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## Characteristics of Ohio schools with adequate yearly progress for students with disabilities

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CHARACTERISTICS OF OHIO SCHOOLS WITH ADEQUATE  
YEARLY PROGRESS FOR STUDENTS  
WITH DISABILITIES

DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO

The School of Education and Allied Professions

THE UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership

By

Patricia Ellis Hoyle, B.S., M.A.

THE UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

DAYTON, OHIO

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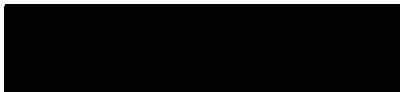
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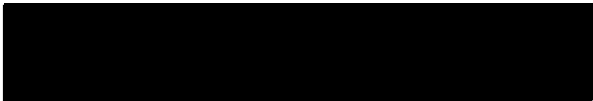
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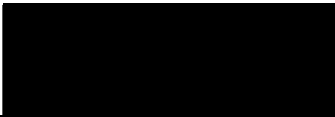
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YEARLY PROGRESS FOR STUDENTS  
WITH DISABILITIES

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YEARLY PROGRESS FOR STUDENTS  
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By

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The University of Dayton, 2007

Dr. Charles Russo, Advisor

This qualitative study was designed to examine schools in Ohio that achieved adequate yearly progress for students with disabilities. Four elementary schools were selected based on state test results and special recognition as State Superintendent's Schools of Promise. The investigation explored policies, practices, classroom management, beliefs, attitudes, values, community involvement, parental participation, leadership, and the use of related services to reveal patterns and common characteristics that may be used to inform policy and practice for educators.

Interviews, observations and document reviews were conducted with principals, general educators, special educators, and non-certified staff. Data converged around 6

structured components of the case; delivery of instruction; program strengths; parents and community; attitudes, values and beliefs; system models; and leadership.

Implications for educators are included as well as recommendations for future research.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM

#### Introduction

More than 30 years after the enactment of the then Education for all Handicapped Children Act in 1975, now the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, the most comprehensive piece of federal legislation addressing the rights and needs of students with disabilities, administrators and teachers in public schools face higher expectations and greater accountability for educating these children than at any time in United States educational history. The Commission on Excellence in Special Education produced a report, *A New Era: Revitalizing Special Education for Children and Their Families (New Era)*, on July 1, 2002, outlining findings and recommendations for improving the educational performance of children with disabilities.

*New Era* stated that President Bush made a bold new commitment to every child by signing as the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) into law on January 8, 2002. According to President Bush, "We became a nation committed to judging the schools by one measure and one measure alone: whether every boy and every girl is learning---regardless of race, family background or disability status" (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002, pp. 3-4).

In the course of its investigation, consistent with congressional findings in the IDEA (20 U.S.C. § 1400 (1)), the Commission revealed the following facts about children with disabilities:

1. dropout rates of HS students with disabilities are twice the rate of their peers;
2. enrollment rates of students with disabilities are 50% lower than the general population;
3. most public school educators do not feel well prepared to work with children with disabilities;
4. one half of the six million students in special education are identified as having a learning disability, a growth rate of 300% since 1976. Of this number, 80% have been identified due to an inability to read; and
5. children of minority status are over-represented in some categories

*New Era* issued nine findings (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002). The first is that basic legal safeguards and access for children with disabilities are provided; however, the current system often places process above results. In other words, the report suggests qualifying for special education is often an endpoint rather than an entry to intervention and effective instruction. Congressional findings in IDEA (2004) similarly indicated that implementation of educational services suffers from low expectations, insufficient focus on applying research on methods of teaching and learning and lack of adequate resources (20 U.S.C.A. § 1400). The second is that the current system waits for children to fail rather than focus on prevention and intervention. *New Era* indicates that help is not provided early enough to be most effective. The third is that educators and policymakers think of special education as a separate system from

general education. The report maintains that general education and special education share responsibility for bringing additional services to students with disabilities who are general education students first. Congressional findings in IDEA (2004) concurred stating that disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is essential to ensure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities (20 U.S.C.A. § 1400).

The fourth is that parents do not have adequate recourse when the system fails their disabled child. The fifth is that the pressures of litigation have created a culture of compliance that diverts energy from the mission of educating every child. The sixth is that many children with disabilities are misidentified or not identified due to invalid identification methods. The seventh is that consistent with NCLB, highly qualified teachers are required. The report is of the opinion that many educators identify a need for preparation, support and professional development for educating disabled students. The eighth is that the current system does not embrace or implement evidence-based practices. Rigorous research is needed. The ninth is that since too few students with disabilities graduate from high school, educational systems need to focus on results and student needs rather than compliance with regulations (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002). These findings were also supported in congressional statements in IDEA (2004) indicating that parents and schools should be given expanded opportunities to resolve their disagreements, supporting high quality intensive pre-service preparation and professional development, and providing effective

transition services to promote successful post-school employment or education for students with disabilities (20 U.S.C.A. § 1400).

The committee findings led to three major recommendations: focus on results, not process; embrace a model of prevention not a model of failure; and consider children with disabilities as general education children first. The findings and recommendations of the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002) support the requirements of recent legislation such as the NCLB and the 2004 reauthorization of the IDEA. *New Era* explains that standards based education reform requires high quality assessments, accountability systems, professional development and alignment of curriculum, and instruction with state standards. Moreover, *New Era* called for establishing accountability for the performance of limited English proficient, migrant, disabled, Native American, neglected and delinquent students (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002).

Under the NCLB (20 U.S.C. § 6311(b)(3)(C)(v)(I)) all states are required to establish separate measurable annual objectives for continuous and substantial improvement for the achievement of economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency. Similarly, the IDEA (20 U.S.C.A. § 1412) requires states to establish performance goals for students with disabilities and indicators to assess progress toward meeting those goals (Norlin, 2005). These laws and the accountability incorporated contribute to the current focus on special education.

Although studies of children with disabilities date back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Itard, 1807), the federal right to a free appropriate public education for children with

disabilities in the United States did not become a reality until the 1975 passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. Subsequent re-authorizations of the IDEA produced the current version of the IDEA. Chapter II of this study chronicles some of the history of the education of students with disabilities, revealing examples of the research, cultural, political and social pressures that led to the current rights to a free appropriate public education for those students.

The concerns raised by the President's Commission (2002) and addressed in both the NCLB (2002) and IDEA (2004) necessitate action on the part of educators to close the gap in learning between children who are disabled and their peers who are not disabled. To this end, the United States Department of Education as well as the Ohio Department of Education are both calling for research to support this effort. In light of the move to achieve higher levels of success, this case study examined 4 schools in Ohio that met the state Schools of Promise criteria for the 2003-2004 school year, received special recognition for performance of students with disabilities for 2003-2004 achievements, and were again selected as Schools of Promise for 2004-2005. This means that each school met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), the measurable annual and intermediate objectives established by Ohio for all children required by the NCLB, at least 40% of the students in the school met low-income criteria, 50% of the students in each tested grade passed the Ohio Proficiency test and at least 75% of the students in major racial and ethnic groups and low-income students passed the test in reading or mathematics (Ohio Department of Education, 2004a).

Fourteen 2003-2004 Schools of Promise in Ohio were recognized for achievement of students with disabilities. Thirteen of those were elementary schools. Six of the 13



schools met criteria for Schools of Promise again for the 2004-2005 school year.

Administrators in 4 of those schools agreed to participate in this study. Of the 4 schools in the study, all were over 75% proficient in mathematics for students with disabilities and three achieved 75% proficiency in reading for their students with disabilities in the 2003-2004 school year. This level of proficiency for students with disabilities was the basis for special recognition by the State Superintendent's Schools of Promise. Through inquiry following this research, the investigator found that 3 of the 4 schools studied were again selected as Schools of Promise for 2005-2006.

By providing a comprehensive description of these schools, the study intends to provide information to all educators and other interested readers who may be seeking strategies for addressing the educational needs of students with disabilities. The researcher anticipates that findings of this investigation may be used for careful reflection on specific service and support practices for special education and generalization of the information to benefit special educators. Erickson (1986) and Stake (1995) support generalization of knowledge obtained from specific situations as a means of learning from experiences that may provide patterns or applications for future situations.

#### Statement of the Problem

States, through their local school boards, must comply with the IDEA (20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.). In identifying, assessing, and serving all qualified children with disabilities this important and far-reaching statute addresses the parameters of the delivery of special education for eligible children. Among the IDEA's provisions are that school systems must provide all students with disabilities, aged 3-21 (20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(1)(A)(ii)), with a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE; 20 U.S.C. §

1401(9)) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE; 20 U.S.C. § (1412((5)). The IDEA's substantive provisions include issues dealing with confidentiality, individual education plans, evaluation, curriculum, instructional environment, assessment, discipline, procedural safeguards and due process rights (Osborne & Russo, 2006). In addition to compliance with the IDEA, education must demonstrate the academic achievement of disabled students through the federal accountability process stated in the NCLB.

In order for schools to achieve AYP, not less than 95% of all students and of each designated subgroup of students must be assessed (20 U.S.C. § 6311(b)(2)). Moreover, students must meet or exceed the Ohio state objectives for all students and for each subgroup of students, of which children with disabilities constitute one subgroup (Ohio Department of Education, 2003). The NCLB does not set federal standards but requires each state to set its own (Raisch & Russo, 2006). For subgroups that fail to meet annual objectives, an exception is allowed if the number of students not meeting proficiency levels has decreased by 10% from the preceding school year, and if the subgroup is making progress on one or more of the additional academic indicators (20 U.S.C. § 6311(b)(2); 34 CFR 200.14). The success or failure of schools to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities evidenced as AYP has significant consequences.

Perhaps the most significant result of a school's failure to reach AYP is the application of sanctions that may ultimately result in district restructuring. Schools that do not achieve AYP one year must develop improvement plans (20 U.S.C. § 6311(h)(1)-(2); 34 CFR 200.44(a)(2); NCLB, 2002). Two consecutive years of missing AYP requires an update and implementation of improvement plans. Technical assistance is ordered and public school choice must be given with transportation provided. Following three

consecutive years of missing AYP a school board must provide supplemental services and public school choice with transportation (20 U.S.C. § 6311(h)(1)-(2); 34 CFR 200.45-200.247). Four consecutive years of missing AYP mandates a school board to take corrective action, with new staff or curriculum. Public school choice and supplemental service continue. Five consecutive years of missing AYP compels school boards to develop plans for restructuring (state contractor, charter, or new staff). Corrective action, public school choice and supplemental service components of district plans continue (20 U.S.C. 6316; 34 CFR 200.37). When a school that failed to meet its AYP satisfies AYP for 2 consecutive years, the school leaves the improvement category and moves to a higher status on the school improvement continuum (Ohio Department of Education, 2003).

Ohio's state accountability system, which was enacted on August 12, 2003, combines the accountability system of Senate Bill 1 in 2001 with requirements of House Bill 3 in 2003, H B 493 in 2004 and the NCLB. Under these provisions, the Department of Education issues state and local report cards that include performance on 25 indicators; a performance index based on how well each student does on all tested subjects in Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and The Ohio Graduation Test; and a statement indicating MET or NOT MET adequate yearly progress. Based on these criteria, schools and districts are designated as Excellent, Effective, Continuous Improvement, Academic Watch or Academic Emergency (Ohio Department of Education, 2005).

#### Research Question

As noted, schools are now more accountable for access to and progress in the general curriculum for students with disabilities than ever before. In order to achieve this

progress, educators must identify and understand effective practices in the field. In light of this challenge, the question guiding the study is “what are the characteristics of schools that meet Ohio achievement objectives for students with disabilities?” More specifically, this study examines process and product, intervention prior to identification, integration of students with disabilities into the learning community, instruction, assessment practices, collaboration practices, professional development, attitudes, values, community involvement, parental participation, use of related services and other unnamed factors that are present in schools that succeed. Measurable evidence of success is the achievement of adequate yearly progress AYP for individual schools and districts. To this end, the purpose of this qualitative study was to examine Ohio schools that achieved AYP for the subgroup students with disabilities (SWD) as defined in the NCLB (20 U.S.C. § 6311 (b) (2)) and identify and describe characteristics of those schools.

#### Delimitations

The researcher’s past experience is as a supervisor of special education for seven school districts in Ohio. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) maintain that a researcher’s metatheoretical predispositions, as well as personal interests, form the basis for initial questions and choice of participants. The researcher’s background can be viewed as an asset and/or delimitation of the study. Ethnographic research is “one of the few modes of scientific study that admit the subjective perception and biases of both participants and researcher into the research frame” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 95). Yet, some observers might argue that such past experience and familiarity might create a vested interest bias toward seeing and reporting only that which supports predetermined conclusions. An opposite argument can also be made. In other words, this researcher

contends that experience with special education instruction and administration in the real world learning community enhanced a deeper and fuller interpretation of data and presentation of findings, thereby making her an appropriate person to engage in a study of this nature.

