusive teaching concepts incorporates a special education teacher and a general education teacher working together with shared teaching responsibilities for a mixed student population (Friend & Reising, 1993). (Loertscher and Koechlin (2015) reported that for more than a decade or so prior to 1960, school improvement had been focused primarily on the single-teacher classroom techniques until the

introduction of the co-teaching and collaboration teaching model. A key term that has come about from this unique partnership is co-teaching or co-operative teaching (Friend & Reising, 1993). Cooperative teaching was first discussed in the late 1980s as an educational approach where general and special educators work together in a concerted effort to instruct mixed groups of students in educationally integrated settings (Tzivinikou, 2015). This alternative approach of having a classroom with both a general education teacher and an education specialist promotes the practices of not only the adult teachers in the classroom, but also the students. Research shows that both the disabled and non-disabled peers learning in a co-teaching environment benefit considerably (Murawski & Lochner, 2011). A substantial amount of research evidence suggests that collaboration between general and special education teachers is a pillar of the effective teaching for all students, including those with learning difficulties (Tzivinikou, 2015). With the current educational landscape of high expectations for students to show proficiency with high stakes testing, schools have embraced the need for collaboration between general and special educators.

The purpose of co-teaching is to provide access for students with disabilities to the general education curriculum, in a general education setting with accommodations from the student's IEP. Co-teaching is the art of two or more mentor adults who plan, teach, and assess a learning experience together (Loertscher & Koechlin, 2015; Tzivinikou, 2015). The distinguishing feature of cooperative teaching is that it involves direct collaboration between the teachers who teach the typical population and teachers who work with students that are disabled. According to Tzivinkou (2015), the teachers are expected to work together in the same classroom most of the day. The theory behind co-teaching as an instructional strategy is supported by specific behaviors that entail that teachers plan, assess and instruct as a team (Murwaski & Lochner, 2011;

Tzivinikou, 2015). The positive student outcomes in this learning environment are attributed to teachers following the aforementioned strategies. Co-teaching is a strategy implemented in inclusive schools and one of the fastest-growing practices. It occurs when two or more professionals collectively deliver substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space (Murwaski & Lochner, 2011; Tzivinikou, 2015). Historically, teachers typically worked independently, often treating their classrooms as their personal domain where instruction and assessments are completed based on their individual styles. This style of teaching can inherently create the perception that it may be difficult to balance the development of work habits with another professional. Consequently, it is important that the administration and teachers put in a sustained effort to create a successful co-teaching model.

Simmons and Magiera (2007) discussed some of the issues of the co-teaching model. They found that implementation was difficult particularly at the secondary level because of the inherent variability in the implementation. Factors such as lack of training, support and common planning time were also variables identified as affecting the co-teaching model. It was found that teachers who were found to be effective in the co-teaching model were often those who volunteered to be in a co-teaching partnership and also participated in joint staff training on this strategy (Simmons & Magiera, 2007). This is further supported by other studies conducted by Simmons and Magiera (2007) that reported that teachers who attended some training sessions increased the likelihood of a teaching pair being successful. Additionally, teachers benefit from co-planning (Murawski & Bernhardt, 2016); obtaining administrative support in scheduling common planning periods was noted as necessary. It offered teachers an opportunity to not only reflect, but to design an instructional program with techniques that support student learning in an inclusive environment. The essential core of co-teaching is built on the idea that the teachers who

specialize in working with students that are disabled and the general education teachers work together to identify teaching strategies that support their unique student population. It is also offers the special education teacher, who may not have the general education content specialization, an opportunity to offer proactive input in the educational program. Magiera et. al. (2006) pointed out that teachers who co-planned together also believed that they were more effective teaching as a team. In the co-instructing environment, teacher teams that were found to be successful actively engaged students using a variety of co-teaching strategies to regroup, re-instruct, collect and share assessment information to better individualize for student's academic needs (Murawaski & Lochner, 2011). In consideration of co-planning and co-teaching environments, special attention must be paid to the student population. Murawaski and Bernhardt posited that a proportional co-teaching classroom should have up to, but not past, 30% of students with disabilities with their typically performing peers. Another important criterion that should be observed is that the represented disabilities not be of the same designation; variation is required even when determining the special education population in a co-taught classroom environment (2016). Another important factor in a co-teaching situation is the ability for the teachers to be able to co-assess. At the beginning of the co-teaching practice, the planning phase should include modes of co-assessments that should be tied back to instruction (Friend et al., 2010). It is therefore important that specific emphasis be placed on the ability for both teachers to be able to think about both the formative and summative assessments to be made in this environment. The types of assessments should include common definitions and samples of quizzes, also projects, presentations, verbal questioning, permanent product and other relevant forms (Friend et al., 2010).

The characteristics of a balanced co-teaching model include a clarification of the roles of the teachers instructing in that environment. Co-teaching, though not legally mandated, is a voluntary arrangement that can improve student success (Bauwens et al.). Bauwens et al. first suggested the three co-teaching arrangements through which co-teachers can share instructional responsibilities: a) complementary instruction, b) supportive learning activities, and c) team teaching. Furthermore, co-teaching is described as having four components: (a) present typically are a general education teacher and a teacher who specializes in working with students that are disabled; (b) instruction delivery by both teachers; (c) a heterogeneous group of students, including those with disabilities as well, are taught with their typically functioning peers; and (d) students are to be taught in a mixed group with disabled and non-disabled students in a single classroom (1989). Murawski and Lochner (2011) discuss the fact that in a productive co-teaching model, both professionals organize and deliver effective instruction as a team. Teachers involved in the co-teaching model are expected to plan and execute with the aid of unique and high-involvement instructional strategies for the sole aim of engaging the learners in their environment. Current research shows that there are five major categories for distinguishing the different co-teaching methods in a classroom: (a) one teaching, one supporting; (b) station teaching; (c) parallel teaching; (d) alternative teaching; (e) teaching together or team teaching (Murawski & Lochner, 2011; Sileo, 2011). The strategy of one teaching, one supporting is the simplest of the approaches and typically the starting point for most teachers beginning the co-teaching model (Murawski & Lochner, 2011). The biggest issue with this approach is that the special education teacher in this position is often relegated the position of an assistant (Murawski & Lochner, 2011). Station teaching requires more preparation than the first described approach in that there needs to be some fore planning by the co-teachers and instructional content is divided

with each teacher assuming responsibility for their selected section. With parallel teaching, the teachers jointly plan the instruction, but each delivers it to a heterogeneous group comprised of half of the student population. According to Murawski and Lochner (2011), this approach requires both that the teachers organize their efforts to assure that all students will receive the same instruction, and that grouping decisions are based on maintaining diversity within each group. In co-teaching strategy, one teacher pre-teaches or re-teaches material to a small group of students while the other instructs the large group in some content or activity that the small group can afford to miss (Murawski & Lochner, 2011). This strategy may be implemented to assure that all students have meaningful interaction with the teacher in a small group format. The final co-teaching strategy of team-teaching is an approach that requires the highest level of planning and coordination between the two teachers. Teachers may role-play, debate, simulate and model lessons in front of all of the students. It should be noted that Magiera et. al (2007) found that the lack of a small group has had detrimental effects on student learning and achievement, and therefore it is important that the proportion of students in a co-teaching environment be properly created. Co-teaching as an educational practice can nonetheless be an effective strategy to improve overall positive outcomes for all students. Students with disabilities are more and more frequently being placed in classrooms with their typical peers. This is more evident in charter schools that typically use this sort of student placement design. The majority of research reports that co-teaching, when properly designed and employed, can be a way to provide students access to the general education curriculum (Brown, Howerter, & Morgan, 2013).

In summary, this research study examined four main themes: (a) the role of the administrator, (b) inclusion practices, (c) charter schools, (d) federal disability laws and funding practices in serving students that are disabled in a charter school environment. In the first theme,

the role of the administrator was described, and it highlighted the importance of the role that administrators played regarding understanding the current skill sets required of school leaders to ensure the effectiveness of inclusion practices and delivery models. A comparison review was also conducted of the charter school principal versus the traditional principal. It was found that though the roles were similar, there were some distinct differences. The charter school principal tended to have more autonomy than the traditional site principal. However, the charter school administrator also had more limited resources when compared to the traditional site administrators. Another key finding in this first theme was the limited training that site administrators in general reported. According to the literature, training of site administrators was reported as being insufficient. The second theme examined what inclusion practice was, incorporating teacher attitudes, mainstreaming efficacy, charter school inclusion practices, and types of inclusion models. The third theme examined the federal law and funding practices for students with special needs and the legal requirements. Finally, the last theme examined the modes charter schools use to serve students who are disabled.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

With the emphasis on accountability in special education programs in California, school administrators are challenged to develop and implement effective inclusion educational programs for students who are disabled to meet their unique needs. It has, therefore, become important that charter school administrators, as well as public school administrators, create specific and appropriate procedures and policies that exemplify sufficient inclusive practices. The primary goal of this research study is to examine the practices of charter schools, with regard to students with special needs, through the perspectives of the respective administrators.

The Explanatory Sequential Design, also known as Qual-QUAN-Qual, will be utilized in this study. It will feature a three-phase design system. The first phase will include a review of the survey design and content by educational professionals not in charter schools. This step will serve to verify that questions included in the survey are both appropriate and valid for this study, increasing the validity of the measurement tool. The next phase will be to send out the survey to charter school administrators. The results of the survey will lead to the final phase of data collection: follow-up interviews with three to five charter school administrators. The determination of who to interview will depend on the results of the survey. The researcher will interview participants for whom there are additional questions or those who can illuminate themes that are observed from the survey results. The results from the second phase will be analyzed for statistically significant differences or anomalies. Those results and findings from phase two will, subsequently, drive and frame the follow-up questions for the final qualitative phase. In summary, the researcher will begin by validating the survey tool, and then will collect quantitative data through the survey, which will be analyzed, and will finally transition to collecting and analyzing the qualitative data (Creswell, 2015; Lochmiller & Lester, 2017).

Setting and Participants

Data was determined through random sampling: convenience, quota, and purposive sampling of charter school administrators in the Southern California region. Convenience sampling was included due to the uncertainty of how much access there would be to the target population— charter school administrators. The availability of participants was a concern at the outset of the study. Quota sampling was also included to have a target number of participants to increase the validity of the study. Finally, purposive sampling was implemented due to the desire to focus on participants that demonstrated the appropriate level of skill and knowledge to respond to study questions. The sample for the study consisted of approximately 50 charter school administrators from public school districts in Southern California. Schools that participated ranged in size from very small to schools comparable to public schools, with a mean of 400 students. The sample is diverse in their age, experience, race, and gender.

Sampling Procedures

An introductory mass email with a link to the survey was sent using Survey Monkey to prospective charter school administrators who held the EC-12 identifying certification across Southern California. The email included a brief introduction by the researcher, and a summary of the study was provided. In that email, prospective participants were informed that the information contained in surveys was maintained in confidence to the fullest extent of the law. Participants were also informed that participation was voluntary and also asked if they might be interested in a brief follow-up interview as a component of the survey. The non-random sampling techniques of convenience sampling, quota sampling, and purposive sampling were implemented for this study. For the qualitative part of the study, 10 personal interviews with open-ended

questions were conducted based on follow-up from responses from the original survey distributed to participants.

Instrumentation

The survey to be used in this study was developed in consultation with academic peers at Concordia University Irvine and other experts in the Special Education field. An initial draft of the survey was emailed for feedback via Survey Monkey. From there, a final survey was created and transferred to Survey Monkey for formatting and distribution. The survey was optional for the participants. The survey only allowed for a “no response” in the demographics area. For the majority of the questions, the participant could select any opinion level they may have or type in that they do not wish to answer. Given that the survey was optional, the participant could stop at any time. The survey was accessible through Survey Monkey, which has developed a reliable and secure data platform. The security embedded in the Survey Monkey program assured security with the infrastructure and practices and reassured that data was appropriately protected. The survey used the response data encryption, rather than only a secure system (SSL), and IP addresses were masked in the settings of the survey. The data was backed up hourly and regularly on the server and could be removed by the researcher to a spreadsheet at any time. The spreadsheet had a timestamp for each respondent. Once the window closed for responses, the online data was destroyed, and only the Excel version of data was used by the researcher for analysis and results. Participants were informed that a follow-up interview was voluntary and they may or may not be contacted. Interview locations were determined based on a mutually convenient location; if in person, a signed consent was obtained, and if over the phone, a consent form was emailed to participants to be signed before the interview began. Recordings were made on a secure recording device that was accessible by the researcher and the committee chair. Only

the researcher owns the data. Data was only assessed by the researcher and the committee chair . Individual data was not be identifiable at the individual or school level, and therefore, repercussions for information about school compliance was eliminated.

Reliability

The most critical concern for reliability is the stability and constancy of the variables. The researcher conducted structured interviews that were recorded on a secure device and transcribed to reflect the content of those conversations. The assumption that the variable one is measuring is stable or constant is central to the concept of reliability. In principle, a measurement procedure that is stable or constant should produce the same (or nearly the same) results if the same individuals and conditions are used (LAERD, 2016). However, not all measurement procedures included in this study featured the same amount/degree of error (i.e., some measurement procedures were prone to greater error than others—for example, the short-answer questions). A small error was possible during the interpretation of responses. However, the error component within the area was relatively small. Therefore, measurement procedure was reliable.

Validity

The measurement procedure implemented in this study, questionnaire items, interview questions, and survey items, provided an accurate representation of the contrast that it was measuring, and therefore, it was consistent. To ensure that this study was valid, triangulation with the multiple forms of data was conducted. To validate survey questions, the survey was sent to 18 professionals, ranging from special education teachers to administrators in the public education field, for feedback and to analyze the survey.

Data Collection

The survey included a 20-item Likert-type scale with some additional yes/no and open-ended questions. Three major sections of the survey addressed: (a) the different strategies implemented by charter school administrators to address the needs of the special education students at their sites; (b) protocols used by charter schools to align with the law of inclusive practices for special needs students; and (c) demographics. Questions in the first section addressed administrators' knowledge in working with students with disabilities in inclusive settings. Questions included items related to their understanding of inclusion and their ability to assist teachers who instruct students identified as having disabilities. A standard Likert-type scale, with one designating "strongly disagree" to five designating "strongly agree," was used.

Questions in the second section of the survey addressed administrators' perspectives of in-service training needs regarding inclusive education. Administrators were asked if they needed further training in four proposed areas judged to be helpful in facilitating inclusion. The training topics included such categories as (a) offering focused teacher workshops, (b) access to best practices literature, (c) special education IEP training, and (d) time for consultation with special education teachers. The major section addressed administrators' perceptions of necessary programmatic supports for successful inclusionary practices. These supports were addressed in the survey using a yes/no format. In this section, administrators were asked if a support or resource was currently present and if they would need the support or resource to successfully serve students with disabilities in inclusive settings. Using this yes/no method generated four possible answers for each item.

A demographic section of the survey assessed administrator background including gender, the number of years as an administrator, and certification. The study employed a mixed-method

design with the use of surveys to examine the views of charter school administrators' perspectives on special education delivery models. An introduction email and survey was sent to charter school administrators in the southern region of California. The survey included a combination of Likert and open-ended questions to potentially be used as follow-up interview questions. Informed consent included language, which guaranteed confidentiality to the fullest extent of the law; duration of the study and a clause informing participants that participation was voluntary was also be given to participants.

Data Analysis

The research method included an analysis of the mode for the descriptive narratives of participants. All short-answer/open-ended responses were analyzed and coded, noting specific themes. The data were collected and then processed in response to the problems posed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. The entire survey response was analyzed using Survey Monkey's analyzing tools and IBM's SPSS statistics program. The fundamental goal, which drove the collection of the data and the subsequent data analysis, was to develop an understanding of special education delivery models in charter schools through the perspective of site administrators. The research questions were:

1. How do charter school administrators implement and address the special education program at their school site?
2. What are the different strategies and dynamics charter school administrators cultivate with respect to other public school practices?
3. How do charter schools align with the law of inclusive practices for special needs students?

These objectives were accomplished.

Plan to Address Ethical Issues

The following actions were taken to reduce and eliminate ethical issues with the participants of this study: Consent forms, which stated the overall purpose of this study, were sent to participants. Due to the nature of this study, potential risks were characterized as minimum to none in that only the perspectives of the administrators were analyzed. Confidentiality to the participants was also assured with this study. The data in this study was collected, analyzed, and reported using the appropriate methods. All results were based on the findings of data collected and all positive and negative findings were communicated accordingly.

Summary

The Explanatory Sequential Design, also known as Qual-QUAN-Qual, implemented for this study addressed the question of how charter school administrators reported the practices of their schools in regards to serving students with special needs. A description of the data collected and how it was analyzed was discussed in this chapter. Results are addressed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the data analysis are presented. The data were gathered and then processed in response to the problems posed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. Three fundamental goals drove the compilation of the data and the subsequent data analysis. Those goals, as delineated by the research questions, were to develop a base of knowledge about the charter schools' service delivery models and their compliance with state and federal standards. This research utilized a mixed-method design, with the quantitative results followed by three interviews for the qualitative analysis. These objectives were achieved. The findings presented in this chapter demonstrate the potential for merging theory and practice.

Participant Responses

Two hundred and sixty-three surveys were sent through Survey Monkey to charter school administrators. Data for contact information for these participants were derived from the California Department of Education active charter school locator for Los Angeles and Orange Counties. Of the 263 surveys sent, 148 were opened, 31 were unopened, 36 bounced back due to email addresses not being viable, 48 participants opted out of the survey, and 38 participants completed the questionnaire with a 100% completion rate. Therefore, 38 surveys were considered to be legitimate for this research. The average time spent by participants to complete the survey was reported to be approximately 10 minutes. Surveys were sent over an 18-day time span. The uncompleted surveys were not considered suitable for this study. Three interviews were conducted for the qualitative analysis and those interviews each took an average of 15 minutes to complete.

Of the 38 respondents surveyed, exactly 50% (19 out of 38) indicated that they had some special education qualification and background. The other 50% indicated "no" for lack of special

education training (see Table 1 & Figure 1). This first question determined the basis for the researcher to understand the qualifications of charter school administrators with regard to their formalized training for supporting students with disabilities. The finding of a 50% experience rate aligns with the current reality that most administrators have encountered minimal training in their educational background. Table 1 indicates the number of participants that had special education training.

Table 1

Response to Special Education Qualification

Answer Choices	Responses	Actual Count
Yes	50%	19
No	50%	19

This section of the questionnaire centered on the types of special education providers at their respective charter school sites. Respondents selected all that applied. The results showed that most charter schools (94.74%) employed a special education teacher on site. This is a notable finding in that it confirms that most charter school sites have an onsite special education practitioner to provide services for their students with special education needs. The second highly rated was school psychologists, with a response rate of 81.58% with on charter school sites. Historically, school psychologists are critical members of IEP teams as they often define eligibility criteria for students with special education needs and also support staff with strategies to work with their students with disabilities. Speech pathologists were also reported to be present on school sites at a rate of 78.95%. This is a significant percentage because many students with disabilities receive speech services as part of their IEPs. Additional providers present at the

charter schools surveyed included adapted physical education providers (55.26%), occupational therapists (57.89%), and others (pupil counseling, ERICS, physical therapy, counseling MSW [social worker], BII, deaf hard of hearing [DHH] teacher, language/speech SLPA, school counselor, Speech-Language Pathology Assistant, instructional aides, audiology services, designated instruction service [DIS] counselor, adapted physical education [APE] and recreational therapy, behavior intervention development specialist [BID], recreational therapy, physical therapist, reading specialist, assistive technology specialist, visual impairment [VI]) (34.21%) (see Table 2).

Table 2

Response to On-site Special Education Service Providers

Provider	Responses	Actual Count
Psychologist	81.58%	31
Special Ed./Resource Teachers	94.74%	36
Adapted P.E.	55.26%	21
Speech Pathologist	78.95%	30
Occupational Therapist	57.89%	22
Other	34.21%	13

Considering that most of the charter school respondents indicated the presence of a special education teacher on site, the researcher desired to go into more depth to determine the actual number of special education teachers at their sites. The results showed that 27% of respondents indicated that they had between 0-5 teachers, 8% reported that they had between 6-10 teachers, and 1% indicated more than 10 special education teachers at their sites. This is important

information to note in that it clarified in real time the number of individuals that provided direct services to students with learning disabilities. The number of providers correlated with the size of the school population.

The section titled “Service Delivery Models” examined the types of service delivery models at the charter school sites. This question was critical in understanding how students with learning disabilities received direct services from providers while attending their charter schools. Interestingly, the results of this question indicated that most charter school administrators report that the most common service delivery model for the students with a disability was a combination of both consults and on-site providers with a response rate of 76.23%. Students typically received services from a combination of on-site and outside providers. Only 2.63% reported a consult-only model. The consult-only model suggested a site where all the services students with disabilities receive are conducted via outside agencies that hold contracts with the charter school sites. The charter school administrators reporting only on-site providers made up 21.05% of the total respondents. This indicated that these sites could meet all the needs of their students with disabilities with resources and providers allocated at the setting (see Table 3).

Table 3

Service Delivery Models

Providers	Responses	Actual Count
Onsite Providers	21.05%	8
Consults	2.63%	1
Combination of Both	76.23%	29

Professional Development Opportunities Provided on Special Education Procedures and Compliance was a key question for this research study. The perception of the charter school administrators of their level of compliance with special education procedures was an important issue to be examined. To explore this question, the researcher asked charter administrators about their level of adherence to the law in regard to compliance with special education matters. The responses to these questions indicated that 89.47% believed that their charter schools complied with the federal and state requirements for special education delivery programs and that professional development opportunities were provided to their staff. Interestingly, 10.53% respondents responded that there were not sufficient professional development opportunities provided to their personnel and their compliance was lacking to some degree. Public charter schools are required by law to follow the same special education procedures, and the 10.53% of noncompliance appears to be problematic. Questions about teacher preparation arise from these statistics (see Table 4).

Table 4

Responses to Professional Development Opportunities Provided on Special Education Procedures and Compliance

Answer Choices	Responses	Actual Count
Yes	89.47%	34
No	10.53%	4

In examining the special education delivery models and trends, it was important for the researcher to review resources in place to support teachers—primarily general education teachers—who work with students with disabilities. This section titled “Support Provided to

Teachers with Students with IEPs” focused on the resources that teachers were provided (see Table 5). Respondents were able to note all that were applicable. The highest response indicated that teachers were provided accommodations to serve their students with disabilities at a rate of 97.37%. This is important in that teachers are being reported to be aware of the acceptable accommodations for their students with IEPs. The second largest area noted was that opportunities for discussions and collaboration with specialist teachers were reported at 92.11%. This is significant as well, because it discloses that teachers can collaborate with special education teachers, which supports their ability to help these students with accessing the curriculum. The third-rated on the list was time to prepare materials for students and access to special education literature; both were rated at 71.05%. The opportunity to prepare and also access literature for students with special education needs cannot be understated. When instructing this population of students, an educator must have access to the latest literature in that it discloses the most recent research on strategies and important considerations when working with students with disabilities. Staying current on these issues is critical to supporting this student population. The next confirmed by approximately half of the respondents (55.26%) indicated that access to pertinent documents and records was important to them. Additional classroom support was reported at 38.84%, while increased allocated time to prepare for materials for students was reported at 36.84%. Time to prepare modified curriculum was reported at 28.95%. Notably low was the fact that more opportunities to liaise with outside specialists were indicated at a 15.79% response rate. This is interesting in that some of the smaller charters do significantly work with the traditional public to coordinate services for their students with IEPs (see Table 5).

Table 5

Opportunities Provided to Teachers with Students with Disabilities

Answer Choices	Responses	Actual Count
Teachers provided with list of modifications	97.37%	37
Discussions and collaboration with specialist teachers	92.11%	35
Teacher Training workshops	89.47%	34
Access to appropriate special education literature	71.05%	27
Time for preparing materials for the student	71.05%	27
Access to pertinent documents and/or records	55.26%	21
Increased allocated time to prepare materials for students	36.84%	14
Additional classroom support	31.58%	12
Time to prepare modified curriculum	28.95%	11
More opportunities to liaise with outside specialists	15.79%	6

With regard to alignment with the law of inclusive practices for special needs students, the following were the responses of charter school administrators:

Table 6

Expressed Statements of Alignment to Educational Law

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sp. Ed. Services must be provided per IEPs ▪ LRE (Least Restrictive Environment) ▪ We have a full-time SPED Coordinator who ensures full compliance. ▪ We follow all applicable law and education code. ▪ We are a "dependent" charter and follow all CDE sped laws and policies. We are an inclusive setting and have been for many years. The specifics are in our charter renewal.