Schools chosen for the study were exemplary samples of Schools of Promise. As such, they met criteria that included low-income, ethnic and minority performance on the Ohio Proficiency tests and AYP. They also received special recognition for performance of the subgroup students with disabilities on the Ohio Proficiency tests. Findings based on this unique population should be examined with caution when considering implications for other schools.

Six elementary schools in Ohio met the criteria for this study and 4 granted research access. Two buildings were unavailable for study. Construction at one building and administrative changes in the other prevented the researcher from gaining entry to those buildings. One must consider that inclusion of all eligible elementary schools might have yielded altered results. Although the geographic scope was statewide since the participant schools represented each quadrant of Ohio, results apply only to the elementary level.

Regulations for special education were revised and went into effect on October 14, 2006 (34 CFR §§ 300.1 et seq.). However, the current Ohio Department of Education Operating Standards for Ohio's Schools Serving Children With Disabilities, which became effective July 1, 2002, are not expected to be revised until July 1, 2008 (Bricker & Eckler, 2007). Changes in the law and revised state policies and procedures may then make future studies subject to different foci. Evaluations for Learning Disabilities no

longer require the use of a discrepancy formula to determine a disability. Struggling students may be involved in a response to intervention (RTI) process that may result in improved learning or the determination that a disability is suspected; short-term objectives may be used only for students who require alternate assessment; and reevaluations may be deemed unnecessary if the parents and school agree. Benchmarks and short-term objectives are no longer required in IEPs except for students who take alternate assessments (IDEA, 2004). If these or other changes are adopted as part of Ohio's Operating Standards, schools in Ohio may adopt new or different practices that meet the changing requirements and become subject to future study.

Every research study has the limitation of the quality of fit between the chosen methodological approach and the depth of data analysis and theme interpretation. Based on a review of the literature, the researcher created a matrix of recurring topics of concern and matters of legal responsibility for special education to frame interviews, observations and document review. The methodological approach for this research, which was qualitative multiple case studies, was appropriate because it captured key informants' perspectives that were compared with observations of daily school life and relevant documents. The chosen methodology attempted to richly describe a portrait of effective schools.

Interviews of a semi-structured nature elicited responses from participants that were not completely parallel from school to school. Some respondents gave greater detail or personal examples in response to questions. Others interpreted the inquiries differently and offered information that was unique to them. The researcher coded the data and

developed themes based on analysis, yet some information could not be compared among all schools.

### Operational Definitions

**Confidentiality:** Safeguards state that each participating agency shall protect the confidentiality of personally identifiable information at collection, storage, disclosure, and destruction stages (20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(8) 1417(c)).

**Evaluation:** An evaluation consists of procedures used to determine whether a child has a disability and the nature and extent of the special education and related services the child needs (20 U.S.C. § 1414(a)-(c)).

**Free Appropriate Public Education:** The term Free Appropriate Public Education or FAPE means special education and related services that-

Are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction and without charge;

Meet the standards of the SEA, including the requirements of this part;

Include preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education in the State; and

Are provided in conformity with an individualized education program (IEP; 20 U.S.C. § 1401(9)).

**Curriculum:** Curriculum for students with disabilities refers to the general curriculum that is used with non-disabled children as defined in the *Operating Standards for Ohio's Schools Serving Children with Disabilities* (Ohio Department of Education, 2002).

Individualized Education Program: An individualized education program or IEP is a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with this section (20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(A)).

Least Restrictive Environment: To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are non-disabled; and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in the regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (20 U.S.C. § 1401 (13)(A)(ii)).

Students With Disabilities: A child evaluated by a multi-disciplinary team and determined to have a cognitive disability (mental retardation), a hearing impairment including deafness, a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment including blindness, emotional disturbance, an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, any other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who by reason thereof, needs special education and related services (20 U.S.C. § 1401(3)(A)(i)).

#### Significance of the Research

This study can inform policy and practice for educators in Ohio serving children with disabilities at the local, city, and state level. It is intended to provide discovery, insight, and understanding, while generating hypotheses for further study about policy, specific instructional strategies, inclusive practices, and leadership (Merriam, 1988).



Students with disabilities are entitled to FAPE in the LRE as defined in the IDEA. This includes instruction based on the Ohio academic content standards.

The IDEA requires accommodations and modifications to the standard curriculum for students with disabilities even as it holds all students to the same high standards of achievement. Instructional strategies that result in a proficient level of achievement must be provided in the LRE. The LRE requires a continuum of services that may include general education, consultation, tutoring, co-teaching by general and special educators, resource room instruction by special educators, and separate facilities such as schools and hospitals (Osborne & Russo, 2006). Yet, practices that lead to proficient outcomes are not clearly understood. Thus, the researcher sought to identify characteristics regarding administration, personnel, instructional practice, student population and other factors descriptive of schools that make adequate yearly progress and present them for consideration of educators who are seeking to provide educational services for students with disabilities and achieve those outcomes.

The need for effective education of students with disabilities in relationship to ESEA and IDEA is clear: research regarding effective practice is needed. Early interest in the education of children with disabilities began with questions about the physical, mental and communication characteristics of such individuals. These questions gained the interest of physicians who began research with the disabled. Medical models framed research that led to diverse approaches to special education studies (Winzer, 1993). As psychology, sociology, and anthropology became academic disciplines, they provided methodological tools for research in special education. Experimental and quasi-experimental group designs were prominent (Skeels & Dye, 1939). Seminal qualitative

studies in special education by Itard (1807), Keller (1903), and Edgerton (1967) demonstrate the important impact of qualitative research in special education and disability studies. The current effort by the United States Department of Education to improve the quality of research in the field of education focuses research on the questions of effectiveness and the employment of high-quality research methods to address these questions. The rationale for the initiative is that improved research will lead to improved practice (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002).

### Summary

The NCLB (2002) and IDEA (2004) placed responsibilities on individual states to close the gap in performance between students who are disabled and those who are non-disabled students. In response to these requirements, states must establish measurable systems of annual achievement and assessment to demonstrate continuous and substantial improvement. As briefly noted above, failure to show adequate progress, within established time periods, carries substantial sanctions.

The study described in this chapter examines the characteristics of schools that make adequate yearly progress for students with disabilities. The study addresses process and product, intervention prior to identification, integration of students with disabilities into the learning community, instruction, assessment practices, collaboration, professional development, attitudes, values, community involvement, parental participation, and related services. The results of this study are intended to inform policy and practice for educators, provide insight and understanding, and generate hypotheses for further study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Disabilities have been of interest to mankind for thousands of years. A significant amount of literature exists chronicling the cultural, scientific and educational history of individuals with disabilities. This review of the literature begins with the early understanding of disabilities. A discussion of scientific inquiry and experimental schools is followed by a discussion of early practices used to educate the disabled in North America. Beliefs, theories, instructional practices and laws are traced through the decades including Public Law 94-142, the Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975 and culminate with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2002 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.

#### *History of Education for Disabled Children*

Early writings contain evidence of people with disabilities from the time of recorded history. Ancient Egyptians were the first to document an interest in disabilities and disabled individuals (Feldman, 1970). For example, Papyrus documents contain references to mental retardation, epilepsy and deafness. Further, Egyptians studied causes, cures and the social wellbeing of the disabled while training the disabled in music, art and massage (Moore, 1987).

At the height of classical Greece, 400 B. C., infanticide was widely practiced. Aristotle supported the practice writing that there should be law that nothing imperfect should be brought up (Moore, 1987). Children were considered property of the state and were disposed of if they were defective. Rome adopted the Greek attitude toward the disabled but the family was the sacred source of authority. The male head of the family had power over the life and death of the children (Winzer, 1993). The Romans developed a hierarchy of rights that depended on an individual's literacy. The patriarch considered those rights when determining a child's fate (Moore, 1987).

On the other hand, in the fifth century BC, Hippocrates initiated concern for the disabled that was carried on by future physicians. He adopted techniques from Egypt that stressed physiological diagnoses but retained some acknowledgment of supernatural influence on disabling conditions (Edelstein, 1937). Hippocrates, whose focus was on knowledge gained through observation, believed that mental abnormality was a disease (Rosen, 1968).

### *Influence of Religious Law*

Hebraic law contains some of the first known provisions for the disabled. Biblical statements in Exodus established that God made the disabled. On that basis, religious law required that blind and deaf persons, widows and orphans be treated with special consideration. Protection under Hebrew law was later reiterated in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries (Hodgson, 1952/1973).

Early Christianity brought the cloistering of disabled people. It protected them from the dangers of general society. All types of handicapped people were gathered and separated from the world. Each handicapped group had separate quarters but all engaged

in common work and worship. Saint Nicholas, a Turkish bishop, was known for his benevolence to poor girls, idiots, and imbeciles. He became the patron saint of the retarded (Barr, 1904/1913). During his era, retarded children were given work in the fields and households of country families. No education was attempted during this period.

### *Medieval Times and the Renaissance*

In medieval times, attitudes toward the mentally retarded varied. Some people thought their mutterings were communications with the devil while others thought they communicated with the divine (Barr, 1904/1913; Burdett, 1891). Following the days of the Black Death, all people considered deranged were prime candidates for witch hunters. Burnings and exorcisms were common means to an end for disabled children (Sacks, 2001). Yet, even in medieval times, some people followed more humanistic impulses. Later, Geronimo Cardano, an Italian physician of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, proposed some of the earliest known practices of special education believing that instruction of the sensorily handicapped was possible (Monroe, 1926). He concluded that education would be successful through the use of alternative stimuli and devised a type of code for the blind that was much like Braille.

From the 13<sup>th</sup> century, theologians, clergymen, magicians, and physicians created a mixture of rational and unreasoned medical literature that described a wide range of disabling conditions and treatments. During the Renaissance, new interest arose in humanistic principles, individuality, learning, and secular arts. During this time physicians studied epilepsy and applied a wide range of treatments to patients (Zilboorg & Henry, 1941). The humanistic and philosophical spirit of the Renaissance fostered genuine educational attempts that demonstrated that disabled persons could learn and

achieve. In fact, some of the major principles of special education were established during the late Renaissance period. Deaf persons were first to be addressed in educational contests, followed by the blind, and much later the mentally retarded. The philosophical foundation for special education was established. Teachers, writers and philosophers were inspired by the belief that discovering the ways in which deaf persons learned would provide a key to the nature of thought (Wenzer, 1993).

Spain produced the first authenticated special education efforts. The earliest evidence of formal and systematic instruction of disabled individuals comes from the Benedictine monastery of San Salvador in northern Spain. The impetus of the efforts was due to the fact that hereditary deafness was prevalent in Spain's ruling families. Moreover, boys who were deaf and could not speak were not legally allowed to claim their inheritances. Consequently, these laws affected great estates and became the educational impetus to establish a means to educate the deaf sons of Spanish aristocrats (Winzer, 1993). Pedro Ponce de Leon, a Benedictine monk, used his own methods to teach these students. He instructed the boys in writing, then pointed out objects signified by the written characters and exercised his students in the vocalization in response to the characters. In a legal document produced in 1578, he claimed that he taught his students to speak, read, write, and reckon. Some students learned Latin, Greek, and Italian while others learned natural philosophy and astrology. As adults, many of them became monks, entered the army, and became historians and politicians (Mathison, 1906).

In 17<sup>th</sup> century England, exploration of basic theories and philosophies was the basis for early designs for intervention with disabled people. The deaf were studied to find the origin and development of language. The blind were also studied to determine if

a person whose sight was restored could recognize through vision what had been learned by touch. The Royal Society of London issued many studies. Individual scientists worked with numerous students and John Bulser petitioned for the first British school for the mute (Winzer, 1993).

### *The Age of Enlightenment*

Educational leaders adopted the essential tenets of *l'esprit philosophique* and applied them as specific techniques and methods for training and education. Educators were people of practical abilities who adopted the reforming zeal and basic optimism of the philosophers (Winzer, 1986a). Special education addressed questions about what it means to be human and what is due to nature versus what is due to nurture. Much of the optimism regarding the education and training of handicapped people came from the speculations of John Locke. Locke moved forward the classical empirical thesis of 18<sup>th</sup> century epistemology; all of our ideas come from experience. Locke rejected the concept of innate ideas and proposed the theory that all ideas arise from sensation. He introduced the idea that the infant is a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate on which all the experiences of the senses are written (Locke, 1690/1956). Locke's sensationalism implied that abilities are not innate but rather are gained through experience and the senses. His theories led to a general optimism about the prospects for the habilitation and rehabilitation of exceptional people (Winzer, 1986a). The philosophers of the French enlightenment were theorists who never proposed a practical plan for instruction and training, but created the climate and theoretical basis for the work of pioneer special educators.