(Table 6, continued)

-
- We implement inclusive practices for Sped.
 - We only offer push-in services.
 - We are a full inclusion school.
 - Full inclusion program
 - We are in compliance as we have an advanced special education program. I (Executive Director) was a Special Ed teacher prior to being admin.
 - We only use inclusion.
 - We are in compliance.
 - We provide a wide range of placements on our own campus from full inclusion with extensive push-in services to a Special Day Program. If these placements are inappropriate, we provide placement at another institution such as a non-public school. We carefully contemplate the unique circumstances of each individual student in line with the new Andrew ruling.
 - We provide the majority of our specialized academic instruction (SAI) services through a collaborative, push-in service delivery model. Speech and language services are provided in a small group setting outside of the general education classroom due to the nature of the service. Overall, we describe our program as a full-inclusion program. Therefore, I would say that we closely align to the law of inclusive practices for special needs students.
 - Perfectly as this is a legal requirement for SPED funding.
 - We attend mandatory district training for SPED to get up to date information and compliance.
 - We follow all laws and mandates.
 - All of our scholars with special needs are incorporated in the general education program completely. Less than 15% of their day includes pull out services on average.
 - We follow all federal special education laws.
 - Compliant
 - We are a public school that accepts all students, regardless of needs. We have a team of
 - support that team as well. We strive to ensure that all learning opportunities are accessible to all students, regardless of needs.
 - Full-inclusion; Aligned appropriately
 - We include all of our learners as much as possible, only pulling out for specialized one-on-one services (speech, OT, etc.).
 - We provide a full inclusion model and meet regularly to monitor placement of students.
 - All of our students are fully included in gen ed classrooms and receive delivery of services through cooperative teaching (gen ed/spec ed staff) and some lab time
-

Table 6, continued)

-
- All students are in inclusive classrooms.
 - All our students participate together in their education...students receive push-in support from resource teachers.
 - We only provide an inclusion program K-8th
 - All students with disabilities are educated with their general education peers for the majority of the day, with some students receiving instruction outside of general education for an average of roughly 10% of the school day.
 - All SPED students were enrolled in general education courses. At this charter there were only mild to moderate students and there was no program for special day classes or modified curriculum. Most SPED students were given one period of Academic Support with SPED teacher.
 - We abide by the laws.
-

Critical information explored in response to answers posed by this study was the student makeup of those with disabilities. Of the respondents, students designated under the eligibility of Speech and Language and students with a diagnosis of ADHD were rated the highest, at 91.89% each. The next highly-rated category was students on the Autism Spectrum at 89.19%. Another significant population found to be represented at charter school sites per the reporting of site administrators was students with moderate learning disabilities at 72.97%. Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) was reported to be the least represented, at 8.11%. Those with responses below 50% representation were severe learning disability and SPLD/Dyslexia (both at 45.95%), Language and Communication (43.24%), Physical Impairment (37.84%), Severe Behavior Difficulties (32.43%), Sensory Impairment – Visual (27.03%), Epilepsy (24.32%), Developmental Coordination (8.11%) and Other at 13.51% (see Table 7 and Figure 7). This inquiry question is critical because it discloses the makeup of these charter schools. The researcher aimed to examine the similarities between the populations between the public traditional schools versus charter schools as reported by respondents.

Table 7

Disability Designations Reported Present at Charter Schools

Answer Choices	Responses	Actual Count
Speech and Language Disability	91.89%	34
ADHD	91.89%	34
Autistic Spectrum Disorders	89.19%	33
SPLD/Dyslexia	45.95%	17
Severe Learning disability	45.95%	17
Language & Communication	43.24%	16
Physical Impairment	37.84%	14
Severe Behavior Difficulties	32.43%	14
Sensory Impairment – visual	27.03%	10
Epilepsy	24.32%	9
Downs Syndrome	16.22%	6
Other	13.51%	5
Development Coordination Disorder (DCD)	8.11%	3

Of interest to this study is the perception of the rate of increase in the population of students with disabilities represented in the charter school population. Respondents were asked

their perception of this increase. As shown in Table 8, 43.24% of the respondents moderately agreed that there had been an increase of students with disabilities at their charter school sites, while 24.32% respectively strongly agreed or were neutral on whether there was an increase at their sites. Over 2 and a half percent (2.70%) moderately disagreed, and 5.41% did not agree with this statement, essentially stating that their population of students with disabilities has remained the same (see Table 8).

Table 8

Perceptions of Increases in Population of Students with Special Needs

Answer Choices	Responses	Actual Count
Strongly agree	24.32%	9
Moderately agree	43.24%	16
Neutral	24.32%	9
Moderately disagree	2.70%	1
Disagree	5.41%	2

Access to Professional Development Opportunities is a critical area for educational professionals. Topics covered during the professional development opportunities can include special education compliance, behavior management, and strategies for supporting students with disabilities and other special education related topics. The question was posed to charter administrators on whether they believed that professional development opportunities were provided to their staff that serves the population of students with disabilities. Slightly over forty-eight percent (48.66%) of the respondents rated access to professional development opportunities

as average; 35.14% of the respondents were above average, and 8.11% responded as outstanding and poor, respectively, to the fact that opportunities were given to their staff (see Table 9).

Table 9

Access to Professional Development Opportunities

Answer Choices	Responses	Actual Count
Average	48.66%	18
Above Average	35.14%	13
Outstanding	8.11%	3
Poor	8.11%	3
Below Average	0.00%	0

A follow-up to the last inquiry question was the opinion of charter school administrators on the level of support provided to teachers during the non-teaching time. This includes administrative support, professional development opportunities, and other trainings. Respondents indicated that 43.24% provided above average supports to their teachers during non-teaching times. Notably, 5.41% respondents stated that programs available to their staff during non-teaching times were below average to poor. (See Table 10 and Figure 10.) Access to additional supports outside of teaching is critical for teachers. In many ways, professional development is the link between the design and implementation of education reforms and the ultimate success of reform efforts in schools Trahan, Olivier, & Wadsworth, 2015; Lemons, Otaiba, Conway, & Mellado De la Cruz, 2016; Culverhouse, 1998). The evaluation of educator effectiveness based on student test scores and classroom observation, for example, has the potential to drive instructional improvement and promises to reveal important aspects of classroom performance

and success. There is rigorous research on professional learning that shows that it can indeed change the way teachers teach and how much students learn (Webber & And, 1993; Flower, McKenna, & Haring, 2017).

Table 10

Perceived Opportunities During Non-Teaching Times for Professional Development

Answer Choices	Responses	Actual Count
Above Average	43.24%	16
Average	37.84%	14
Outstanding	8.11%	3
Below Average	5.41%	2
Poor	5.41%	2

The next section explores the needs of charter school administrators in regard to supporting their educator who serve the population of students with disabilities. When working with children with developmental disabilities, teachers can accomplish a great deal by managing the learning environment proactively to prevent behavior problems and promote learning (Flower, McKenna, & Haring, 2017; Ryan, Sanders, Katsiyannis, & Yell, 2007; Meyen, Vergason, & Whelan, 1998).

Identified students may also experience behavior or learning problems because they lack key skills (e.g., capacity to interact with other children in socially appropriate ways). Children with developmental disabilities should therefore have explicit skills-training in deficit areas as a central component in their curriculum. Table 11 represents narrative responses from administrators regarding desired supports.

Table 11

Charter School Administrator Desired Supports

-
- Networking with other SPED teachers within the charter management group.
 - PD for teaching mild to moderate SPED students within general education courses. Strategies for accommodations for SPED students
 - Additional time to prep materials and collaborate with special education providers.
 - Collaborating with other school sites
 - Collaboration with teachers across other school sites
 - Not sure
 - Collaboration
 - Additional strategies in handling severe behaviors and differentiating instruction
 - More in-depth training on co-teaching models and curriculum modifications or alternative curriculum implementation.
 - Our SPED teachers have many opportunities to collaborate, research, and are given many PD opportunities that truly support their practice.
 - Updates on changes in Ed code or law
 - General teacher ownership
 - Time with our Special Ed Program Administrator assigned to our campus to model ways to modify assignments for new teachers. Time to observe the co-teaching model used at our other sites successfully.
 - Clarification
 - How to deal with behaviors when having non-structured time
 - N.A.
 - Regular meetings with RSP teachers, extra time for planning, district support for special education services
 - We will continue providing teacher professional development.
 - Providing teacher aides
 - Resources that focus on differentiation
-

Table 11 (continued)

-
- Not really sure how to answer this question. More paid time outside of the classroom. Not possible with current state funding.
 - Workshops
 - Just more time!
 - It would be good to have specialist come to school sites and model best special Ed practices.
 - How to provide accommodations
 - Co-teaching
 - Book club and co-teaching trainings
 - Differentiated instructional strategies
 - Time to collaborate and prep lessons for SWD
 - More opportunities for planning and co-teaching
 - None
 - Additional PD
 - Time to plan, time to liaise
 - Access to structured PD on interventions for the sped student in Gen Ed
 - More educational conferences
-

With increases in the special education population reported, the researcher explored the impact on the charter school in regard to the overall special education workloads. While 10.81% reported a significant increase in their workload in regard to supporting students with disabilities, 54.05% reported that there had been a moderate increase; 21.62% indicated that the workload stayed and 13.51% reported a decrease (see Table 12).

Table 12

Workload Increases Related to Growth in Special Needs Student Population

Answer Choices	Responses	Actual Count
Moderate increase	54.05%	20
Workload stayed	21.62%	8
Decrease	13.51%	5
Significantly increased	10.81%	4

Table 13 lists narrative responses to this question. Several factors could be influencing the overall child-count numbers and the shifts in categorization. Anecdotal evidence has indicated that some children with disabilities are being reclassified; for example, a child who might once have been identified as intellectually disabled or emotionally disturbed might now be classified as autistic. Some children who in previous years would not have crossed the special education threshold may now meet a state's identification guidelines. Also, policy changes such as the rise of response to intervention, an educational framework designed to provide targeted assistance to academically lagging students, have been tagged as one possible reason why fewer children are identified with specific learning disabilities (Zirkel, 2017; Haraway, 2012).

Table 13

Statements by Charter School Administrators on the Perception of Workload

- More paperwork and more preparations for implementing accommodations and/or modifications.
- Accommodations, modifications, finding appropriate materials, paperwork, planning
- Almost 25%
- Having students with IEP's requires additional documentation of services provided

Table 13 (continued)

-
- It varies from year to year. Our caseload gets heavy at the beginning and end of the school year. We need to work with parent inquiries about wanting IEPs for their kids who are meeting standards. We are a proactive group and have embraced the new SST model = SSPT.
 - Increase need for collaboration, co-teaching, Positive-Behavior Training, IEP training, strategies
 - More IEP's and staffing needs
 - More testing and IEP meetings
 - We recently added a mod/sev program to meet the needs of our students and employ our own in-house special Ed coordinator
 - It takes time to talk to the Sped dept. and to make accommodations for students.
 - More time lesson planning. Less whole group instructional time when dealing with behaviors
 - Differentiating instruction and assessments increases the planning time for teachers.
Collaboration with RSP teachers to make sure that each student has instruction tailored to their IEP requires additional meeting time outside of class.
 - Our school is 19% Students with Disabilities so the workload increase is very significant.
 - Complex IEP's and many more advocates and lawyers involved in the process
 - Having more students with special needs
 - Behavior needs have increased. We all also see a need for parenting classes to inform parents of the needs of the child. Also, collaboration with outside agencies to support this need.
 - Planning & organizing individualized materials & supports to meet both academic and behavioral needs. Preparation and meeting time to attend IEP's, SST's, 504's and collaboration with special services providers
 - We spend more time collaborating across our team.
 - Ensuring there is sufficient time in school day for teachers to collaborate and co-plan
 - We have seen an increase in the frequency and degree of defiant and/or aggressive behaviors among our students with special needs.
 - Master schedule cohort grouping and T.A support
-

The next section investigated the perceived stress level experienced by staff in regard to the workload attributed to their school sites. Meeting the daily learning and behavioral needs of students makes teaching a stressful job. Although not all stress associated with teaching is negative, stress that reduces a teacher's motivation can have deleterious effects such as alienation from the workplace, absenteeism, and attrition. In fact, when special education teachers are highly stressed by the unmanageability of their workload, they are more likely to leave the special education classroom (Miller, Brownell, & Smith, 1995). The ability to successfully manage stresses related to teaching is critical if special education teachers are to survive and thrive in the classroom. Despite the current trend toward school-based decision-making, many schools remain bureaucratic organizations where teachers have little control over major decisions in their environments and frequently work in isolation (Skrtic, 1991). Further, with increasing demands to be accountable, teachers' work is becoming more intense, leaving many teachers feeling emotionally exhausted (Hargreaves, 1994). Thus, in school bureaucracies, teachers may become stressed by role overload and lack of autonomy.

Additionally, since the focus of teachers' efforts is to help students, many teachers enter special education because of their desire to help children and youth. While the desire to help others can lead to strong student-teacher relationships and can provide teachers with commitment to education, this same desire can also make it difficult for teachers to leave their work at the schoolhouse door. In fact, professionals who are empathic, sympathetic, dedicated, idealistic, and people-oriented are vulnerable to experiencing excessive stress (Cherniss, 1980; Pines, Aronson & Kafry, 1981), particularly when they face the multitude of problems that students with disabilities present. As indicated below, 51.35% reported a neutral response regarding if stress had been added to their work; 8.92% indicated that they moderately agreed; 13.51% strongly

agreed that there has been a significant increase in their stress levels. Also, 13.51% reported that they disagreed that there has been an increase in stress levels. Additionally, 2.70% moderately disagreed that there has been an increase in stress levels (See Table 14).

Table 14

Respondents' Answers for Stress Levels Associated with Working with Students with Special Needs

Answer Choices	Responses	Actual Count
Neutral	51.35%	9
Disagree	13.51%	5
Strongly agree	13.51%	5
Moderately agree	18.92%	7
Moderately disagree	2.70%	1

With charter schools oftentimes having less fiscal ability than their public counterparts, the researcher sought to find in what areas that charter school administrators felt they could benefit from in terms of additional support/resources. Figure 1 indicates, by a rate of almost 80%, that charter school administrators would be interested having more teacher-focused workshops and access to supplemental resources in order to support both their students with disabilities and the providers who work with these students.

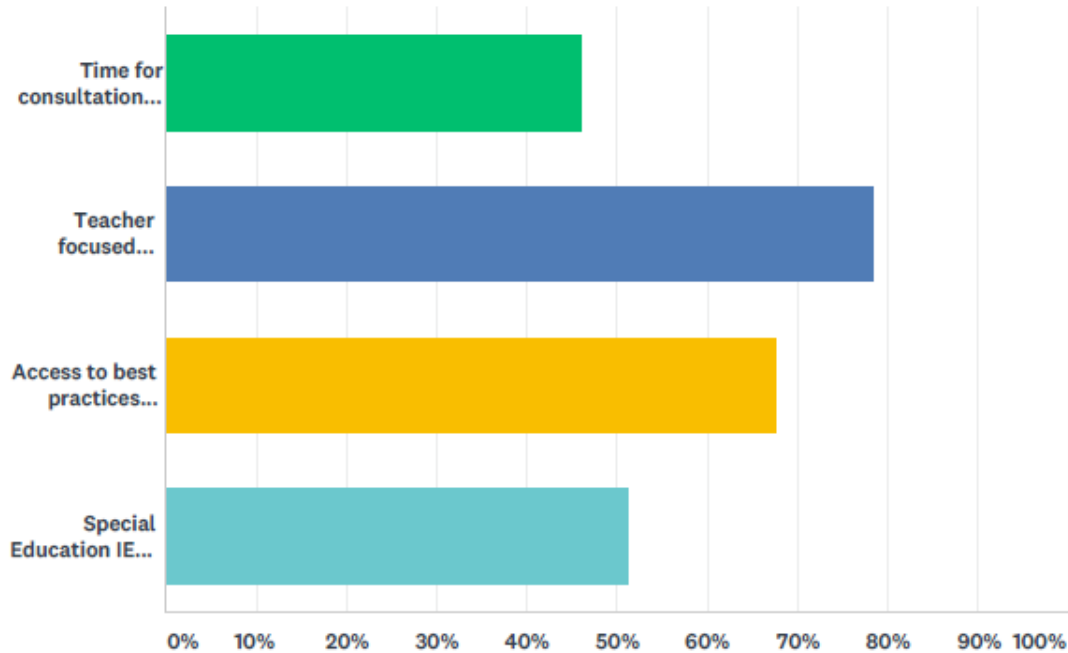


Figure 1. Programs Charter School Administrators Are Interested in for Further Support

A component of the charter school system that was unique from the participants is the range and scope, in terms of grade levels, of this educational environment. In this study, this grade makeup will be a delimitation for this study, in that the comparison with traditional public schools is not equivalent. Table 15 presents the grade ranges represented.

Table 15

Charter School Grade Ranges

Grades	Responses
Transitional Kindergarten to 12th	5
Transitional Kindergarten to 6th	1
Transitional Kindergarten to 8th	2
Transitional Kindergarten to 5th	3
Transitional Kindergarten to 2nd	2
Kindergarten to 12th	1
Kindergarten to 8th	1
Kindergarten to 6th	1
Kindergarten to 5th	1
Kindergarten to 1st	1
1st – 6th	1
5th to 8th	1
6th – 12th	3
6th – 8th	3
7th – 12th	1
7th – 8th	1
9th – 12th	5

Demographics of Respondents

Concerning the years of experience that the site administrators had, 43.24% reported 10 years plus of experience; 32.43% reported to having between 0 to 5 years of experience; 24.32% was between 5 – 10 years of experience. The demographic section indicated that 64.86% of respondents were females and 35.14% were males (see Table 17, Figure 15). The age range of respondents was 67.57% reported for 40+ years old and 27.03% between 31 – 40 years old; 21 – 20 years old at 5.41%.

Qualitative Results

Qualitative data was gathered over both phases of the research. In the first phase of the research, single open-ended questions were embedded in the research survey. The QUAL data was derived from a combination of 4 open-ended interview questions with 3 respondents. Of the 38 charter school administrators surveyed, 9 indicated a willingness to participate in a follow-up in-depth interview; 3 were interviewed. The selected individuals all have been employed at both charter schools and public schools. Currently, the interviewees are principal, assistant principal and program specialist, respectively. The interviewees were assigned a unique individual code that will be used to identify their responses during the qualitative portion of this study. The interviews were recorded. Their informed consent letters specifically granted permission for the researcher to do so. The researcher also sought and received verbal permission at the start of the interviews, by asking interviewee to acknowledge that they are aware and had approved of the interview being recorded. These interviews were transcribed in their entirety into a single document. Those documents were then combined into one document in which participants' answers were grouped by question so that the researcher could compare answers. All three were associated with the public charter school from Los Angeles and Orange Counties in Southern

California. The following were the responses of the three purposively selected respondents that were interviewed.

Table 16

Charter School Administrator Interviewees (Coding)

-
- | | |
|----------|---------------|
| ▪ Plus 1 | Participant 1 |
| ▪ Plus 2 | Participant 2 |
| ▪ Plus 3 | Participant 3 |
-

Questions and Responses

QUESTION 1: How long have you been an administrator at a charter school?

Plus 1: “Three years. I started off as administrator overseeing curriculum and instruction, three months then I became assistant principal.”

Plus 2 – “Six years at charter and now employed at a district.”

Plus 3 – “I’m no longer an administrator with charter, I’m a program specialist. So far, I worked with charter school, at least there are over 300 in California. Then I was directly involved with 40 in Los Angeles, as a special Ed, program specialist. But previously, I worked as an assistant principal for a year with a large team in Los Angeles. Then I worked as a program specialist for-- I did for a very large team.”

QUESTION 2: Have you worked as an administrator in the typical public school? If yes, can you highlight any notable similarities or differences you have observed and experienced with regards to special education programming?

Plus 1: “In regards to legality we always met timelines, we always met dates. There was just a sense of informality to it. I feel like at the district school site right now there is just much more of a formalized process, not that we weren't doing anything but-

The similarity is that the case managers are also the special Ed teacher and that was the same at my charter school. The major difference is that at our charter school our special education teacher and case manager was actually from the district. She wasn't an employee of our charter school she was an employee of the district. She was there all the time. She wasn't really our employee but she worked at our site. At our charter school, we only had mild moderate. All students were in normal courses and then almost every single special education student was in an academic support class, which was a tutorial extra study hall type period with the special Ed teacher. What was a constant battle was convincing the special education teacher that not every student on IEP needed this, because it took away a class period from them. Some of these students who happen to have an IEP, we're also capable of. Because our special education teacher was provided by the district and the districts always have interesting relationships with charter schools because okay -- districts don't like charter schools because charter schools will take away students which takes away money, ADA. They essentially -- we felt gave us the person that they didn't want in their school. We did have a school psychologist, but visited us when we needed him and he was from the district. We were technically one of his school sites, and then also if a student needed a speech or counseling the providers would come in.

Plus 2: “I'll say same in the use of the push in and push out model.”

Interviewer: “Okay, do you believe that they're in compliance, like you guys are following all the timelines and all the expectations?”

Plus 2: Yes.

Plus 3: “In both charter and district settings, you have an obligation to provide procedural safeguards to students. In the past, they were more mild/moderate but now we're starting a lot more students with large severities. That's something at charter that I'm struggling with. Definitely charter's making improvements in that area to make sure they have the resources to serve the students. I think just in general, the biggest difference between charter and district and special ed program is districts historically have more resources for all types of learners, where charter, often are not from the beginning, they don't have a lot of these systems in place or resources or knowledge surrounding the kind of students with more severe needs, but that's something that they're definitely growing at. Regardless, obligation doesn't change. Charter gets the students with moderate disabilities, they just often have to really figure it out. They figure out the students' program as they go. It's interesting because the first charter I worked with-- both of them were really large and in Los Angeles, one of them was a first year school, and with that [unintelligible 00:03:24] psychologists were called service providers, they contracted it out. Although there were an RSP on site, with a very large campus, but then the second organization, I worked with was different, and I was a program specialist with them, with special Ed.

We had all of our teaching staff were onsite, we'd share between three or four schools that teach the same thing. OT with a contract out, AP we contracted out. Most time you have bigger student populations, you can just-- You can typically in-house it. The smaller the student population, then once you get, I guess, a certain number of students with services, physically it makes more sense. Just program-wise, and you have people onsite which is so much more seriously, the rapport, it's not just a contract person coming in for 30 minutes a week, they're actually there, they have an office. It's much more beneficial.

Interviewer: I have a question. Do you think that it affected the types of FAPE offers that were offered since, let's say, the onsite provider wasn't really there? Was the charter a little bit more conservative with their FAPE offer, or was it, it didn't matter, they did their best and make sure that students got their services?

Plus 3: Yes, I don't think that ever came into play as far as whatever the student needed to offer, FAPE was going to be made. You don't make programming decisions based on fiscal limitations. You deal with that afterwards and they figure it out, whatever the student needs to, they're going to get.

QUESTION 3: What was your opinion of level of professional development provided to teachers at the charter school site?

Plus 1: “Last year, I cannot remember one professional development that was provided to teachers that regarded specialists. In the years before that the only professional development that was [quote-quote] given to teachers about special Ed was done by the special Ed teacher herself.”

Plus 2: “I'll say limited; there might have professional development for teachers, in general, but as far as having anything specialized, not much.”

Interviewer: “I see. Okay, good. Therefore, you can conclude that teachers really weren't given that much instructional support during non-teaching time, the specialist.”

Plus 2: Correct, it was the college prep environment. I would do a lab style. I think that would be one of other differences and the severity of the issues. Like the most severe thing in my head was like an autistic kid. Who barely talk, kind of thing. But no serious stuff, no severe disabilities.”

Plus 3: “The PDs were pretty awesome. I would actually say it was better than the district, to be quite honest. There was more opportunity. There was more work days in the charter as well.