Those who undertook the education and training of disabled people were pragmatic individuals who took theory from the philosophies and translated it into action.

Education was rooted in sensationalism and a fuller understanding of language and alternate sensory stimuli (Winzer, 1986a). Jacob Rodriguez Pereire was the first professional teacher of the deaf in France. He simplified the finger spelling techniques developed by Pablo Bonet of Spain and invented an arithmetical machine to teach students how to calculate (Sacks, 2001). Pereire used Rousseau's directions for individual instruction especially for structured and systematic sense training. The art of teaching was rooted in empirical principles. Rousseau believed that if left alone to play, children would develop motor skills. He believed that senses must be raised to develop the ability to discriminate between objects and the senses could be used to exert judgment. Pereire shifted education emphases from training the mind to training the senses (Magdol, 1976). French priest Charles Michel de l'Epee applied the theories regarding the psychology of deafness and the evolution of language to the education of deaf persons. Epee proposed to introduce mathematics, physics, history, and geography into the curriculum for the deaf and instruct in French rather than Latin and explicitly detailed his methods. He opened a school in Paris in the 1760s. He explicitly detailed his methods. His school, which eventually became known as The National Institute of Deaf Mutes, Paris, became the foundation for the education of deaf-blind children and mentally retarded people. Epee was vital to the transformation of special education from philosophy to educational practice (Winzer, 1986a).

In educating the blind, Valentin Huay attempted to overcome the limits of his pupils by fitting them to the sighted world. Although he used sensory stimuli, he did not match education to the specific visual needs of his students. He stressed vocational



training with less emphasis on intellectual development (Guillie, 1817). The successes of Epee and Huay provided opportunities that extended to other disability groups.

The celebrated story of the wild boy of Aveyron is the account of the case study of a young boy who was found running through the woods of central France on July 25, 1799. The boy appeared to be deaf and mute. He was unaccustomed to prepared food, drank by dipping his chin into water, and exhibited uncontrollable behavior. He was placed in the school for the deaf in Paris where Marc Gaspard Itard became his teacher. The child called Victor spent much of his time rocking back and forth, lay flat on the ground and bit people. With Victor as his student, Itard set out to put the theories of Rousseau and other philosophers into practice. Through individualized intervention, he hoped to determine the degree of intelligence and the nature of ideas that were possessed by this child who from birth was without education or human contact (Seguin, 1886/1907). He sought to prove the theory that human nature is the product of human interaction.

Itard had five objectives governing his educational strategy (Ball, 1971) socialization, sensory stimulation, concept development, speech, and transfer of learning. He tried to develop appropriate social behavior and awareness of the senses through systematic instruction. He began with focusing on Victor's physical wants and moved toward creating new wants. He used imitation to teach speech. After 4 years, Victor achieved little socialization or intellectual growth, yet the study prompted later interventions in cases of retarded children and established the basis for teaching approaches used by others including Maria Montessori. He was never truly restored to society (Lane, 1976).

## Special Education in North America

Early 19<sup>th</sup> century Americans viewed special training as a means to uplift individuals and instill in them patriotic ideals of duty to class and country. These goals were similar to those of a free public education system for all children. Social reformers embraced special education. Henry Barnard and Horace Mann involved themselves in the establishment of institutions to serve the special needs of deaf, blind, and mentally retarded people. American institutions for the disabled adopted the structures of British charities and the pedagogy of the French.

Institutions for special education developed in parallel with the expansion of the common school. Protection, separation and dependence characterized them. Specialized institutions marked a shift in attitudes and treatment of disabled individuals. There was a change in perception of the role of the disabled in society. Through the course of 3 centuries perceptions shifted from supplicants to dependents to individuals deserving education rights similar to non-disabled people.

### *Institutions*

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century increasing numbers of exceptional students received their education within institutions. As the century progressed, there were gradual increases in daily attendance, the length of the school year, and consolidation of control at the state level. Classification of students became standardized and programs were differentiated. However, large numbers of disabled children were still not in school. The medical model continued to be followed where problems were believed to originate with the individual. It was considered appropriate to segregate the system of education with training provided by specialists (Gelzheiser, 1987).

On April 15, 1817, the Connecticut Asylum for the Education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons was opened. It was the first school in North America designed to serve a disabled group. Many early institutions allowed unrestricted clientele. By 1880 the United States had 55 schools for the disabled. There was no centralization of governance yet the schools were very similar (Winzer, 1993).

Samuel Gridley Howe focused on the needs of the mentally retarded. He estimated that one third of the mentally retarded population could benefit from instruction. He advocated focus on self-control, industry and morality. Howe received funding to run an experimental school for 10 idiotic children. His school was to test the capacity of the children for instruction and to serve as a model (Brockett, 1856). The school opened on October 12, 1848, in a wing of the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston. The training school ran for 3 years. The result showed that many retarded children are capable of improving their personal hygiene, mental abilities, social behavior, and spiritual natures and most can become more independent, less reliant on their friends, family and community (Howe, 1848/1972). This success prompted the Massachusetts legislature to found a permanent school in 1850, the Massachusetts School for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Children (Williams, 1917).

Other states rapidly followed Massachusetts. In 1857 an institution was established at Columbus, Ohio. Others were established in Kentucky and Illinois. By 1865 there were eight such schools. By the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, most states were assuming some responsibility for the education and training of disabled children. Special education was predominantly not free, not compulsory and not part of the regular education system (Williams, 1917).

Institutions for mentally retarded individuals expanded in the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Schools assumed a more custodial character. Daily routines were regimented and stressed manual training rather than academic curriculum. Institutions became self-sufficient using resident labor. Inmates moved from school programs to adult facilities (Vineland, 1893).

### *Instruction*

Schools for mentally retarded children tended to adhere to the sensory training techniques of Pereire, Rousseau, and Itard (Barr, 1904/1913; Training School at Vineland, 1893). Seguin incorporated the work of these and others in a complex systematic sequence of training called the physiological method. His publication, *Idiocy and Its Treatment by the Physiological Method* (1886/1907), formed the basis for training programs in most institutions for the mentally retarded. Programs were founded on individual assessment. They were highly structured, systematic, directional, and multisensory and emphasized training in self-help and daily living skills, frequently using games, songs and positive reinforcement (Kauffman, 1989). Seguin adopted materials from education, philosophy, and medicine and modified methods based on work with normal children. He used specific sensory exercises. All was undertaken in the institutional setting, which Seguin viewed as an educational facility with the objective of making children responsible members of society. The physiological approach used movement training, discrimination training, classification, object association, and logical operations (Seguin, 1846). Physical exercise was essential. Music was used to improve listening and to assist speech. When using Seguin's program, the class began the day with singing and marching followed by attending classes where they followed a formal

educational program. Each teacher taught a specified set of lessons and the students rotated from teacher to teacher.

One of the most important institutions to develop in the later 19<sup>th</sup> century was the New Jersey Training School for Feeble-Minded Boys and Girls at Vineland. The school was founded as a private school opening with a kindergarten and an industrial department and provided leadership in programming and teacher training. Staff members included Henry Herbert Goddard and Edgar A. Dale, future leaders in special education. The school produced the first measurement of adaptive behavior, the Vineland Social Maturity Scale (Doll, 1965). The school was founded as a private school. It opened with a kindergarten and an industrial department.

The term special education emerged in North America in 1884. Special education grew at a time of social reform (Splaine, 1965). Separate facilities for children with special needs were urged on the grounds of expediency, charity, and duty. Education would promote independence and relieve society from responsibility. Students would learn habits for life and socialization. Schooling for deaf, blind, and mentally retarded students grew. Other disabled children were left out. Crippled, emotionally disturbed, and multi-handicapped children were excluded.

The advent of urban industrial societies meant a change in educational emphasis. There was a growing requirement for trained and educated workers and a need to identify those who were not capable of benefiting from mass education and training (Lee & Stevens, 1981). Moral and spiritual training and skills for an industrial society were imperative for disabled children (Winzer, 1986b). The primary goal for the disabled was to serve as useful members of society. Schools were designed to enhance industrial

training. Literary curriculum was considered unnecessary (Perkins Institution, 1832). The factory became the model for institutional life. The focus of industrial training separated institutional and public school curriculum. Hidden in the rhetoric of non-dependence, production, and individual uplift that permeated the industrial training notion was a confident hope that such education would condition exceptional persons to a grateful acceptance of their lot in society (Mitchell, 1973).

Amid these changes, Alexander Graham Bell was a critic of the emphasis on trades. He noted that few deaf people worked in the occupations taught at school. Critics proposed establishment of institutions of higher learning and additions to the residential school curriculum to make it more like that for the hearing majority (Bell, 1885).

Blind children in institutions were educated differently based on social class. Children from wealthy families learned geography, history, English, French, and arithmetic. The curriculum almost paralleled that of common schools. Children who would need to earn a living were taught handcraft work and music (Perkins Institution, 1834). Poor children learned to produce baskets, make mattresses, and moccasins. Deaf children were taught carpentry, shoemaking, and as the industrial society progressed, these students were considered particularly suited to learn skills needed to work in print shops. Other parts of the curriculum included cabinet making, joinery, tailoring, bookbinding, and gardening (Winzer, 1992).

Many early state constitutions spoke generally about guaranteeing free public education for all children. In 1839, Samuel Howe urged increasing school time, increased enrollment and attendance, and free compulsory education for all exceptional children (Winzer, 1981). It was not until free and compulsory schooling became prevalent in the

early 20<sup>th</sup> century that special education became an option for the majority of exceptional children.

### *Research and Development*

Samuel Gridley Howe defined three grades of retardation, low grade or idiots, middle grade or fools, and high grade or simpletons (Howe, 1848/1972). Idiots were likely to be severely and profoundly retarded with intelligence quotients below 25 or 30 (Talbot, 1964). Their appearance showed no animation. Their senses were imperfectly developed and their train of ideas was slow and feeble. Howe believed idiots could not be taught and excluded them from experimental schools. Imbeciles were considered mildly retarded and capable of simple accomplishment. Simpletons were considered defective in judgment (Spitzka, 1883).

John Langdon Haydon Down distinguished three etiological groups for mental retardation. The causes were congenital, accidental, and developmental. He suggested that the physiological features of congenital idiots could be arranged by ethnic phenotypes. The mongoloid classification passed into common usage to describe an identifiable group of mentally retarded individuals (Down, 1866).

As the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed, technical and medical discoveries produced progress in the education and training of the disabled. Typewriters grew from efforts to make writing machines for the blind; the telephone arose from Alexander Graham Bell's experiments to make speech visible to deaf children. Thomas Edison stated that the second potential use for the phonograph was a phonograph book for the blind. By 1930 talking books gave rise to long playing records (Koestler, 1976).

By the 1890s the interrelationships of biological, social, and educational understandings of mental retardation became matters of serious debate. This was the beginning of psychoeducational research (Clark, Kivitz, & Rosen, 1976). Early 20<sup>th</sup> century psychologists directed their energies to devising and using tools that would scientifically measure a person's intelligence, predict that person's social role and determine his or her value to society. Alfred Binet and his assistant Theodore Simon are accepted as the first to devise a highly acceptable test of mental ability. In 1895 Binet was considered a leader in experimental psychology and experimental pedagogy. In 1904 the French government asked Binet to produce a measure that would identify children who did not possess the potential to achieve in regular classrooms under regular school instruction. Binet devised a way to measure the intellectual capacity of school-aged children, specifically to assess the level of development of various mental processes. He subscribed to the belief that individual differences consist of deviations from a population average. He thought that mental tests should yield both quantitative and qualitative information about mental differences (Young, 1923). Binet and Simon sought to create a single scale in which samples of different aspects of mental ability could be combined to provide a rough but serviceable means to appraise general intelligence. Simon and Binet's intelligence test was first made public in 1905 (Binet & Simon, 1916).

Lewis Terman, student of the psychology of genius, the measurement of intelligence, and the phenomenon of individual differences at Stanford University, produced the Stanford-Binet Individual Test of Intelligence, the most widely accepted version of the Binet measure. That test became widely used to study the gifted and led to the advocacy of eugenics as the solution to crime, poverty, prostitution, and



feeble-mindedness. Terman was a proponent of heredity versus environment as the main determinant of mental ability. He transformed Binet's concept and was one of the first to use the term intelligence quotient to express the numerical relation of mental age to chronological age. The concept of mental age led to the emergence of new classifications of retardation. Levels of retardation were assigned to intelligence quotients (Terman & Childs, 1912).

Educational testing grew rapidly between World War I and World War II. In the 1930s questions arose regarding the use of intelligence tests, their validity, and reliability. As psychologists began to assess the importance of heredity and environment in shaping behavior, it grew clear that both were linked to form a total human being. Hereditary principles further wavered under the impact of new theories of behaviorism. Progressive schools, adopting the tenets of John Dewey and others embraced behaviorist concepts. Behaviorism focused exclusively on the impact of the environment on behaviors.

The term mental retardation was introduced in the United States by 1912. In 1955 Sloan and Birch offered the current classification system organized by severity levels of mild, moderate, severe, and profound (Heber, 1961; Winzer, 1992).

### 20<sup>th</sup> Century Special Education

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Maria Montessori, an Italian psychiatrist influenced by Seguin, was instrumental in establishing education and rehabilitation programs for retarded children. She added new approaches based on child development. She believed that mental retardation was an educational, not a medical problem (Montessori, 1912; 1917). She established a prepared environment in which children were free to use materials of their own choice and at their own pace. Montessori wanted

each of the materials to be used in a specific manner to provide a portion of the self-education she envisioned.

Advocacy for segregated classes in the public schools began in the United States in the 1880s and surged after 1910. In order to satisfy the requirements of compulsory education laws enacted in 1909 and the requests of schools, districts created special segregated classes. Students with disabilities were not isolated in institutions, but were separated in special classes. Children with difficulty learning or behavior problems were removed from the mainstream and could not interfere with the learning of normal children or lower the standards of a school. The arguments for segregated classes were legal, social, educational, and medical. Reformers cited curriculum differentiation as a strategy to provide vocational education, guidance programs, kindergarten and junior high schools for disabled children (Franklin, 1989). The most important reasons for the establishment of segregated classes within public schools were the compulsory attendance laws. Before the enactment of these laws, issues relating to the education of exceptional children were debated in social and political settings. However, with the advent of compulsory attendance, public schools could no longer ignore exceptional children. They were forced to find ways to educate a much broader range of children, many incapable of functioning in regular classrooms. Further, as federal commitment grew, state funding for special classes increased.

#### Special Education in United States Public Schools

Some of the first public school classes were ungraded and served children and youth returning from the work force, delinquents, truants, and low achievers. These classes functioned as coaching and remedial classes and presented the content of the

regular curriculum (Tropea, 1987). Early public school special education became the setting for children the schools could not or would not educate and was used to remove disabled children and youth and those displaying behavior problems (Hoffman, 1975).

Compulsory schooling for the blind and deaf was mandated in six states including Ohio in 1909. By 1930 16 states had passed legislation authorizing special education. Of these, 10 also set legal requirements for teacher certification usually limited to an elementary degree plus supplemental training (Scheier, 1931). Solutions had to be found to meet the needs of exceptional children. Special segregated classes received renewed attention, as ability grouping became part of a broad series of reforms to make schools more flexible and productive (Tropea, 1987). Educators argued that special education was a logical extension of regular education and required the extension of educational opportunities to exceptional children. They viewed disabled children as a pool of potentially productive citizens.

Leonard Ayres wrote one of the earliest books on special education, *Laggards in Our Schools*, in 1909. He reported that 33.7% of all elementary school children demonstrated an age to grade retardation. He suggested that these children needed a different kind of teaching. According to Ayres, education of disabled children would be more difficult than general education and students with disabilities would have lower achievement levels.

The concept of the standard grade was a barrier for students with disabilities. It implied that all students should progress at the same pace (Kozens, 1990). Wallin (1914) pointed out that students with learning problems were often irritated, disheartened, and depressed. Many became chronic rebels. He called for the abandonment of the inflexible

curricula and advocated that schools include remedial, corrective, or differential instruction designed to meet the varying needs of all types of students. He observed that grouping many abnormal children together accentuated their abnormalities. It made them feel inferior and different. Parents objected to the stigma of special class placement, and students had no opportunity to associate with non-disabled peers.

Others observed that students with disabilities began to respond positively to the special classes. Individual attention and guidance, differential training adapted for their individual needs, and the skills of properly trained teachers, influenced them.

From 1910 to 1930 the enrollment in public schools and the numbers of special education classes grew dramatically. Classes were available for students with various handicaps including deaf, blind, intellectually handicapped, crippled, and emotionally disturbed children. Children were tested, labeled and assigned to classes based on the nature and severity of their disabilities (Palen, 1923). The expansion of special classes increased the need for trained teachers that surpassed supply. Teachers who previously worked in institutions brought the curriculum that they had used in the institutional setting to public school classrooms. Teachers provided activities that were concrete and practical (Franklin, 1989). Instruction focused on applied academics and functional skills needed to solve concrete problems. Students were taught to obtain housing, use transportation, and get a job. Social training was an unwritten part of the curriculum.

By the end of the 1920s, the principle of segregating students in special classes in the public schools was well established. Special curriculum was being designed to meet the needs of children in a growing number of disability categories.

## Categories of Disability

In the opening decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century special education changed from isolated institutional settings to segregated classrooms within public schools. As the century progressed, special education expanded to embrace more children, to designate others to different categories to adopt new philosophies, and to implement more sophisticated diagnostic and instructional approaches. The categorical definitions of exceptional children that emerged served to maintain the purity of each population by focusing on discrepant attributes, the often exclusive characteristics that distinguished one population from another. Educators judged exceptional individuals as qualitatively different and tended to focus on handicaps, disadvantages, and weaknesses. Professional groups and programs grew up around specific disabilities (Winzer, 1993). Labeling encouraged educators to segregate children with disabilities for instruction.

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century focused on students labeled emotionally disturbed and learning disabled. There was a careful distinction between children with mental retardation and those who had normal intelligence but failed to achieve adequately. Samuel introduced the term learning disabilities in 1963. Learning disabilities denotes the largest category of disabled students in most schools today (Winzer, 1992).

### *Emotionally Disturbed*

In the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century professionals confronted the notion that emotional disturbance can be a childhood disability. The psychotic child became an object of study, as psychiatrists and others initiated efforts to observe, describe, and classify the disordered behaviors exhibited by child patients (Kanner, 1962). The functional approach to treatment associated with the mental hygiene movement

concentrated on promoting mental health and the development of the personality (Cohen, 1983). The opposing viewpoint was that all mental disturbances could be attributed to brain malfunctions or physical disease. These views vied with each other until the 1930s when the behaviorist school of psychology gained prominence. Behavior theorists such as B. F. Skinner postulated that disordered behavior has no innate or underlying cause, but is specific to situations and can be learned. Studies of behavior disorders in children included research into organic and genetic causes, the development of the humanistic model in psychology, and research into social psychology (Newcomer, 1980).

It was not until the late 1960s that education assumed responsibility for seriously emotionally disturbed children (ED; Csapo, 1984). Formalized procedures and professional services for disturbed children and their families grew. Advocates proposed that mental hygiene work take place in the public school system (Cohen, 1983). Psychological clinics were tied to schools, the courts, or social agencies. Offices of pupil personnel services offered guidance and counseling, group measurement, and child and youth study divisions in the schools (Tropea, 1987).

The predominant 21<sup>st</sup> century issue concerning ED students is placement. This decade old debate simplifies the complex task of meeting the educational and mental health needs of ED students (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1977). Regardless of placement, educational supports that may be appropriate include individualized instruction behavior management, social skills instruction and positive behavior reinforcement. Emotionally disturbed students, as other disabled students, may be removed from a regular education setting only when appropriate education cannot be achieved in that setting, even with supplemental aids and services (Tankersly, 1996).

### *Learning Disabilities*

Physicians and psychologists conducted early research into learning disabilities. They emphasized clinical investigation rather than practical application in schools. They studied brain injured and mentally retarded children followed by studies of children of normal intelligence. The initial investigations focused on spoken language, written language, motor and perceptual skills (Mercer, 1979). From 1930 to 1960 psychologists and educators used many of their predecessors' theories to develop diagnostic procedures and remedial programming. Much of the pioneering research concerned children with reading problems (Wiederholt, 1978). Educational approaches for learning disabilities were related to perceptual motor theory. Instructional plans followed three main steps: teaching a student to store letters of the alphabet in the part of the brain that processes visual memory; teaching the student to spell words orally developing auditory memory and word retrieval; and transferring auditory retrieval to visual memory centers.

Many methods, procedures, and therapies have been developed. These include structured methods such as the Orton Gillingham system and the Frosty method; the use of different settings such as engineered and stimulus-reduced classrooms; and different instructional methods such as modality training, skills approaches, and perceptual motor training. Therapies include patterning and the auditory program of Tomatis (Cruickshank, 1976; Lerner, 1981; Winzer, 1993).

Students with learning disabilities (LD) are a heterogeneous group. Individual learning problems are diverse and the discrepancy formula primarily used for LD identification identified only that this category of students was low achievers (Edgar & Hayden, 1984/1985). The IDEA, 2004 now directs that scientific, research-based

intervention as defined in NCLB, 2002 (20 U.S.C. § 7801(37)) may be used in a process to determine response to intervention and used as a part of evaluation procedures for learning disabilities (Section 614(b)(6)(A)). Response to intervention (RTI) is designed to be used with struggling students in the general education setting prior to determining whether a disability is suspected.

From the establishment of segregated classes about 1910 until well into the 1970s the education of learning and behaviorally disordered children was generally associated with special class models of service delivery. Schools removed difficult students from general education and provided specialized instruction designed to remove or reduce their deficits in learning and behavior. The inclusion movement, initiated with the least restrictive environment provision requirement for the education of disabled children found in the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), was slow to enter common practice. A steady trend toward acceptance and the strengthening of laws, NCLB, (2002) and IDEA, (2004), with accountability for achievement of students with disabilities including sanctions continues to increase numbers of students with disabilities receiving instruction in general education classrooms (ODE, 2004a).

#### *Additional Disability Categories*

Students with disabilities are categorized by the Ohio Education Management Information System (EMIS). The September 6, 2006, EMIS data collection form, currently used for the 2006-2007 school year, identifies 15 disability categories: they are Multiple Disabilities, Deaf-Blindness, Deafness, Visual Impairment, Speech or Language Impairment, Orthopedic Impairment, Emotional Disturbance, Cognitive Disability,



Specific Learning Disability, Preschoolers with a Disability, Autism, Traumatic Brain Injury, Other Health Impaired (Major), and Other Health Impaired (Minor).

### The Depression and War Era

With the 1930s optimism surrounding special education declined. There was mounting dissatisfaction with inadequately planned classes, poorly trained teachers, watered down curriculum, total segregation of exceptional children, and the misinterpretation of Progressive education (Winzer, 1993).

World War II produced advances in special education, social perceptions of disabled people, and their care and treatment. More liberal and flexible views emerged, new techniques were developed, and there were medical advances in prevention, intervention, and care. The field of special education became professional. Attention was placed on assessment, pedagogy, classroom management, and curriculum. Segregated classes were promoted with strong support from parents (Reynolds, 1975). During the 1960s the problems of differential programming for students with disabilities, along with possible solutions were studied. Parents demanded that their exceptional children be provided with educational services in local schools. Educators began to critically question the value of special classes. Numerous efficacy studies focused on the justification for and effects of educational segregation to bring it in line with the principles of normalization and least restrictive environment (Karagianis & Nesbit, 1981).

### Legal Foundation for Current Practice

*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* was the most significant ruling on education in the history of the United States. Its decision involving racial segregation established the principles of equal opportunity, that all children have the right to the

opportunity of an education. Legal developments protecting the rights of education for disabled children are grounded in this decision (Osborne & Russo, 2006).

From the middle of the 1960s on there was a series of cases in federal courts attacking special education on several fronts. They focused on five points: that tests were inappropriate; that parental involvement was lacking; that special education was inadequate; that placement was inadequate; and that placement stigmatized children (Cohen, De Young, & Ross, 1971; Zelder, 1953).

Public Law 94-142, indicating that it was the 142<sup>nd</sup> piece of legislation introduced during the 94<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act signed by President Gerald Ford, in November 1975, was a legislative remedy for the failure of some schools to provide appropriate education for disabled students. It provided official recognition by the government of growing dissatisfaction with the placement of exceptional children in segregated settings. It altered the concept of special education to bring it in line with the principles of normalization and least restrictive environment (Karagianis & Nesbit, 1981). School systems could no longer exclude handicapped students; students were accorded the right to a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment; parents were given due process rights and confidentiality; and school boards were mandated to provide a range of educational services.