Teachers actually work more, I think, and that's because district administrators have to work more anyway. There were a lot of built-in PD, teachers in charter and that wasn't there in the district. In the district you only get like one day since school started, and maybe half a day at the end of the year and it was just-- Both of the charters always every quarter there would be a full day for the teachers. That was actually really awesome. Yes, they got a lot of that at PD and then with the them they worked with, there were coaches, and in instructional areas. There would be a life coach, then an athletic coach, and then an expert in that content area. They would schedule time with the new teachers to work on [unintelligible 00:07:19] and give them lots of feedback. That was really pretty awesome. I know in the district, it may have changed, when I was there we certainly didn't have that whole support. Charters actually have to follow the exact same roles as public schools do because charters take public funds. That's why they have to enroll students no matter whatever needs they have. It doesn't matter if they're EL, have an IEP. They can't turn away students, which is definitely a myth that's definitely out there. It's true, districts do move a lot because of the charter. A lot of what I saw just in the Special Ed world because I don't want to generalize at all is that typically, there's been a breakdown of trust with the district school. Parents get frustrated and upset and often, that's one reason they don't want charter. Or a lot of what we see is that there's been a Special Ed or a SDC placement as the district offer of FAPE. Perhaps their parents want their child fully included. Most charters are full inclusion. That's a big carrot for parents. A lot of the philosophy in charters and their mission and vision is around inclusion. I think that really attracts parents who don't want their students in a separate classroom. I can only speak to some of what I've seen. I certainly don't know the generalized realm. A lot of times, it's just the district experience hasn't been positive. That's when they come to charter.”

QUESTION 4: What is the stress level experienced due to serving students with disabilities at your site?

Plus 1: “Because everything fell onto our shoulders. I had a part-time security guard who is also the part time janitor. I had to search students if there was a teacher who needed students pulled into class, I had to do it. We did the IEPs, I didn't have a secretary so it was -- you did everything. And we had a population of approximately 400 with about 36 with an IEP.”

Plus 2: “I want to say, probably, mess with scheduling. We've got a cope cohort the kids together. That would be a little stressful. I want to say also just making sure you've met A through G requirements. Because especially students who needed a math model in which the kids with a regular classroom they had a tutorial period and elective. They're learning math, to work on me IP goals and to help with their schoolwork. It would take an elective spot like the A through G elective which was meant to better prepare students for college admissions and stuff.”

Plus 3: “I wouldn't say it's specific only to special needs. In a charter, you have to often answer to the board. Decisions, charters, there's a lot of myths surrounding charter, what they're up against. I had a great district experience and I had a great charter experience, so I really don't see one as a better program or better to work for than the other. I think with anything, it depends on the individual experience. It depends on the actual site you're at. I've never worked for a small standalone charter school, and they face a lot of challenges. The six I have I haven't worked directly for them, I've only worked with them. Large CMOs often have pressures of the board in place so I was really fortunate, working for them.”

Limitations of Study

There were limitations to this research study due to the limited sample size of the number of charter school administrators in California that responded to the survey. This research study

focused on a specific geographical area, Los Angeles and Orange Counties in the Southern California area. Despite the aforementioned limitations, the findings in this study will provide important insight into the opinions of charter school administrators in regard to their current inclusion practices for students with special education needs.

Delimitations of Study

The delimitations utilized by the researcher in this research study were determined by a desire to gain a better understanding of the complete relationship that exists between the practices of charter schools in regard to their inclusive educational practices for disabled students. In order to gain the perspective of charter school administrators, the researcher only sought participants in the study who were administrators in charter schools. The focus on charter school administrators in this research study was limited to the public charter schools in California.

A second delimitation used by the researcher was the use of only schools in Southern California. This study does not explore other school administrator perspectives from neighboring counties within and outside of the Southern California region. A specific emphasis was placed on charter schools in Southern California for the administrators' perspectives.

A third delimitation for this study is that this study is only investigating the public charter school setting. This study does not explore the numerous for-profit charters that currently exist in the educational system.

The final delimitation of this research study was the variety in the school settings studied. The researcher examined a variety of placements and the diversity in this placement could pose some differences that may not be easily measured within the context of this study.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In the preceding chapter, the presentation and analysis of data were reported. Chapter 5 consists of a summary of the study, discussion of the findings, implications for practice, recommendations for further research, and conclusions. The purpose of the following sections is to expand upon concepts that were studied to provide a further understanding of their possible influence on and to give suggestions for further research targeting the knowledge of the service delivery models and trends in the charter school setting from the perspective of administrators. With charter schools being at the forefront of the contemporary educational reform movement for three decades now, it is important to measure the efficacy of this educational environment as it relates to students with special education needs.

It is correct that charter schools are often seen as autonomous learning institutions with the ability to create and follow alternative rules when compared to their public school counterparts. One area where that autonomy is not granted is with regard to their service delivery models for students with disabilities. "Although states provide varying degrees of autonomy by excusing charter schools from some or all of their laws and regulations, states may not waive the provisions of any federal statute or regulation" (Charter Schools and Special Education. n.d.). Similar to other public schools, charter schools are subjected to federal civil rights laws. They must comply with federal requirements relevant to serving students with disabilities. These requirements are included in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Charter Schools and Special Education, n.d.). The law as it currently stands prohibits the discrimination of students with disabilities, and this subsequently has a direct impact on the services received by

students with disabilities. To date, only a few studies focused on special education trends have been authored.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the efficacy of the services in charter school environments when compared against the traditional school setting, particularly given the rise in parents choosing to send their children to charter schools as an educational alternative setting (Schneider & Buckley, 2003). It was both important and necessary to determine whether students with disabilities in charter settings are being served in the same ways as their peers in typical schools.

This study was a QUAL QUAN QUAL design with surveys sent out to participants through Survey Monkey. The survey was composed of questions in a Likert-style format; responses here were used towards the quantitative analysis. For the qualitative analysis, the survey included some open-ended questions, which allowed respondents to write comments. In addition to the open-ended questions, follow-up interviews were conducted with three purposively selected respondents; their responses were included in the qualitative analysis.

Respondents answered questions on the special education delivery models at charter sites, which were then compared to the delivery models in typical public schools setting. This direct comparative analysis was able to be gained because the selected interviewees had experience in both settings. Their discussion further illuminated the primary questions of this study. These were included in the qualitative analysis. With the sample size of this study, the majority of respondents reported that the public charters were indeed in compliance with the expectation of the law.

Of the 263 surveys sent, 148 were opened, 31 were unopened, 36 bounced back due to email addresses not being viable, 48 participants opted out of the survey, and 38 participants completed the questionnaire with a 100% completion rate. Therefore, 38 surveys were considered to be legitimate for this research. The average time spent by participants to complete the survey was approximately 10 minutes. Surveys were sent over an 18-day time span. The uncompleted surveys were considered not suitable for this study. The three interviews conducted each took on an average of 15 minutes to complete.

This study included three research questions:

1. How do charter school administrators implement and address the special education program at their school site?
2. What are the different strategies dynamic charter school administrators cultivate with respect to other public school practices?
3. How do charter schools align with the law of inclusive practices for special needs students?

All three questions were answered through the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data garnered through this study. The data compiled from these questions were analyzed through basic statistical analysis measures as expressed in Chapter 4.

Implementation of Special Education Programming at Charter Schools

The findings resulting from research question one indicate that charter school administrators have a belief that they adhere to their legal obligation to provide procedural safeguards to all students, especially those with disabilities. Table 6 shows the responses of charter administrators with regards to alignment with the law of inclusive practices for special

needs students. One hundred percent of respondents asserted that their charter school is aware of the law and the education code that guides students with disabilities and is in compliance.

In terms of the service delivery model, 94% of participants responded that they had a special education teacher at each of their sites. This is significant because the special education teacher is often designated as the case manager for the students with IEPs. Coordination of service delivery is typically initiated by them. Also, another important special education team member found present at 82% of school sites was a school psychologist, who is responsible for conducting the initial special education eligibility. By using assessment data and reports, they assist in developing programs that allow students to obtain programming that gives them educational benefit.

With regard to service delivery trends, respondents reported providing meaningful special education related supports to their educators on site (see Table 5). This finding is important because in order for programs to be successful, educators must access the necessary tools when servicing their students with disabilities. This is a vital activity for those working with students with special education needs. Access to best practices and strategies must be ongoing as this is a field that is constantly evolving to serve the needs of the students with disabilities.

In summary, charter schools adhere to and follow the same procedures as typical public schools when providing services to students with disabilities. This finding confirms that, at least from the perspective of charter school administrators, their practices are compliant and in line with the practices at the traditional schools.

Strategies used to Support Students with IEPs at Charters

The findings for this research question were collected during the qualitative portion of the study. During the interviews, two of the participants expressed their viewpoints. One respondent

explained that even though the charter schools take seriously their obligation to address the needs of students with disabilities, one of the biggest issues they face is fiscal restraint. The less financial resources one has, the more creative in effectively implementing the procedures one has to be. The respondent explained that because their charter was smaller, they often had several responsibilities and roles even within the development of the specialized academic programs for students, which, at times, made the procedures arduous to complete. This participant also expressed the observation that in the charter setting, the IEP process was less formal. Currently, the participant is working at a traditional public school and reported that the procedures at the public school appear to be more formal in their implementation.

Interestingly, Plus 3, the third interviewee, commented that though there is a common belief that districts typically have more funding than charters, in some instances, charters that were large were able to provide comparable resources to their staff including more professional development opportunities. Of the three interviewees, two highlighted the limitation of resources. The limitation of resources affected the flow of the delivery of services to both students with disabilities and to the educators that supported them. One of the respondents added that in two years, there had not been any special education-related professional development offered at their charter site. It is significant to note that most charters are small and the reality may be that educators at charters simply do not get the same level of ongoing professional development to aid them in serving their population of students with disabilities.

Another difference in charter schools was that the population size often limited the number of service providers located on-site. This is different from most public schools that have a majority of the service provider's on-site. Certainly, there are providers who are contracted as outside vendors. However, in the traditional setting, most service providers are in-house. The

smaller charters tended to contract outside service providers or defer to the district that holds their charters to provide those services that students with disabilities need.

A similarity across the board was that case managers were always special education teachers, even in charter schools. One difference was that one of the charter administrators interviewed claimed that their one and only special education teacher was not an employee of the charter—that teacher was the responsibility of the district of the charter. The most important finding here, based on the quantitative and qualitative results, was that services for students with disabilities were delivered to students no matter the fiscal limitation of the charter sites. The districts of services assured that services were provided to students with special education needs.

Alignment with Inclusive Educational Law

The findings in this study indicate that the charter school administrators indeed have the perspective that they align with the inclusive practices for students with special education needs. This is evidenced by the quantitative and qualitative data from Chapter 4. Because the public charters receive federal funding, they are mandated to align with the legal expectation of the law. The federal special education law, P. L. 94-142 (Education of the Handicapped Act of 1975, also known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA) ensures that a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) is made accessible to students with disabilities and gives funding to assist states to achieve its requirements. The fundamental components of the federal education law, P. L. 94-142, also known as FAPE, include the evaluation of a student referred for a suspected disability, the determination of eligibility for special education, and other relevant requirements. If a student is determined to meet the criteria for special education services, an individualized educational program (IEP) is developed. The IEP includes the student's present performance levels, annual goals and short-term objectives or benchmarks, and the special

education and related services to be rendered for the student's educational benefit and other related components. In addition to the IEP documentation, there are other requirements that the law mandates; these included parental notice, consent, and involvement, due process rights and other special procedures governing suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities. Recently, with the growth of the charter school sector, the law now requires states and local education agencies (LEAs) to assure that students with disabilities attending charter schools are served in a congruent and equitable manner as any other child with a disability in any other type of public school (Rhim & McLaughlin, 2001). Adherence to special education requirements is implemented with the aid of the specialized staff that works with students with disabilities. Also important to note for this question are the current program delivery methods in charter schools. The researcher was not able to deduce whether or not most students with special education needs were served in the inclusive classroom, and if it was the intent of these school sites to include all students in the learning environment. With that said, it is important to note that even though the public schools have more funding, currently their rate of including students with special education needs remains low when compared to their charter school counterparts (National Center, n.d.). This finding could be potentially valuable for public school administrators who are looking for creative and successful ways to implement inclusive practices at their sites.