#### Research, Law and Practice from 1975 to 2007

Following the enactment of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, the education of disabled children became a more visible and prominent concern of public schools. Edmonds (1979), a leading researcher in the effective schools movement, concluded in the late 1970s “(a) We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully

teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us; (b) We already know more than we need to do that; and (c) Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't [done it] so far" (p. 23). Yet many students with disabilities continued to be educated in self-contained classrooms where they were instructed using a slower version of the regular education curriculum and functional curriculum intended to help mentally retarded students acquire everyday skills. Instruction focused on daily living skills, functioning in the community, and employment.

Clarification of responsibilities for educating students with disabilities came through court rulings. In 1980, the ruling in *Armstrong v. Kline*, Pennsylvania established that some severely handicapped children have the right to schooling for 12 months (Sacks, 2001). Extended school year services (ESY) must be provided if the child's IEP team determines that services are required to prevent significant regression of instruction between school years that cannot be recouped in a reasonable amount of time. *Rowley v. Hendrick Hudson School* (1982) reinforced provision of services that permit students with disabilities to benefit from instruction. This ruling supported the philosophy behind IDEA that FAPE is more than simple access to education. FAPE is viewed to consist of instruction designed to meet the unique needs of a student with disabilities, supported by services needed to benefit from instruction. In the same year, a report from the Disability Rights, Education, and Defense Fund stated "that regardless of race, class, gender, type of disability, or age of onset, the more time spent in integrated public school classes as children, the more people achieved educationally and occupationally as adults" (Ferguson & Asche, 1989, p. 124). This finding supported those who advocated more instruction in general education settings for disabled students, sometimes known as inclusion.

The court addressed the behavior of emotionally disturbed students in 1988.

*Honig v. Doe* (1988) reaffirmed that if a student's behavior is related to his or her disability, that student cannot be denied education.

In 1990 the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed. This act, based on the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 guarantees equal opportunities for persons with HIV infection, diabetes, cancer, recovering alcoholics, drug addicts, and others. Accessibility is required for public accommodations that include hotels, retail stores, libraries, and private schools. The IDEA was reauthorized in the same year and expanded discretionary programs and mandated transition services and assistive technology services to be included in the IEP. It added autism and traumatic brain injury as new categories of disabilities.

The IDEA amendment of 1997, P.L.105-17, enhanced what children with disabilities learn versus what is expected in regular classrooms. Children with disabilities have the right to be educated, or included in the regular classroom. This amendment protects the rights of students and families by having them become more involved in the general curriculum. It guarantees that general education teachers will be included in teams that develop IEPs for children who may participate in a general classroom and guarantees participation in local and statewide assessments.

In general classrooms, curricula are to be adapted for all students, not just those identified as disabled. Differentiated instruction is seen as a correct approach for all students. Cooperative learning, multi-dimensional grouping, thematic approaches, applied learning, skills grouping, and community-based instruction are among the instructional practices employed.

Contemporary issues of inclusion and reform are characteristic of special education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since the 1980s the number of students with disabilities educated in general education classrooms has consistently increased. Inclusion of students with disabilities in the general classrooms has many models. Full inclusion has all students in regular classes all of the time. Partial inclusion may include only students who meet certain criteria in general classrooms full time. Other models provide supports for disabled students within the general education classroom with adaptations or modifications to the general curriculum (Sacks, 2001).

Some critics decry the expense of special education and cite the unfair burden of educating disabled children placed on general educators. Others voice concern about the effect of disabled students on the learning environment of non-disabled students. Skritic (1995) argues that the system of education must be disassembled and special education must become an indistinguishable part of general education.

### Summary

The education of the disabled passed through many stages. Classical Greece, for all of its concern with abstract thought and reason, exemplified disregard for the lives of disabled people. Rome also allowed destruction of imperfect infants and children in or about 400 B.C. That position began to change a little bit in 500 B.C. when physicians such as Hippocrates became interested in studying disabled people and religions affirmed the value of the disabled in the eyes of God. Societies ignored or mistreated the disabled for hundreds of years.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the first efforts to educate deaf students were recorded. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century interest in educating the blind and retarded emerged. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century

in the United States, institutions and experimental schools made early attempts to understand and train people with various handicaps. The first state schools were established in the United States to educate those who were deaf and dumb, retarded, blind, and in some cases included unrestricted categories of disabilities. Those institutions dominated the care and education of the disabled into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Following the passage of compulsory education laws, limited numbers of public schools in the United States included disabled students placing them in isolated classrooms with weak curriculum and little focus on academic achievement. Segregated classes kept difficult students out of the mainstream where they could not interfere with the learning of normal children. Other reasons used for segregation included the need for curriculum differentiation, and vocational education for disabled students.

Disability categories grew dramatically from 1910 to 1930. Orthopedically handicapped, emotionally disturbed, and learning disabled were recognized. In 2007 there are 15 disability categories including pre-schoolers with a disability, autism, traumatic brain injury, and other health impaired major and minor.

Public schools have included and expanded services for greater numbers of students with disabilities for over 3 decades, and now contemporary special education is the concern of everyone in public education.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This qualitative study was designed to identify and describe characteristics and practices of schools that make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for the subgroup students with disabilities. In addition, the investigation attempted to explore and discover patterns of practice that contribute to Ohio proficiency and achievement scores of proficient and above for the subgroup so that educators can consider this information in efforts to improve specialized services and the educational performance of students with disabilities

The author chose case study analysis as the appropriate method to explore characteristics of effective schools for students with disabilities. The case study is an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as in individual, group, institution, or community (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Bromley (1986) stated that an advantage of the case study method of inquiry, given its emphasis on a particular pattern of behavior in a particular set of circumstances over a limited period of time, is that it enables a more comprehensive, insightful form of understanding that leads to improved educational practice in schools. Marshall and Rossman (1995) assert that qualitative studies are valuable with respect to research regarding "little-known phenomena or innovative systems" (p. 43). This case study is for "intense, in-depth

examination of one or a few instances of some phenomena” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 46). Bromley indicated that the case study methodology represents “The day-to-day realities of educational processes, and institutional structures” (1986, p. 22).

Peck and Furman (1992) explored the importance of qualitative research in special education, noting the need for more holistic analysis of problems in policy and practice. These authors recognized the need for attention to descriptions of the world as experienced by individuals with disabilities, and analysis of issues in special education. Peck and Furman also identified contributions of qualitative research to the field. Qualitative researchers have identified fundamental roles of ideology, organizational dynamics, and the social/political process in shaping policy and practice in special education. Qualitative methods have led to insights into the cultural values, institutional practices, and interpersonal interactions that influence special education practice (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). This chapter describes the methods that were used to conduct the case study; site and sample selection; the researcher’s role; data collection and analysis; and management plans including timeline (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

### Research Question

This study began with a review of the research literature regarding studies of special education and studies of effective schools. The critical literature review helped the researcher refine the research question and focus of this case study (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

The research question guiding the study was: What are the characteristics of schools that meet Ohio achievement objectives for students with disabilities?



## Research Design

The theoretical conceptual framework of this study was derived from the professional orientation of educators. Looking through this lens, the researcher explored the question of characteristics of effective schools for students with disabilities with interest in curriculum, instruction, staff development, and administration.

Merriam (1998) asserts that, "all aspects of the study are affected by its theoretical framework" (p. 47). She describes this framework as a study's scaffolding. The outer frame is the body of literature and disciplinary orientation drawn upon to position the study. The second frame, inside the larger frame, is the problem statement. In this study, the problem addressed is that of effectively educating students with disabilities. The third frame, inside the second frame, is the purpose of the study. The purpose of this study was to examine Ohio schools that made AYP for the subgroup students with disabilities and identify and describe characteristics of those schools.

Other elements of casework design included in this study and discussed by Yin (1993) are deciding between single or multiple-case studies, selecting the cases to be studied, developing case protocols, and determining data collection strategies as part of case study design. Each of these components is addressed in greater detail later in this chapter.

## Case and Sample Selection

Guba and Lincoln (1981) described the challenge of defining the unit of analysis as a "bounding problem." They explained that researchers should specify criteria for inclusion of findings and exclusion of findings. They also expected that a study present the potential relevance or irrelevance of the research with articulation of the rationale.

Merriam (1988) advised that the one unit of analysis selected for initial inquiry may incorporate numerous participants, events, or phases of a process. Further, Patton (1980) states, that the unit of analysis is determined by “what you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study” (p. 100). The unit of analysis for this research was multiple-case studies of 4 schools that achieved AYP for the subgroup students with disabilities. The bounded system is one in which characteristics are indicated, discovered, and studied so that a fuller understanding of schools that meet adequate yearly progress for students with disabilities can be achieved. A sample of schools meeting the selection criteria for the 2003-2004 State Superintendent’s Schools of Promise and meeting that benchmark again for 2004-2005 was chosen.

The schools included in the study were also given special recognition for the performance of students with disabilities. Six schools met that measure. The researcher was granted access to 4 of those schools for this study. Yin (1993) calls this exemplary case design. All of the cases are expected to reflect strong examples of the phenomenon of interest. Multiple-case studies should follow replication logic. The investigator may predict that similar replications will be found. If a researcher can find replications, confidence in the overall results can be raised. Consistent findings in multiple cases are considered more robust. This study was undertaken to provide information and insight that might be used to improve the performance of students with disabilities and close the achievement gap between disabled and non-disabled students.

In Ohio, there are gaps in achievement based on race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, disability, and English language proficiency (Ohio Department of Education, 2005). In an attempt to close achievement gaps, the Ohio Department of

Education developed a program for identifying schools that are making substantial progress in ensuring high achievement for all students. Schools of Promise are achieving proficiency for all demographic groups of students. The program annually identifies schools that meet or exceed specific student performance and diversity criteria. The Ohio Department of Education (2004a) selected the State Superintendent's Schools of Promise using the following criteria:

1. The school met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements as defined by the federal government based on 2003-2004 data.
2. If there were at least five students who were supposed to graduate in 2002-2003, the school met the AYP graduation rate criterion of 73.6%.
3. At least 40% of the students in the school met low-income criteria based on 2003-2004 data.
4. At least 75% (and at least 85% for cumulative results on the Ninth Grade Ohio Proficiency Test by the end of Grade 10) of the students in each of the tested grade levels (3, 4, 6, 10) in the school passed the 2003-2004 Ohio Proficiency Test in reading or mathematics and the Ohio Achievement Test in reading.
5. At least 75% (and at least 85% for cumulative results on the Ninth Grade Ohio Proficiency Test by the end of Grade 10) of the students in the major racial and ethnic groups (with five or more test takers) in each of the tested grade levels (3, 4, 6, 10) in the school passed the 2003-2004 Ohio Proficiency Test in reading or mathematics and the Ohio Achievement Test in reading.
6. At least 75% (and at least 85% for cumulative results on the Ninth Grade Ohio Proficiency Test by the end of Grade 10) of the students who met low-income

criteria (if there were at least five test takers meeting low-income criteria) in each of the tested grade levels (3, 4, 6, 10) in the school passed the 2003-2004 Ohio Proficiency Test in reading or mathematics and the Ohio Achievement Test in reading.

7. At least 50% of the students in each of the tested grade levels in the school passed the 2002-2003 Ohio Proficiency Test in reading or mathematics.

The 4 schools selected for this study were elementary schools located in the four geographic quadrants of Ohio. They represented suburban and rural school districts. Each met at least the criteria listed above with one school achieving 100% proficiency for sixth grade students with disabilities in math and reading, one school achieving 100% proficiency for fourth grade students with disabilities in reading and 86% proficiency in math, one achieving 85% proficiency for fourth grade students with disabilities in reading and 92% proficient in math, and one achieving 78% proficiency for fourth grade students with disabilities in math.

#### Researcher's Role

The researcher, as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, was responsive to the context in which this research was gathered (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Merriam, 2002; McLaughlin & Mertens, 2004). Prior to undertaking the study, the researcher identified her personal values, assumptions, and beliefs. This introspection reconfirmed the researcher's belief that each person is of equal human value. The researcher also is convinced that each child has the ability to gain knowledge and skills that may be academic or functional and it is the responsibility of educators to find the most effective means to teach each child. The researcher is a special educator who

worked in many schools as a teacher, administrator, and special education consultant for over 30 years. Through the professional lens she made observations and analyzed data. From her construction of reality in the research situation she decoded the data obtained in the 4 schools in this study and produced the final interpretation of this research.

The investigator was immersed in the study without preconceived hypotheses. For this study, the researcher conducted interviews at times and in ways that resulted in minimal disruption to school settings. The researcher gathered data in the form of audio taped naturalistic interviews, which were then transcribed, written observation notes, and included demographic information that were obtained from principals. The researcher also gathered additional information from each building, which included curriculum documents, materials, staff development plans, and test records.

#### Data Collection

Patton (1980) described qualitative data as detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors; direct quotations from people about experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts; and excerpts or passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories. The researcher used these sources to explore topics suggested by the report of the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, (2002), NCLB (2002), IDEA (2004), and the Ohio Schools of Promise Framework of Practices (ODE, 2004a). Data analysis was conducted simultaneously with collection, interpretation, and journaling.

The researcher developed protocols for observations, document review and interview questions (See Appendix A) focused on process and product, intervention prior to identification, integration of students with disabilities into the learning community,

assessment practices, collaboration practices, professional development, and curriculum and instruction.

During the 3-month period, March to May 2006, the researcher made site visits and collected data. The researcher spent one full day at each building making before and after school observations of students, teachers, and parents, and interviewing participants, observing classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, gymnasiums, offices, play areas and unstructured interactions in and around the buildings during the school day. Site visits were followed by telephone calls to solicit additional information and to conduct member checks as the researcher proceeded with data analysis.

### *Observations*

The researcher made multiple site visits to Schools of Promise to make observations and conduct interviews. The researcher assumed the role of non-participant observer and questions or concerns of staff were answered prior to the visits. The participants knew of the information-gathering activities of the researcher. The researcher took notes, observed the settings, the participants, activities and interactions, and noted what occurs in the school environments. The researcher limited observations to 30 minutes with teachers and staff in an effort to follow the instructional schedule without disruption to classes.

The focus for classroom observations included instructional practice, teacher behavior, and student behavior. The framework for observation was drawn from the West Regional School Improvement Team's Standards-Based Education Matrix (Ohio Department of Education, 2004b). This tool was a helpful structure that illustrated a method to identify categories for observation. It includes such areas as classroom

environment, cognitive level of instructional activities, and student centered approaches. Behaviors that improvement team coaches hope to see are itemized in each category. The researcher observed general and special educators, noting behaviors demonstrating high expectations for all students and instruction aligned to appropriate grade level indicators and benchmarks. The researcher looked for teacher levels of academic knowledge and instructional practice including communicating goals for learning, differentiation in instruction, and relationships to standards for all students. These teacher behaviors are more extensively detailed in the *Pathwise Classroom Observation System* (Educational Testing Service, 2000), which the researcher used as a guide. High expectations are demonstrated when teachers select challenging learning goals that are within the reach of their students and encourage students to have confidence, take risks, and strive for success. Posting indicators and communicating to students the indicators linked to the daily lesson is evidence of alignment to standards and benchmarks. Levels of academic knowledge and instructional practice could be evidenced by clear communication of content, differentiation of amount of work, multiple ways for students to demonstrate learning, and addressing various learning styles in instruction.

The researcher's observations of students focused on engagement in learning, evidence of students' belief in their ability to achieve at high levels and the variety of learning strategies that they used. Student engagement is demonstrated by attention to task, questioning, and volunteering to participate in the lesson. Students taking risks through participating in challenging activities demonstrate belief in their ability to achieve at high levels. Students may reveal their learning strategies through class reflections on the lesson. Following each observation, the researcher reviewed field notes

to provide a complete account of the observation. Two formal observations of general education classrooms were conducted in School A, one in School B, two in School C, and two in School D. The researcher formally observed two special education classrooms in School A, one in School B, and two in School D. She also observed one content specialist's class in School D and one co-teaching class in School C. In addition to these 14 formal observations, the researcher made informal observations of classrooms as she toured the buildings with principals and studied the facilities independently. The field notes portions of which are cited in chapter 4, included the researcher's comments, feelings, reactions, interpretations, and hypotheses (Merriam, 1998).

### *Interviews*

Principals recommended key informants for interviews. The researcher selected general educators, special educators, non-certified staff, and administrators in each building following the principals' recommendations. The researcher developed interview protocols for each informant category. The content of semi-structured interviews was developed to elicit information that would answer the following questions:

1. Do successful schools focus on process or product?
2. How do they address prevention of failure for students who are not making expected progress?
3. How are students with disabilities incorporated into the learning community of all staff and students in the building?
4. What are the assessment practices?
5. What professional development plans are implemented?



6. How is instruction provided and how is it aligned to general curriculum and content standards?

Interviews consisted of experience/behavior questions, opinion/value questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions, and background/demographic questions. Interviews were semi-structured to evoke ideas from the respondent. Interviews were tape-recorded and limited to 20 minutes. The researcher formally interviewed 22 participants. She interviewed the principal, 2 general educators, 2 special educators, and one classroom aide in School A. She also held informal conversations with 2 general educators and an additional special educator in School A. The formal interviews conducted in School B were with the principal, one general educator, one special educator, and the building secretary. The researcher held formal interviews with the principal, 2 general educators, one special educator, and one classroom aide in School C, and interviewed the principal, 2 general educators, 2 special educators, one classroom aide, and one content specialist in School D. She also held additional conversations with two general educators and one other special educator in School D. The researcher also took notes during the interviews and kept a journal so that data could be coded and triangulated for analysis.

*Documents*

The researcher studied district report cards, building report cards and Schools of Promise reports. She gathered documents including test results, professional development schedules, and lesson plans. She also reviewed artifacts including trophies, banners, engraved pencils, school tee-shirts, and posters that cover the range of written and symbolic records kept by the schools.

In addition, the researcher sought records of awards for teachers and students and noted various recognitions such as the honor role and good citizenship designations. She categorized and coded the documents to explore patterns that emerged for general and special education teachers and students.

### *Data Analysis*

The researcher engaged in data analysis throughout the study, using the constant comparative model (Merriam, 1992). Findings were systematically built as pieces of data were collected. Initially, the researcher reflected on impressions, relationships, patterns, and commonalties. However, the researcher recognized the need to conduct more detailed analysis as research progressed. As such, the researcher organized notes and studied data seeking similarities, differences, correspondence, categories, themes, concepts, and ideas (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). The researcher displayed information in matrices illustrating categories by informants, location, time ordering, and role ordering. She compared incidents in interviews, field notes, and documents. These comparisons produced categories for further comparison. The researcher used coding to identify each interview, observation, and document. Reflections of the researcher were also coded. This system of management facilitated access to specific data as the researcher could easily reference codes to access information.

### Validity and Reliability Measures

#### *Internal Validity*

Internal validity, linking power, is evidenced in the relationship of the results of the study to reality. Internal validity is also established by the “tightness” of a study. The components must be well planned and executed.

Merriam (1998) lists six basic strategies to improve internal validity: triangulation, member checks, long-term observation, peer examination, participator or collaborative modes of research, and researchers' biases. This study utilized triangulation, multiple data collection techniques used to cross-check the accuracy of data collected another way; member checks, consulting with participants to verify accuracy; peer examination by other special education administrators, sharing data for the review of peers; and clarification of researcher biases to enhance internal validity. The researcher used two types of triangulation to strengthen internal validity. Informants from different status positions and different points of view provided data triangulation. The researcher provided methodological triangulation by using the multiple sample methods of interview, observation and document review (Patton, 1987). She conducted member checks in each building by presenting informants with tentative interpretations and data and asked if the results were plausible.

### *External Validity*

External validity, generalizing power, refers to the extent to which the results of a study can be applied to other situations. Merriam (1998) states that the intention of qualitative research is not to generalize findings, but to produce a unique interpretation of events. The question is whether it is possible to generalize from qualitative inquiry. Some consider generalizability a limitation of the method while others defend the external validity of qualitative studies. Erickson (1986) argues that the general lies in the particular. One learns from particular situations and generalizes to similar situations. Learning is derived from experiences and that knowledge is applied in future situations.

Stake (1995) describes naturalistic generalization as drawing on tacit knowledge, intuition and personal experience to look for patterns that provide explanations for observations and experiences.

In order to enhance the external validity of this research, the researcher attempted to provide “rich thick description” for readers to evaluate whether the findings closely match their situation. The schools studied are described as exemplary in order to establish a frame of reference for comparison. The multi-site design allows the results to be applied to a greater range of other situations (Merriam, 1998). By employing multi-case analysis including pre-determined questions and specific procedures for coding and analysis the generalizability of this research is enhanced (Yin, 1994).

### *Reliability*

The uniqueness of a study within a specific context decreases the likelihood of replicating it exactly. Replication is the essence of reliability. Considering this problem, Creswell (1994) states that the statement of central assumptions; statement of the selection of informants; and statement of the biases and values of the researcher increase the possibility of replication in another setting. In qualitative studies, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis and as such attempts to describe, explain, and construct meaning from multiple sources. The concept of replication as applied to traditional experimental research does not fit the nature of qualitative research. There are many possible interpretations and no single reality to be duplicated by others. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest thinking about dependability of the results or consistency of results instead of reliability. Dependability is evidenced when others agree that given the data, the results make sense.

## Ethics

In a qualitative study, Merriam (1988) and Creswell (1994) suggested that ethical issues may arise during data collection and during the reporting of findings. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) developed a formal ethical code that addressed the specific ethics of conducting research with special education populations. The CEC code states that special education professionals are required to protect the rights and welfare of participants, interpret and publish research results with accuracy and a high quality of scholarship, support a cessation of the use of any research procedure that may result in undesirable consequences for the participants, and exercise all possible precautions to prevent misapplication or misuse of a research effort (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). The researcher submitted a Human Subjects Proposal to the chair of the Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects in Research at the University of Dayton Research Institute and received approval prior to starting the study (See Appendix B). She sent letters to the principals of schools meeting the research criteria to request permission to conduct the study (See Appendix C) and obtained signed Informed Consent Forms from all participants (See Appendix D). Confidentiality was strictly maintained and informants were assured anonymity in published results of this study.

## Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe characteristics of schools in Ohio that make adequate yearly progress for students with disabilities and provide data that may be used to inform policy and practice for educators focusing on delivery of instruction, instructional practices, parents and community, attitudes, values, beliefs, system models, and leadership. This qualitative study included general and special

educators, principals, and classified staff from 4 elementary schools in Ohio that were selected as State Superintendent's Schools of Promise for performance in the school years 2003-2004 and 2004-2005, and received special recognition for the performance of students with disabilities. The significance of this study arises from requirements and consequences of federal and state rules for assessment and performance of disabled students. This study adds to the body of knowledge on exemplary schools in the quest for effective education leading to proficient achievement for students with disabilities.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS OF THE STUDY

#### Introduction

This chapter, which is developed into eight sections, presents results recognizing common characteristics and differences among the four schools in this study. The data are organized to identify major themes revealed through detailed data analysis. The first two sections of this chapter state the school profiles and give data regarding settings and participants. Section three addresses common practices for delivering instruction among schools in the study. Results are presented using the voices of participants with descriptions from interviews and field notes providing a depiction of classrooms and teaching practices. The fourth section presents data revealing classroom tactics and tools used by teachers. These are also exposed through the words of informants. Sections five through eight include results of analysis of interviews and observations concerning the role and involvement of parents and the community; attitudes, values and beliefs; system models; and leadership.

#### Profile of Study Participants

Consistent with the Ohio Department of Education's use of School Profiles to make data available, the researcher provides the following demographic information about participants. This study included 22 participants in 4 elementary schools. Four participants were administrators, 7 were general educators, 6 were special educators, 4

were classified staff, and one was a certified content specialist. The schools were located in the southeast, southwest, northeast and northwest quadrants of Ohio. Three of the schools consisted of Grades K-5 while another included Grades K-6. Total enrollment in each building ranged from 243 to 396, with the high and low enrollment numbers found in K-5 buildings. The four districts where the schools were located had enrollments ranging from 1,438 to 4,791. Students with disabilities accounted for 12 to 24% of the student population of these schools.

Table 1

*School Profiles*

Subgroups	Proportion of enrollment by school			
	School			
	A	B	C	D
1. Economically disadvantaged students	56.8%	47.5%	50.1%	50%
2. Students with disabilities	23.4%	12.5%	13.5%	12.4%
3. Black students	9.5%	5.2%	3.7%	0%
4. White students	89.5%	90.4%	89.1%	91.8%

## Settings and Participants in the Study

The following description of settings and participants is organized by school. First, the researcher describes the school building, and surrounding environment. The second paragraph gives information about the staff and services of the school including the number of special education teachers, general education teachers, male to female



teacher ratio, average years of experience of teachers, percentage of teachers with advanced degrees, district support services, and the number of years the principal has served in the building. This paragraph also gives examples of the pre-service experiences of teachers.