Discussion of the Findings

The results of this study indicate that it is the belief of the charter schools' administrators that comparable services are rendered to students with special education in their charter settings. Though the service delivery model differs from site to site, and this may be mostly due to financial constraints and the range of makeups of these unique environments, the charter school programs are reported to be successfully implementing educational programs for their students

with disabilities. The makeup for service providers (see Table 2) show that most charters host a combination of in-house providers and outside providers. The services that students with disabilities need are met through these various routes. Certainly, it is preferable to have an onsite provider, but the law does not specify the mode of delivery service, rather that students receive the services to assist them in reaching the educational benefit as it applies to them. The researcher asked one of the interviewees whether the limitations in funding affected the FAPE offered to students. Without hesitation, the respondent asserted the FAPE offers made to students at the charter schools was never based on fiscal ability but rather by student need as it is the public school setting. In conclusion, the results in this section illuminate a major finding of this study, and that is that students with special educational are being served as are their peers in the public schools.

Implications for Practice

The variety of options accessible for general education elementary and secondary schooling in the United States today falls along a spectrum. This includes options from homeschooling to independent study to private schools, and finally to charter schools. Charter schools, being one form of choice along that range of publicly-financed education, must be explored to determine efficacy as it serves all students, especially those with special education needs. The implication of this study is that the charter school can be seen as comparable educational facilities where all students' needs can be met. The idea that charter schools are unable to meet the needs of their students with disabilities is unfounded according to the results of this study. The charter school administrators with an overwhelming majority report compliance with the law, educational expectations, and practices.

Recommendations for Further Research

For further research, it would be beneficial to not only examine the perspective of the charter school administrators, but to consider the point of view of other stakeholders, parents, students, teachers and others. Another special consideration would be to examine actual data at these sites to determine service delivery models and student IEPs to investigate compliance and means for measuring student progress without the reliance of the perspective of the participants. Another study that should be conducted would be a comparative study of a traditional public school and a public charter in the same geographic area. This would reduce some of the delimitation and limitation issues that the researcher encountered during this study. It would give an even clearer picture of the practices at both sites.

Conclusions

With charter schools on the rise in the United States, it is important to examine this rapidly changing component of the educational landscape, more specifically as it relates to students with disabilities. The charter school varies widely from state to state, site to site, and in other characteristics. This variation elicits further examination. Students with disabilities are one of the most vulnerable groups, and educational programming designed for them must be measured for efficiency and compliance with the law. The obligation of charter schools to conform to all special educational requirements and regulations has significant implications, not only for procedural matters about students with disabilities, but also for many other aspects of a charter school's operation. This study, though limited in its scope, serves as a pivotal step towards understanding the special education procedures in charter school setting. More studies need to be completed in this area of analyzing alternative settings to add to the literature.

CHAPTER 6: EPILOGUE

The researcher, who is both a public school education specialist and an owner of a learning center that serves students with special education needs, became interested in this topic when she began to encounter a surge of students with IEPs enrolling into her public school and also into her center from charter schools. The researcher encountered her first student arriving from a charter school about two years before this study began. Up until this point, there had been an increase in students choosing to enroll in the charter school system. However, the researcher had not considered the effects on students with disabilities that were also enrolling in these types of educational settings.

When the researcher began to work with this first student, as is customary, she reviewed the current IEP document that the student arrived at the public school with. It is standard procedure and the requirement of the law to implement an IEP as is until the new intake team has had 30 days to review and assess it for its appropriateness in the current setting. Within approximately 30 days, the intake school team is required to reconvene to reassess the current IEP. At that meeting, the IEP is permitted to be revised to meet the standards of the new placement and to determine its appropriateness to the student's needs.

As an education specialist, the first thing the researcher did was to conduct a basal paperwork review of legal compliance of the IEP document. Upon the first inspection, the IEP Document revealed that all items listed had been completed. The initial check did not include rigor or assessment of the educational benefit to the student. The original goal was to assess whether a comprehensive IEP document was delivered. Upon further review of the IEP, the researcher noticed that the IEP on the surface was mostly completed. Most of the required boxes were checked and filled with legally mandated information. However, when the IEP document

was reviewed further and examined with a more thorough analysis, the researcher found that the document as a whole did not have the level of rigor and completeness that the typical public school IEP had.

The issues found in that initial charter school IEP were as follows: The pre-academic/academic/functional skills areas were vague at best. Statements made in these areas were not discernible and subjective and therefore, not measurable. This is a serious issue with any IEP document. The IEP document should meet the stranger test, meaning that the document should be implementable at any site in the United States upon review. This document did not meet that test. It was written in a way that only the author could discern any progress made by the student. This issue could have led to the denial of FAPE to the student, a critical element to the IEP record. In the area of health, there was a typo that listed the wrong medication for the student. Typos can undoubtedly occur, but this typo could have posed a life-threatening issue for the student. Under vocational, parents concerns were indicated, and that is not the appropriate area to indicate parent concerns. Also, in the area of concern, parents expressed concern with social interaction and in the area of communication and documentation with peers and adults. However the IEP still stated that the student communicated well with adults and peers. This was an area of suspected disability, and an assessment was not done in this area. Regarding the goals written for the student, they did not address all areas of needs, and this was in fact a denial of FAPE to the student. The accommodation page was bizarre. It included over 17 accommodations that did not appear to be specific to the student's needs. The area for state testing was left blank with an explanation that charter site did not participate in state testing. For a student receive educational benefit, goals need to be written to address areas of need and that was not done. Finally, the progress report which included the IEP document could be described as vague

at best. Benchmarks included phrases such as “Student is meeting benchmark and progress towards the goal,” but there was an incomplete description of student’s current performance. Percentages for trials and markers for assessing progress were incorrect. In the summation, after a more intensive assessment of the IEP document received by the researcher, it was determined in the current IEP that the student did not meet the criteria for determining the educational benefit to student, and thus a denial of FAPE, a legal standard. At the 30 day meeting, all of the areas of inadequacy were addressed. Parents expressed that the IEP at the public school was conducted in a more thorough and efficient way. They asserted that they believed that charter school was unable to address the needs of their student. They also expressed that they did believe that the charter school staff was equipped to serve their student. They believed that services were not offered due to fiscal abilities to the sites and that their student had fallen significantly behind having attended the charter setting.

As an education specialist, the researcher interests were piqued with this initial contact. Not wanting to judge all charter school setting based on this singular experience, the researcher focused on the work with the new student. This student struggled to keep pace in the specialized academic setting that he joined. The researcher believes that his struggles were attributed to a lack of preparation by the charter school and not just as a result of his disability. Over time, the student began to show marked improvements. Following this encounter, the researcher began seeing a surge of students in charter schools with IEP re-enrolling to the traditional public school sector. This certainly piqued the researcher’s interest. In addition to this increase in enrollment, the researcher also started to experience students from charters enrolling in her charter for supplemental services. In two years, the enrollment of students from charter grew by 70%. It was precisely at this moment that the researcher began examining the

literature to examine any studies done with regards to this particular subgroup. The researcher found that research conducted in the area was minimal to none. These types of educational programming are available in this alternative, yet public setting. The initial idea that the researcher had was to learn the types of programming that her students were receiving and continuing providing valuable services as any special education teacher would. The researcher found that when she reviewed student IEPs from charters, they did not have the same level of rigor or content as the public documents. The researcher informally began having discussions with parents and reviewing the educational plans of these students, and it was these discussions that showed the need for further study of these topics in the charter school setting.

The findings of this study affirm that charter schools align with legal expectations and those expectations are minimal. This study serves as a baseline of sorts. Charter schools cannot receive public funding without meeting this baseline. With that said, students with disabilities in charter setting deserve the same level of rigor as their counterparts in the traditional public school setting. This study serves as a basis to determine that the basic legal expectation is met. Further studies should consider examining IEP documents and comparing them with the legal standard and their traditional counterpart. In addition to such comparison studies, an unbiased analysis should be administered with a correlation analysis of charter school and intake school analysis of the IEP documents. Garnering only the perspective of the charter site analysis was the initial level and a more in-depth analysis is required to adequately study the educational benefit of students with special needs in the charters schools. Parents have the right to send their student to alternative settings, but it is the responsibility of all us to assure that the education students are receiving enable to be able to ready for post-secondary life and be productive citizens of our country.

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Appendix A

IRB Checklist

Appendix A



APPENDIX A: CHECKLIST FOR SUBMITTING YOUR IRB PROTOCOL

1. EXEMPT REVIEWS

- ☐ Take the IRB training <http://phrp.nihtraining.com> and download certificates of completion (for all researchers, university supervisor/sponsor, and if applicable external thesis/dissertation supervisor)
- ☐ Complete the Exempt Review Checklist
- ☐ Complete the Exempt Review Application and obtain signatures
- ☐ Complete Site Authorization Form(s) as applicable, and obtain signatures for non-CUI sites
- ☐ Attach any measurement instruments and other materials to be distributed to participants (e.g., surveys, tests, questionnaires, interview questions); and if applicable, translations AND have a Verification of Translation Accuracy Form signed by someone other than yourself who is adept in the language
- ☐ Attach recruitment materials, if using
- ☐ Submit all of the above together in one e-mail to irb@cu.edu with "(name of program) IRB Application - Exempt Review - (Last Name)" in the subject line

2. EXPEDITED AND FULL BOARD REVIEWS

- ☒ Take the IRB training <http://phrp.nihtraining.com> and download certificates of completion (for all researchers, university supervisor/sponsor, and if applicable external thesis/dissertation supervisor)
- ☒ Use the Expedited Review Checklist to determine if your project needs Expedited or Full Board review. If your project meets requirements for an Expedited Review, complete and attach the Expedited Review Checklist with your application
- ☒ Complete the Expedited & Full Board Application and Protocol Narrative and obtain signatures
Note: The Expedited and Full Board application is basically the same; however, the length of review time is longer for Full Board Applications.
- ☒ Attach any measurement instruments and other materials to be distributed to participants (e.g., surveys, tests, questionnaires, interview questions)
- ☒ Attach appropriate consent form(s), letters, and scripts containing all of the elements of informed consent
- ☐ If applicable, provide translations of both the consent forms and all measurement instruments to be distributed to participants AND have a Verification of Translation Accuracy Form signed by someone other than yourself who is adept in the language
- ☐ If applicable, attach Site Authorization Form and other institutions' IRB approvals
- ☒ Attach recruitment materials, if using
- ☒ Submit all of the above together in one e-mail to irb@cu.edu with "(name of program) IRB Application - (type of review requested—expedited or full board) - (Last Name)" in the subject line

Appendix E

**APPENDIX E: EXPEDITED & FULL BOARD APPLICATION & PROTOCOL NARRATIVE**

Please complete the Expedited Review Checklist to determine if your study falls under Expedited or Full Board Review and mark the appropriate level of review. Note: The primary difference between Expedited and Full Board review is the length of time needed for the IRB to complete the review process. To be completed by the Principal Researcher. All items must be filled in. If "Not applicable," explain why.

LEVEL OF REVIEW: ☐ Expedited ☐ Full Board

Researcher's Name	Nnenna Maksoud Okpara
Researcher's Department and/or Course	Educational Leadership
Researcher's CUI Email Address (or other if non-CUI affiliated)	nnenna.maksoud@eagles.cui.edu
Researcher's Phone Number	(949) 306 - 9698
Researcher's CUI E# (if applicable)	E00236794
Title of the Project	A MIXED METHOD STUDY OF CHARTER SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' PERSPECTIVE OF EFFECTIVE INCLUSION PRACTICES

Researcher's Status: (check one)

☒ CUI Student ☐ CUI Faculty ☐ CUI Adjunct Faculty

☐ CUI Staff ☐ Other (explain): _____

Other Researchers: (use cui.edu email, if applicable)

Name: N/A Role: N/A

Email: N/A Phone: N/A

Researcher's University Supervisor/Sponsor information:

Name: Belinda Karge Role: Professor of Doctoral Studies at Concordia University

Email: Belinda.Karge@cui.edu Phone: (949) 214-3333

This research is for (check one):

☐ Graduate Thesis or Project ☐ Independent Study

☒ Doctoral Dissertation ☐ Honors Project

☐ Classroom Project ☐ Presidential Show Case

☐ Other (please describe) _____

If you are CUI Faculty or Staff conducting research as part of an outside institution's program, list institution, degree, and program: N/A

Beginning date: (must follow IRB approval) Feb. 28, 2017

End date: (must follow IRB approval) Feb. 28, 2018

Location(s) of the research: Southern California Region

Appendix E



Participants: check all below descriptions that describe your participants

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Female / <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Male | <input type="checkbox"/> Inmates |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child Development Center | <input type="checkbox"/> Children with special needs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children (17 or younger) | <input type="checkbox"/> Patients in institutions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English as foreign language learners | <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant women |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adults competent to consent | <input type="checkbox"/> Adults not competent to consent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CUI students | <input type="checkbox"/> CUI Faculty/Staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, explain: _____ | |

Total number of participants proposed: 100

Funding:

1. Are you seeking funding for this research? ☒ No ☐ Yes

2. Will participants be compensated for participating? ☒ No ☐ Yes

If yes, describe in summary.