### *School A*

School A was located in a small southeastern Ohio town with a population of 3,742. The area had spacious farms and near the school one could see steam rising from the river. Close to the school, new, well-groomed homes stood near older, smaller homes in poor repair. Lush green surroundings provided a serene and comfortable atmosphere. The school, a one-story building, offered a welcoming environment. It stood close to the narrow road, where people congregated in the parking lot among the cars and carried on conversations at various times throughout the school day. At the outdoor covered entry to the building, were benches for seating in a large covered patio-like area. Three large banners were attached to the wall proclaiming that the school was a School of Promise. Each banner represented a year that the school received the School of Promise award, 2002-2003, 2003-2004, and 2004-2005. The halls of the school were busy with teachers and students in what looked like purposeful movement. Many examples of student art and notices of recognition were posted in the building entry and in the halls. An example of an award displayed for students was the "Caught Being Kind Award." The principal also posted awards of recognition for class performance, attendance, professional development, and other achievements of teachers prominently throughout the building.

Twenty-five teachers were on the staff of School A. The principal described them as having a mix of experience ranging from 4 to 30 years with an average of 16 years of

experience with 55% having masters' degrees. Twenty-one teachers were general educators and 4 were intervention specialists. Five general educators were male and 16 female. All special educators were female. The principal has served this building for 9 years. The district provided the support services of a curriculum director, literacy team, computerized programs A-Math, Academy of Reading, Failure-Free Reading, and Accelerated Reader. It also provided a speech language pathologist and Title I programs. Special and general educators came from various educational preparation programs. One special education teacher reported that she became interested in obtaining special education certification after she was assigned to a resource room as a substitute while not elaborating further. Another special educator developed an interest in autism as a high school student and focused on special education at the university while working in autism services. General educators came from similarly diverse educational and experiential backgrounds. One general educator talked about teaching in Hawaii for 2 years following a traditional teacher preparation program before returning to the school district where he had been educated to continue teaching. Another general educator was a product of the local school system, educated at a nearby university, and established her ongoing career where she began her formal schooling as a child. Both of these educators taught students with disabilities within their inclusive general education classrooms as the sole teacher supported with consultation from an intervention specialist.

### *School B*

School B was located in a city in northeastern Ohio with a population of 32,000. It was an area surrounded by other bigger cities, formerly large industrial centers where closed factories and other businesses evidenced a previously vibrant environment. The

school community, which has narrow streets and is densely populated with small homes, adjoins a larger city where new roads and shopping centers are under construction within a mile and across the railroad tracks from the school. The building was a two-story structure with an attached gymnasium with 10 numbered entrances. The principal stated that it was the oldest school building in the district. The entries are locked during the school day, except for times when crossing guards assist students in and out of the building. Visitors must ring the bell at door one to gain entry. On both sides of the entry from door one there were student handprints pressed on the walls in red paint with a designation of DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) participation and the year that students participated in the program. Just past the handprints, banners and posters represented honors that the school had received including School of Promise 2003-2004 and 2004-2005. One poster displayed three questions for educators. They asked; what should our students know and be able to do? What are we doing to get them there? How do we know?

The staff of School B consisted of 34 teachers. Twenty-eight teachers were general educators, 3 were Title I teachers, and 3 were intervention specialists. Twenty-five general educators were female and 3 were male. All special educators were female. The principal reported teacher experience levels ranging from a few years to reaching retirement with an average of 12 years of experience. Fifty three percent of the staff had masters' degrees. The principal had been working in this building for 6 years. The district provided a test analysis team, Ohio Reads program, FM systems in all classrooms, after school tutoring, a curriculum director, Title I, and a preschool handicapped program. Preparation for teaching again varied among teachers. A special educator prepared for

teaching in a secondary physical education program and, after experiences substituting in special education classes, took four additional courses and was certified as a special educator. Later, this teacher took classes to obtain elementary certification. One general educator followed her childhood interest in teaching through an undergraduate degree in elementary education and her master's degree.

### *School C*

School C was located in a suburban area adjacent to a city with a population of over 300,000. The suburb had a population of 11,300. The elementary school, part of a complex of buildings, was three stories tall and had wings jutting in several directions. As one approached the main and secondary entries, teachers stood on the steps and walks to greet students, parents, and others. Inside the building each classroom marked its "address" with a full sized mailbox mounted in a large flowerpot beside the door. The teacher's name was painted on the side. The halls contained awards for the school, student work, and one large bulletin board filled with small apples naming 220 "Blue Ribbon Volunteers." This school was selected as a U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon School in 2005 and School of Promise 2003-2004 and 2004-2005. Classrooms in the building were arranged by grade levels; with the lower grades on the lower floors.

The staff of School C consisted of 35 certified staff members, 45% of whom had advanced degrees. There were 32 general educators and 3 intervention specialists. Two general educators were male and all special educators were female. Teaching experience of the staff ranged from less than 6 years to over 33 years. The principal stated that the staff was balanced with an average of 15 years of experience. She had served the building for 6 years. The district provided 12 categories of support services including counselor,

health aide, psychologist, speech language pathologist, early identification program, Title I Reading Workshop, Head Start, Parent-School Partner, intervention based services gifted services, intervention tutors and preschool. Participants reported diverse paths to their current positions and teaching disabled students. One special educator began her career as a paralegal. She was interested in education because her mother was a retired teacher and other members of her family were in care-giving professions. When she entered a university school of education, she was immediately drawn to special education. Following graduation, she obtained a position in her current building and completed a master's degree. A general educator was prepared as a special educator and general educator. She sought a specialized degree because some members of her family were deaf, and was inspired to become a general educator due to her admiration for her fourth grade teacher. Later she earned a master's degree in reading.

#### *School D*

School D, the smallest of the 4 in the study, was in a rural area of northwest Ohio with a population of approximately 18,000. The small town contained farming and small business enterprises with a mix of middle class neighborhoods. The school building was a one-story brick with large classrooms and wide halls. Entering the main door, the feeling of comfort and welcome was immediate. In the center of the spacious entry area a garden bench for seating and a standing lamp created a parlor-like effect. Classroom doors were decorated with colorful printed café curtains. Bright blue bins lined the lower-grade halls with a student's name on each bin. They were used to remedy the school's need for more student lockers. The principal described the décor as an intentional approach to be a "family friendly" school. Student work created displays throughout the building.

Congratulations and "way to go" statements adorned the halls. A School of Promise banner hung in the entry.

Thirteen teachers were on the staff at School D. Three were National Board Certified. Seventy five percent of the staff had a master's degree or higher. The range of experience was from 5 to 34 years with an estimated average of 19 years, which the principal characterized as "a nice mix." Nine general educators, a Title I teacher, and 3 intervention specialists taught in the building. Two general educators were male, and all special educators were female. The principal had served in this building for 5 ½ years. The district provided several support programs, Positive Attitudes with Students (PAWS), Harvesting Excellence in Highly Gifted and Talented Students (HEIGHTS), Title I, an after school study table program, food-child nutrition services and a director of special education. A special educator described her entry into the field as accidental. She was uncertain about her focus when she entered college and registered for an education course to explore a possible interest. She was unaware that the class was focused on the education of students with disabilities and included participation in special education classrooms. The reading specialist was initially certified for elementary K-8 and was assigned as an LD tutor. She took additional courses in special education and reading and earned her master's degree as a reading specialist. In her current position, she works with non-disabled and disabled students in small groups. A general educator chose elementary education because there was little demand for teachers in his areas of interest, German, politics, and high school social studies. He teaches students with disabilities and non-disabled students now with "high expectations for everyone."

### Data Analysis Process

Through transcripts of taped interviews, field notes from observations, and documents gathered for review in these 4 schools, the researcher obtained a wealth of data for analysis. The researcher began comparing, coding, and developing categories. As analysis progressed, themes developed and common characteristics emerged. The researcher also found differences and unique practices and noticed that some issues such as discipline, were noticeably missing when one looked at the topics that dominated the data. Although discipline was not a high frequency topic, paddling was a surprising element of discipline in one building. The principal displayed an old fashioned wooden paddle on the office wall. With parent permission and with the parent's presence, students occasionally received a paddling.

The columns in Appendix E reveal the framework of analysis of the interviews only. Column one shows the framework of analysis, while columns two through five identify participant groups and primary categories of data that came to light from each group. Columns show emerging meaning related to the study's conceptual framework. Each row in the framework identifies the principles that each of the participants addressed. Interviews with administrators focused on staff. On one hand, special educators centered on evidence based practices, general education curriculum, and assessment. On the other hand, general educators' main discussion surrounded instruction and incorporating students with disabilities into their classrooms. Additionally, classified staff focused on their roles with students. Detailed codes of topics that were found in transcripts are located at the bottom of the page. They appear in the framework when they frequently emerged in data from all schools.

The schools had different levels of funds available. One principal remarked that her building was fortunate to have generous financial resources for staff development, materials, and programs, while the other three buildings faced greater financial stresses. Another principal described his struggle with limited funds and the hard choices he had to make when confronting the needs of teachers and students. All schools demonstrated high student achievement, suggesting that although funding can facilitate the process, or present challenges, it alone does not determine achievement.

The researcher was surprised that a variety of terminology or professional language was used in different buildings. Although the delivery of instruction had many common characteristics, some special educators referred to themselves as LD or DH teachers, while others used the more recent designation Intervention Specialist. Educating students with their non-disabled peers was sometimes called mainstreaming, or inclusion, while some classrooms taught by special educators were called resource or self-contained classes. The researcher was initially surprised when hearing in one building that “we are essentially a pull out program,” then observing that students with disabilities and their peers who were not disabled moved freely among general classrooms, intervention settings, and special education classrooms for instruction. Different labels, that at first seemed to be differences in service, did not appear to influence the range and settings of services for students in any of the schools.

One school used a unique system of incentives to motivate students for high achievement on Ohio Achievement Tests. The teachers rode bicycles, donated by the Parent Teacher Organization, down the halls of the school and into classrooms on the morning of the test. The bicycles were parked in the front of the class to remind students



that they could earn a ticket for each test they passed at the proficient level or above, and those tickets would go into a raffle for the bicycles. The principal and teachers in that same school distributed peppermint candies for students to eat during the assessment, following the theory that peppermint improved performance, and adding another positive aspect to the day.

### Delivery of Instruction

Interviews and observations revealed common practices in instructional delivery. The following information identifies those practices and provides a detailed description of their implementation in the classrooms or buildings in the study.

#### *Intervention*

Teachers and principals in all 4 schools reported that they provided a great deal of intervention for all students. One principal stated that all teachers were required to provide 20 minutes of intervention every other week. In the same school, intervention is part of each teacher's schedule. Teachers also donated additional intervention time in that school. One teacher estimated that she provides four or five intervention sessions a week. An incentive program was in place for teachers and students to promote intervention activities. The principal kept a record of donated time for teachers. Teachers who provided an extra 20-minute intervention during their lunch period received one ticket to be placed into the "intervention bucket." Forty-five minutes of extra planning earned two interventions for two tickets. In the principal's words, "every intervention they do which is above and beyond the ones I've already assigned to them, they put a ticket into a little bucket and every grading period we draw out of the bucket and they get a

\$50 bill and five \$20 bills.” If students attended after school study for 7 hours, they earned a “recreation evening,” of bowling or a similar activity. Class spirit is displayed with cheering and congratulations when a teacher’s name is selected at the quarterly drawing.

Participants in each school described interventions as immediate for struggling students. One teacher declared that she addresses skills weekly, “not waiting until next week to intervene.” Teachers provided guidance for parents suggesting activities to be done at home. The prevailing descriptor for interventions was “flexible.” Intervention was also described as common. One teacher explained, “All students go out of the general classroom at some time during the day. It is not seen as unusual.”

Means for intervention varied by school but the practice was used in all four settings. Participant descriptions across school settings include Intervention Assistance Teams that met together with the parents of struggling students where they introduced concerns and the team developed possible interventions. Teachers documented the results of implementation of the interventions and provided data for future educational decisions. One principal described intervention in the following way:

We have the Title I reading program and we have intervention besides special services at all grade levels. We have learning communities. We have grade level teams. We have Intervention Based Services. That is usually the teacher’s first resource to look and identify the behavior role or the academic concern that they have and identify it. Then they work within the classroom. So it’s sequential, a sequential process and if it’s a huge concern then it’s addressed immediately. Usually it’s a step-by-step process handled through the administration, through

the team process so everybody knows to support that child's concerns. It's very individualized and case-by-case.

This illustrates administrative recognition of the role and importance of intervention for all students. Intervention is not seen as a precursor to special education, but as an essential means for delivery of instruction within the range of supports for non-disabled and disabled students.