3. Does the funding agency require IRB approval? ☒ No ☐ Yes

If yes, provide all relevant forms, instructions, etc. with this application.

PROTOCOL NARRATIVE

Please review Protocol Narrative Instructions at the end of this document for information on what is expected in each of the following sections. Provide enough information so that reviewers will have a clear and concise understanding of exactly what is planned for your proposed study. Incomplete information will delay the IRB Review process.

I. INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER INSTITUTIONS

N/A – Researcher will be obtaining perspectives from charter school administrators across Southern California only not institutions.

II. HUMAN PARTICIPANTS INVOLVEMENT

Please complete all sections below. If a section is not applicable, indicate "N/A."

A. Purpose(s)/Objective(s) of the study: (1-2 paragraphs)

With charter school enrollment on the rise in schools in the United States, it is important to explore the efficacy of special education services provided to students with disabilities in the charter school settings. Charter schools, like other public schools, are charged with delivery comparable educational programs (Baily, 2004; Bifulco, Ladd, & Duke Univ., 2004; Downing, Spencer, & Cavallaro, 2004; Estes, 2004). The federal guidelines and mandates that guide other schools must be followed. In 1997, California was found to be out

compliance by the federal government with their rate of inclusive practices ("Overview of Special Education in California," n.d.). As a state, it was found that more students with disabilities were receiving their instructions in more segregated classrooms than other states.

With the emphasis on accountability in special education programs in California, school administrators are faced with the challenge of developing and implementing balanced, inclusive educational programs for their students who are designated as having special education needs. The researcher will explore the service delivery models implemented in charter schools from the perspective of charter school site administrators. Currently, there exists very limited peer-reviewed research of students with disabilities in this type of alternative setting. This research study will specifically examine charter school leadership perspectives regarding inclusive education as it relates to standards accountability, service delivery trends, and models, and general education professional development.

B. Subject Population

Charter school administrators who hold an EC-12 identifying certification across Southern California in not for profit settings.

Design/methodology of the study:

The Explanatory Sequential Design, also known as Qual-QUAN-Qual, will be utilized in this study. It will feature a three-phase design system. The first phase will include a review of the survey design and content by educational professionals, not in charter schools. This step will serve as a way to verify that questions included in the survey are both appropriate and valid for this study. This stage increases the validity of measurement tool. The next phase will be to send out the survey to charter school administrators. The results of the survey will lead to the final phase of data collection, and that would be follow-up interviews of three to five charter administrators. The determination of whom to interview will depend on the results of the survey. The researcher will interview participants who there are additional questions, or those can illuminate themes that are observed from survey results. The results from that second phase will be analyzed for statically significant difference or anomalies. Those results and findings from phase two, subsequently, drive and frame the follow-up questions for the final qualitative phase. In summary, the practitioner began by validating survey tool, then will collect quantitative data through the survey, which will be analyzed and then will transition to the collecting and analyze qualitative data (Creswell, 2015; Lochmiller & Lester, 2017).

C. Recruitment Plan

An introductory mass email with a link to the survey was sent to prospective charter school administrators who held the EC-12 identifying certification across Southern California using Survey Monkey. The email included a

brief introduction by the researcher, and a summary of the study was provided. In that email correspondence, perspective participants were informed that the information contained in surveys was maintained in confidence to the fullest extent of the law. Participants were also informed that participation was voluntary and also asked if they might be interested in a brief follow-up interview as a component of the survey. The non-random sampling techniques of convenience sampling, quota sampling, and purposive sampling were implemented for this study. For the qualitative part of the study, ten personal interviews with open-ended questions will be conducted based on follow-up from responses from the original survey distributed to participants. Participation is optional.

D. Methods, Materials and Devices

Setting and Participants

Data will be determined through random sampling: convenience, quota, and purposive sampling of charter school administrators in Southern California region. Convenience sampling due to the uncertainty of how much access there will be to target population, the charter school administrator. Availability of participants was a concern at the onset of the study. The quota sampling was included to have a target number of participants to increase the validity of the study. Finally, purposive sampling due to the desire to focus on participants that demonstrates the appropriate level of skill and knowledge, to respond to study questions. The sample for the study consisted of approximately 50 charter school administrators from public schools in Southern California. Schools that participated ranged in size from very small to schools comparable to public schools, with a mean of 400 students. The sample is diverse in their age, experience, race, and gender.

Instrumentation

The survey to be used in this study was developed in consultation with academic peers at Concordia University, Irvine and other experts in the Special Education field. An initial draft of the survey was emailed for feedback via Survey Monkey. From there a final survey was created and transferred to Survey Monkey for formatting and distribution. The survey will be optional for the participants. The survey will only allow for a “no response” in the demographics area. For the majority of the questions, the participant can select any opinion level the participant may have or type in that they do not wish to answer. Given that the survey is optional, the participant can stop at any time. The survey will be accessible through survey monkey, which has developed a reliable and secure data platform. The security embedded in survey monkey program assures security with the infrastructure and practices and reassures that data is appropriately protected. The survey will use the response data encryption rather than only a secure (SSL), and IP addresses will be masked in the settings of the survey. The data will be backed up hourly and regularly on the server and can be removed by the researcher to a spreadsheet at any time. The spreadsheet will have a timestamp for each respondent. Once the window closes

for responses, the online data will be destroyed, and only the Excel version of data will be used by the researcher for analysis and results. Participants will be informed that follow up interview is voluntary and they may or may not be contacted. Interviews location will be determined based on a mutually convenient location, if person, a signed consent will be obtained in person, if over the phone and a consent will be emailed to participants to be signed before interview begins. Recordings will be made on a secure recording device that will only be accessible by researcher and committee chair.

E. Confidentiality

Only the researcher will own the data. Data will only be assessed by researcher and committee chair only. Individual data will not be identifiable at the individual or school level, and therefore repercussions for information about school compliance is eliminated.

F. Compensation

There will be no compensation of any sort related to this study.

G. Potential Benefits

This study will provide the perspective of charter schools administrators regarding special education delivery model and compliance issues. It will reveal the analysis of the practice of serving students who are disabled in the charter educational system. With the current movement towards charter and alternate educational model, this system needs an examination to measure efficacy and compliance to the established federal norms. It will further act as a model for inclusive settings since most charter schools include their students who are disabled in the general classroom as a common practice. This aspect of the study is beneficial to all educational facilities that are incorporating the co-teaching model as their practice.

H. Potential Risks

When considering risks, the researcher is concerned with immediate risks to participants. These include fatigue from completing survey and loss of time. Another risk that may be associated with this study may pose the concern of participant for confidentiality.

I. Risk Reduction

To address the first mentioned potential risk of fatigue and time loss, participants will be informed during the orientation phase of the survey about the approximate amount of time needed to complete the survey and that participants can work at their pace. They may stop to take breaks as needed during the completion of the survey portion. They may also end their participation at any time without questions or consequences. The second risk of confidentiality concerns will be clearly addressed in the consent letters, and survey tool that individuals will

not be identifiable at the individual or school levels and all responses will be held in the strictest confidentiality. The research will be conducted in an ethical, fair and safe manner that protects human subjects.

II. INFORMED CONSENT

Please complete all sections below. If a section is not applicable, indicate "N/A."

A. Consent Process

At several stages in this study, participants will have opportunities to give consent. Participants will be informed that participation is voluntary and confidential. The first will be in the introductory email that informs prospective participants about the study and protections for them as participants. That email will feature a statement to the effect that by "clicking on the link for the survey that that individual is choosing to participate in the study". When the link is clicked again, there will be another a consent statement that informs participants that participation is both voluntary and confidential and they may choose to participate and have the right to stop their involvement in the study at any time during the survey. The last consent forms are attached to the survey where participants are offered the opportunity to participate in a follow-up interview by entering their contact information. Should a participant be chosen for a follow-up interview, a separate consent that requires a signature will be given to participant before any interview will take place.

B. Special Consent Provision

N/A



CONCORDIA
UNIVERSITY IRVINE Appendix E

☒ Copy of NIH Certificate(s) for all researchers/co-researchers and university supervisor(s) ☒ Copy of the completed Exempt Review Checklist ☒ Other materials as appropriate (e.g., Site Authorizations, measurement instruments, recruitment materials, translations, Verification of Translation Accuracy, etc.), please list:

RESEARCHERS AND SUPERVISORS ASSENT

I agree to follow the procedures outlined herein, and to ensure that the rights and welfare of human participants are properly protected. I will ensure the study does not commence until the study has been approved by the CUI IRB. I will promptly report additions, changes, or problems involving the rights or welfare of human participants to the IRB by sending the appropriate IRB form to the IRB at irb@cui.edu.

Printed Name of Researcher: *Nnenna Makouda Okpara* Date: *3/9/17*

Signature of Researcher: _____

Printed Name of Co-Researcher: *N/A* Date: *N/A*

Signature of Co-Researcher: *N/A*

Printed Name of University Supervisor (or CUI Faculty Sponsor): *Dr. Belinda Karge*

Signature of University Supervisor (or CUI Faculty Sponsor):

Belinda Karge

Title: *Professor of Doctoral Studies, Educational Leadership* Date:

NOTE: A member of the CUI faculty must be principal researcher, co-researcher, supervisor, or sponsor for projects utilizing human participants in research at Concordia University, Irvine. The faculty member is considered the responsible party for legal and ethical performance of the project.

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that
Nnenna Maksoud Okpara successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course
"Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 03/08/2017.

Certification Number: 2347360.

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Belinda Karge** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 01/20/2016.

Certification Number: 1957211.

Appendix B

IRB Application

Concordia University, Irvine Mail - [Ticket #3414] EDD IRB Application- Expedited Review- Maksoud (Karge)

4/18/17, 8:31 PM



Okpara, Nnenna <nnenna.okpara@eagles.cui.edu>

[Ticket #3414] EDD IRB Application- Expedited Review- Maksoud (Karge)

1 message

Office of Institutional Research <oir@cui.edu>

Thu, Mar 30, 2017 at 11:40 AM

To: nnenna.maksoud@eagles.cui.edu

Concordia University Irvine - Office of Institutional Research



Hello nnenna.maksoud@eagles.cui.edu,

**This message is from the
Concordia University Irvine
Office of Institutional Research.**

TICKET ID #3414

Date: Mar 03, 2017 @ 03:36 pm
Creator: nnenna.maksoud@eagles.cui.edu
Summary: EDD IRB Application- Expedited Review- Maksoud (Karge)

If you have any additional information regarding this case respond to this email. Please remember to keep "[Ticket #3414]" in email topic.

On Mar 30, 2017 @ 11:40 am Blanca Quiroz wrote:

Ticket closed: Dear Macsoud, CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY IRVINE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD PROTOCOL REVIEW

IRB Protocol Number: 3414
IRB Approval Date: March 30, 2017

Miss. Macsoud, Congratulations! Your research proposal has been approved by Concordia University-Irvine's IRB. Work on the research indicated within the initial e-mail may begin. This approval is for a period of one year from the date of this e-mail correspondence and will require continuation approval if the research project extends beyond a year.

If you make significant changes to the protocol during the approval period, you must submit a revised proposal to CUI's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Please write your IRB # and "EdD IRB Application Addendum # (and the IRB Protocol number)" in the subject line of any future correspondence.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB's decision, please contact me by replying to this e-mail or by phone at 512 810 9172

Kind Regards,
Blanca Quiroz
EdD IRB Reviewer

On Mar 30, 2017 @ 11:40 am your ticket was marked as closed,

This means your request was considered resolved. If it has not been resolved to your satisfaction, simply reply to this message to automatically reopen your ticket.

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=1&ik=308afa0613&view=pt&search=inbox&th=15b7085181e41c7b&siml=15b7085181e41c7b>

Page 1 of 3

Please do not reply to this email unless your issue has not been resolved to your satisfaction. Any reply to this message will automatically reopen your ticket.

Thank you,

Concordia University Office of Institutional Research

Email: OIR@cu.edu Phone: (949)214-3433



Ticket History

On Mar 14, 2017 @ 09:01 am nnenna.maksoud@eagles.cui.edu wrote:

" "

Attachment:

On Mar 14, 2017 @ 09:01 am nnenna.maksoud@eagles.cui.edu wrote:

" "

Corrections have been made to my IRB per requestes. Please see attached.

Thanks,

Nnenna Maksoud Okpara

#E00236794

On Mar 08, 2017 @ 03:31 pm nnenna.maksoud@eagles.cui.edu wrote:

" "

Good Afternoon,

Thank you for sending this update. I am unclear about what changes I need to make. The only attachment I got has that the IRB is not approved and that I need to change to an expedited application and address issues on the attachment. Please clarify---I will like to address these ASAP.

Thanks,

Nnenna

#E00236794

On Mar 08, 2017 @ 02:47 pm Blanca Quiroz wrote:

" "

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY IRVINE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD PROTOCOL REVIEW

IRB Protocol Number: 3414

IRB Approval Date: Currently unapproved

Your research proposal has not been approved by Concordia University Irvine's IRB, but will be reconsidered upon receipt of the following:

Please resubmit your application as an expedited application and address the issues listed in the

attachment included here use the same ticket number.
Your research cannot commence until the above material is received and the IRB has responded with an e-mail of approval.

Kind Regards, IRB Representative

On Mar 07, 2017 @ 01:11 pm Melanie Hamon wrote:

" "

Hi Nnenna,
We received your application. I am forwarding it to the IRB for review. Your file record number is #3414.
Blessings,
Melanie

On Mar 07, 2017 @ 01:10 pm Melanie Hamon wrote:

" "

Assigned to Blanca Quiroz.

On Mar 03, 2017 @ 03:36 pm nnenna.maksoud@eagles.cui.edu wrote:

" "

Attachment:

On Mar 03, 2017 @ 03:36 pm nnenna.maksoud@eagles.cui.edu wrote:


" "

Attachment:

On Mar 03, 2017 @ 03:36 pm nnenna.maksoud@eagles.cui.edu wrote:

" "

Please see attached application for review.
Thank you,
Nnenna Maksoud Okpara
E#00236794

 IRB Decision Form 10.06.15 - Macsoud.pdf
1976K

Appendix C

IRB Decision



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DECISION

☐ Exempt Review 45 CFR 46.101 ☒ Expedited Review 45 CFR 46.110 ☐ Full Board Review 45 CFR 46

Review Date	March 30, 2017
IRB#	3414
Title of Project	A Mixed Methods Study of Charter Schools Administrators' Perspective of Inclusion Effective Practices
Researcher/s	Nnenna Maksoud Okpara

☒ **APPROVED**

Effective duration of IRB Approval: 3/30/2017 to 3/29/2018

Dear Miss Macsoud, your expedited IRB application is approved.

For Exempt Approved, Please Note: while your project is exempt from providing Informed Consent information to the IRB, your project must still obtain participants' informed consent.

For Expedited and Full Board Approved, Please Note:

a. The IRB's approval is only for the project protocol named above. Any changes are subject to review and approval by the IRB.

b. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB.

c. An annual report or report upon completion is required for each project. If the project is to continue beyond the twelve month period, a request for continuation of approval should be made in writing. Any deviations from the approved protocol should be noted.

☐ **NEEDS REVISION AND RESUBMISSION**

☐ **NOT APPROVED**

Printed Name IRB Reviewer Blanca

Signature of IRB Reviewer

Digitally signed by Blanca Quiroz
Date: 2017.03.30 13:31:38 -05'00'

Appendix D

Initial Letter to Charter School Administrators



Dear Administrator,

You are invited to participate in a research study titled "A Mixed Methods Study of charter school administrators' perspective of effective inclusion practices." This research study is being conducted by researcher, Nnenna Maksoud Okpara, an Educational Leadership doctoral candidate at Concordia University, Irvine. The purpose of this study is to examine the special education trends and service delivery models in the charter setting.

Participation in this research study is entirely voluntary at all times. You can choose not to participate at all or to leave the research study at any time.

You are being asked to take part in this research study because you are an administrator in a charter school in the Southern California region. Your insight can provide valuable data that helps this research study address this topic.

If you agree to participate, there will be two parts of this study. The first part will be an online survey and the second will be a follow-up interview should you decide to participate in the second half. The interviews will be based on clarifying questions based on your survey answers. These interviews should take each last around 5 minutes – 10 minutes. The interviews will take place at a mutually agreeable location and based on your choice of free time. Notes and audio recording will be used during the interview.

The contents of the interview will be kept strictly confidential, and you will remain anonymous with no links to you in any way. There will be no identifying information collected about you at any point during the study, and your recording will be identified only with a random pseudonym. If you say something during the interview that may identify you, it will be removed during the transcription of the interview. Once your interview is over, there will be no way to withdraw your responses from the research study because the interview will contain no identifying information.

Research study data will be transcribed from paper and audio recording to a digital text format. The paper version of notes will be destroyed and the audio recordings will be deleted immediately after they have been transcribed. The digital text format will be stored in an encrypted read-only file saved on a secure server of the researcher. Access to the data will be protected by password, and only Nnenna Maksoud Okpara will have access to the data.

There are no risks associated with this research study. While you may not experience any direct benefits from participation, information collected in this research study may benefit you and others in the future by helping understand the special education trends at a charter school.

If you have any questions regarding the interview or this research study in general, please contact the principal researcher, Catherine Nolan, at (949) 306-9698 or via email at nnenna.maksoud@eagles.cui.edu.

By taking part in this interview, you are indicating your consent to participate in this research study.

Participant Name: _____ Nnenna Maksoud Okpara
 Signature: _____ Educational Leadership Doctoral Candidate
 Date: _____ Concordia University, Irvine

nnenna.maksoud@eagles.cui.edu

Appendix E

Survey Questions

Text

Charter School Administrator Survey - Special Education (Prelim.)

Charter School Administrator's Perspective on Special Education

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your identity will remain anonymous, and confidentiality will be kept. A follow-up interview may or may not be conducted; participants interested in follow-up interview will complete a separate consent letter. The survey will take less than 10 minutes to complete, and it is voluntary, and you may stop at any time. Your input and feedback is important and will be maintained in full confidence. Individual or school level data will not be identifiable. Again, thank you for providing your valuable opinion.

Charter School Administrator Survey - Special Education (Prelim.)

* 1. Do you have any specific special educational qualifications?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

* 2. How many teachers do you have on site with a special education background/education?

* 3. Indicate the types of special education providers at your site: Check all that apply

- ☐ Psychologist
☐ Special Ed./Resource Teachers)
☐ Adapted P. E.
☐ Speech Pathologist
☐ Occupational therapist
☐ Other (please specify)

* 4. Indicate service delivery model at site:

- ☐ Onsite providers
- ☐ Consults
- ☐ Combination of both

* 5.

Are professional development opportunities provided to your staff on Special education procedures and compliance?

- ☐ YES
- ☐ NO

* 6.

Indicate with a check mark support preparation provided to teachers who work with students with IEPs:
Check all that applies

- ☐ Teacher Training workshops
- ☐ Teachers provided with list of modifications and accommodations
- ☐ Discussions and collaboration with specialist teachers
- ☐ Access to pertinent documents and/or records
- ☐ Access to appropriate special education literature
- ☐ Time for preparing materials for the student
- ☐ Increased allocated time to prepare materials for students
- ☐ More opportunities to liaise with outside specialists
- ☐ Additional classroom support
- ☐ Time to prepare modified curriculum
- ☐ Increased allocated time to prepare materials
- ☐ More opportunities to liaise with outside specialists

* 7. How does your charter school align to the law of inclusive practices for special needs students?

* 8. Indicate with a check mark if your site has students with following disability designation? Check all that apply

- ☐ Severe learning difficulties
- ☐ Physical Impairment
- ☐ Moderate learning difficulties
- ☐ Epilepsy
- ☐ Severe behavior difficulties
- ☐ Autistic Spectrum Disorders
- ☐ Moderate behavior difficulties
- ☐ Down syndrome
- ☐ Sensory impairment – visual
- ☐ Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)
- ☐ Sensory impairment – hearing
- ☐ Speech & language difficulty
- ☐ SPLD/ Dyslexia
- ☐ ADHD
- ☐ Language & communication
- ☐ Other (please name)

* 9.

With reference to the various disabilities listed above, have there been any significant increase in the types of students with special needs you have encountered over the last few years?

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Moderately agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Moderately disagree
- ☐ Disagree

* 10.

What is your opinion of the level of professional development support teachers have access to?

- ☐ Outstanding
- ☐ Above Average
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Below Average
- ☐ Poor

* 11. What is your opinion of the level of support teachers receive given during non- teaching time? For example: Admin. Support, Professional Development & Other trainings

- ☐ Outstanding
- ☐ Above Average
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Below Average
- ☐ Poor

* 12.

What further support during non-teaching time, if any, do you think would be useful for your teachers?

* 13. Please indicate with a check mark programs you would be interested for your charter school?

- ☐ Time for consultation with special education teacher
- ☐ Teacher focused workshops and access to supplemental resources
- ☐ Access to best practices literature
- ☐ Special Education IEP Trainings

* 14.

To what extent has having students with special educational needs created an extra workload for you and your staff?

- ☐ Significantly increased
- ☐ Moderate increase
- ☐ Workload stayed
- ☐ Same

* 15. If you believe there is a moderate to significant workload increase, describe the nature of this increase?
Please enter N/A, if not applicable.

* 16. To what extent does dealing with students with special education needs create an extra stress for you?

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Moderately agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Moderately disagree
- ☐ Disagree

* 17. Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

* 18. Age

- ☐ 21-30
- ☐ 31-40
- ☐ 40+

* 19. How many years you have been an administrator?

- ☐ 0-5 years
- ☐ 5-10 years
- ☐ 10+ years

* 20.

Grade levels at your charter school?

21. Will you be willing to participate in a short follow up interview?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

22. If you answered yes, please enter your contact information in text box below. A separate consent letter will be sent for follow-up interview should the researcher have additional questions.

Appendix F

Follow-Up Questions to Administrators

Sample Follow-Up Interview Guide for Online Survey Respondents

(Questions may change due to survey results)

Date:

Interviewer:

Interview Start Time:

Interview End Time:

Webpage/help for (based on online survey response):

Date online survey was completed:

Interviewer's Notes:

Before we start, I'd like to explain what we'll be doing during the interview, which will take no longer than 30 minutes, as well as answer any questions you might have. Basically, I'll ask you questions about your responses to our survey that was posted on the survey for school administrators' perspective on special education delivery models and trends in the charter school setting. With your permission I'd like to audio-record our interview as it will help me better focus on our conversation [pause for response; if subjects says no, then interview will not be recorded].

Please note that you don't have to answer every question. This interview will be kept strictly confidential and your identity will remain anonymous when we write-up the results of the study. Upon completion of the study all records that contain personal identifiers will be shredded. Any questions before we begin?

Warm-up Questions (3-5 minutes):

1. How long have you been an administrator at the charter school?
2. Have you worked as an administrator/employee in the typical public school? If yes, can she highlight any notable similarities or differences?

Main Questions: (5 minutes)

When you responded to our survey, you indicated on item X [answer based on online survey response].

5. What is the reason for the response for X?
6. Probe: What did you want to know for response given to question 6?
7. Repeat questions 5 & 6 for Survey item #8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, & 16

Go to Closing

8. Is there anything you would like to add about what we've been discussing?

Closing:

Thank you very much for participating in my study. I appreciate your taking the time to talk with me. In accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974, the methodology used in this research study will keep your identity and responses private, anonymous, and confidential. The results from our study will be analyzed for fulfillment of my doctoral study.