Other interventions mentioned by teachers were special mathematics and reading teachers who provided extra assistance, after school classes throughout the year, parent tutors, and computer technology. A school located near the local university paired struggling students with college students for support. One district employed a district Intervention Assistance Team. The principal in that district explained "if the things our team suggests don't work or they run out of ideas you can take a child to a district IAT." There the district psychologist and curriculum specialist add their ideas to the group.

An example of an intervention in School A, found in my field notes, was a small group intervention in reading with a Title I teacher. The students in the group were first grade students.

The setting was a small room with a cozy environment. Soft music played, colorful beanbag chairs were around the room, and stuffed animals and hanging plants seemed to fill the room. There were awards on the walls along with student work charts and examples of student work. Many books and other materials lined shelves. The teacher directed students to take out books from their individual plastic bags. The story was *Ben's Tooth*. There were six students in the group. All of the students had a paper in their book that contained a parent comment and an

adult signature signifying that the students did the homework. All of the students had their paper and received a sticker for their chart, used to earn a reward. The group began a new story, *Little Critter*. Students were asked to volunteer to read the title. The teacher asked questions and students volunteered answers throughout the lesson. The teacher directed the students to read a portion silently and draw a line under words they didn't know so that they could be identified later. The teacher chose a word to analyze, care[ful]. The teacher asked the group "What does it mean? See care like in Care Bears? ... How can they be careful with a puppy"? Following this exchange the teacher asked for a volunteer to read. All of the students raised their hand each time the teacher asked for a volunteer. Then the students were given a worksheet. When they were completed, together the teacher and students checked the papers for immediate feedback.

The teacher described the group as "fluid," meaning members of the group may change during the year based on need. This interaction in a Title 1 setting exemplifies one way in which long-existing programs can be used to meet the needs of a cross section of students. Students were not categorized in this group. The rich, warm environment invited all students to participate without fear of failure. Students were rewarded for involving their parents in their learning and gave parents the opportunity to become involved in the instructional process.

#### *General Classroom Instruction*

General educators in all buildings avowed that they had "high expectations" for all students participating in their classes. Instruction was aligned with grade level standards with accommodations and modifications provided based on students' IEPs. The

researcher observed classrooms in which the general educator was the only teacher and disabled students were members of the class in accordance with LRE.

One teacher in School A was teaching a spelling group. Students were fifth graders and included students with learning disabilities. The class had 13 students. Students, who appeared relaxed and friendly as they entered, became immediately and totally engaged in learning. For the activity, the teacher directed the class: "from a group of 10 words find a word spelled incorrectly and in the second group conversely correctly." Students worked quietly and independently. The teacher described himself as quick to modify study guides or tests for students who demonstrated a need for accommodations to facilitate learning. He may give the tests as a study guide or "tear off" parts of tests if those accommodations will help students to better express what they know.

Another observation was of a second grade classroom in School A. There were four groups of students at colorful tables. One student with a disability was included in a class of 20. Many visuals were displayed around the room. The classroom had a word wall and a daily graph. Each student had a "Gum Ball Machine" on the bulletin board. The title of the bulletin board was "We're On the Ball." The individual construction paper representations of gumball machines had varying numbers of colorful gumballs in them that had been earned by students for academic achievements. Students earned gumballs for academic achievements. Daily journals were visible on a shelf. Interactions took place between the teacher and students and among students.

This observation from field notes stated:

Direct instruction was a vocabulary lesson. The teacher introduced the lesson by reminding the class about their completion of a book containing specific words. She also reminded the class that they had looked these words up “yesterday.” Many students raised their hands as they acknowledged their familiarity with the words. The teacher led the class in a “Say It Clap It” exercise identifying the number of syllables in each word. They compared words.

In this class, the teacher conducted instruction using a familiar routine as evidenced by the directions the teacher gave for the next activity, “You know the drill” she said, and the response of the students was to immediately get materials ready for the activity. This teacher used instructional strategies that allowed students a variety of responses. Examples were found in field notes.

“Write one word per card and lay it out in front of you.” One student was chosen to help the teacher distribute six 3 x 5 cards to each student. The teacher encouraged and guided the class by saying “Anthony’s ready, Charles is ready.” The teacher instructed the class not to speak out but to “hold up the card” in answer to her questions. “Hold up the card that means amazing.” No correct cards were raised. The teacher prompted students to remember the definitions of yesterday. The questions varied. Some were fill in the blank (e.g., He --- to eat his broccoli [refused]). “If you raised this card put it in the plastic bag of words you know.” She asked for a group-answer to one question.

Although the teacher told the researcher that one student in the class was disabled, the child was never identified and all of the students received the same instructions and

options for response during the lesson. There were no observable differences in instruction for individual students.

These examples of instruction in general education classrooms with teaching provided by one general educator incorporate high expectations for all students through grade level content standards. The teachers demonstrated an awareness of learning styles by using visual and kinesthetic activities and used connections to prior learning and routine to enhance instruction. There were instances when a teacher offered students multiple ways to express knowledge and a reward system was in place to increase motivation. These strategies made it possible to follow IEP accommodations without singling out disabled students and offered non-disabled students a variety of ways to learn.

The observation of a fourth grade general educator in School B was during a science lesson. Students came into the room and took their seats. The classroom was located on the second floor where the walls were filled with student art and student work. The desks were arranged into two small groups of seven desks and one long arrangement of 13. There were 18 students in the class. When interacting with the students, the teacher sometimes asked questions that were answered by the students as a group and sometimes by individual volunteers. The teacher called on students whose hands were raised.

On the wall there were "I Can" posters. They said:

I can use word clues to understand meaning.

-Acquisition of Vocabulary

I can set a purpose for reading.

-Reading Process

I can identify who is telling the story.

-Literary Text

There were other "I Can" statements, each associated with academic content standards. This is the only classroom in which the researcher encountered these posters. They are another way to connect learning to the standards that is readily understandable by the students.

Following a homework check, the teacher began the lesson with a review of prior learning. The class reviewed the steps that they had taken to create a salt and water solution and the steps they had taken to produce a saturated solution. The class reviewed their lab charts before beginning the lesson for the day. The following interaction was recorded in the field notes.

The teacher began today's lesson by pouring some solution into two pans warmed by electric candle or coffee warmers that were on a table at the front of the room. She instructed the class to complete their lab sheets, but keep them out. "Now that we have a saturated mixture, we're going to separate it. With a solid mixture it was easy to separate." She reminded the students of that previous activity. "It was easy based on the properties." The teacher handed out new lab sheets. "This mixture is solid and liquid." It has all of the solids still in it. The students say that the solids (salt) won't evaporate. "How can I prove that solids are there"? Students volunteered answers and the teacher responded. "We could taste it, yes, but we don't for safety." She reminded the class of the definition of dissolve. "For today's demonstration, what is the big question? Where is the salt? How do we prove that it is still there"? The teacher repeated key terms frequently in the



presentation. The students were instructed to read the procedure steps. "We have a prediction/hypothesis. Learn this word, it is scientific prediction. Write a hypothesis. Use words and/or pictures are great. What will be left? Where will it go? Address both the solid and liquid in your hypothesis. When and where will they both be?"

As the students wrote or pictured their hypotheses, the teacher walked around the room monitoring their work. She gave prompts "What will happen to the liquid?" "Include statements about the salt." "Find where you mentioned solid or salt." "Circle that." "Then find liquid and circle liquid or water to make sure you included both parts." "When you have these circled, put your pencil down so I know you're ready." Following the independent work time, the teacher continued with direct instruction. The field notes recorded the conclusion of the lesson.

The teacher announced, "We're ready to observe. We'll come up in teams. The backside of the paper is for your observations today. This will be homework if you do not have time to complete it in class. Can you answer the investigative questions? Was your prediction correct?" The teacher timed the teams as they observed the pans that had been warming the solution. Each had one minute to observe with magnifiers that are distributed by the teacher. "If you're choosing to draw I should see round pans." She told the class that some are choosing to draw, "that's always a good strategy." As class drew to an end the teacher told the class "We'll come back to these tomorrow. If you draw, label your parts. That is called a diagram." The students kept working until the teacher said, "I know you want to keep working but you can't. Line up when you're ready to go."

This setting provided an opportunity to see a lab investigation conducted with disabled and non-disabled students. As in other general education classrooms, this teacher provided a variety of ways to demonstrate knowledge, made connections to prior learning, and validated the use of alternate means of expression through drawings or diagrams. Other strategies seen here were the use of frequent prompts and repetition of key terms. These strategies broaden the means by which a disabled student or any student can become a successful learner.

### *Co-teaching in General Education Classrooms*

An observation of a general and special education inclusive setting in School C began with the 2 teachers and several students working at the class chalkboard. There were 13 students and 3 adults in the classroom. Students with disabilities participated throughout the room. One small group of 5 students was at a table with one aide and were working and talking together. Four students were at a semi-circular array of desks working on the math problems that were also on the board. In a prominent position above the chalkboard was the saying "I've failed over and over again in my life and that is why I succeed." Posters contained the messages "Practice makes perfect; never, never... never give up; and if you're not sure ask questions." The teachers conferred informally in the center of the room at various times during the session. Each teacher moved to support different groups of students. The general educator left the board first while the special educator remained. The general educator moved back and forth from one area to another. The special educator focused on one student. She used a chart to trace the multiplication column seven to find 49. Field notes recorded the interaction.

She asked, "What number is in the corresponding row? Now make a list of all of the numbers in the column. You can do it! Keep going"! The student at the board circled the 49 when he found the match. He placed the 7 at the top of the problem 49 divided by 7. The teacher used two colors of chalk to highlight the answer. She gave the equation  $7 \times n = 49$  and the student stated the correct answer immediately. She gave congratulations. Next she posed  $3 \times n = 9$  and received an immediate correct response. Then she asked the student to make a problem for her. When the teacher produced the correct answer the student gave her two thumbs up.

During the time that the special educator was engaged with the student at the board, other children in the class raised their hands and the special educator responded to their questions. When she returned her attention to the student at the board, she continued the instruction.

"Now I'm trying to trick you," she said. "Get as close as you can to 38 divided by 6 without going over." The student independently used a number copying strategy that had been modeled by the teacher earlier in the lesson. He finally selected 6. The teacher illustrated in diagram form how 38 results in six groups of 6 with a remainder of 2. The teacher drew the first group of six and the student drew the rest.

The class moved to transition. The general educator told the class that it had done an excellent job in math. The class had made some great progress today.

Co-teaching in this classroom combines the efforts of two teachers and an aide working cooperatively while providing instruction for students in different ways. Some

students worked in cooperative groups while others had the direct guidance of the aide and the special educator gave one-on-one instruction. The general educator was the teacher coordinating instruction for the whole class. The special educator modified the math lesson for a student who worked with her at the board. Using a multiplication chart, color cues, and positive reinforcement, she guided the student in standards based instruction. As noted earlier, these teachers posted messages encouraging students to try, ask questions, and fail if necessary in order to succeed. This form of instructional delivery allows students who may be unable to achieve in a general education classroom without the support of a special educator to learn in an environment with non-disabled peers. It also provides flexibility for the teachers to design instruction using the skills of two educators. This teaching combination is sometimes called “the power of two” (Friend, 2006). Friend’s instructional model suggests that combining the skills of general and special education professionals multiplies the instructional possibilities beyond 1 plus 1.

### *Resource Room Instruction*

Special educators in each building provided direct instruction in resource rooms based on IEP requirements. The instruction in these classrooms focused on reading, language arts, and mathematics. Individualized instruction included modification to the curriculum, the assistance of classroom and/or individual aides, behavior management practices, and modified materials.

Observation of a resource room in School A revealed a classroom with uncluttered décor. The teacher posted the alphabet with upper and lower case letters

above the chalkboard. In addition, the teacher displayed student artwork. One intervention specialist and two aides staffed the resource room. Three large six-sided tables provided the main workspace. Learning centers were located around the room with baskets for organization of work labeled with students' names in each area. One center contained computers for student access.

Field notes recorded the following classroom interaction:

One large reading group was working at the table in the center of the room. Five students were using standard texts with an aide guiding oral and silent reading; answering students' questions; and posing questions to the students. Three students worked at a table at the side of the room. They were separated around the spacious table, but quietly interacted verbally. One aide worked hand over hand on a written task at the third table with an autistic student. One student worked independently at a computer using a math program. Another student sat at the teacher's desk and consulted with her while the teacher worked at a computer. Within the several small groups, students talked with each other and the aides. At one point when the noise level of the classroom rose, the teacher called a reminder to the class that they needed to talk more quietly. The class immediately became quieter, but continued to verbally interact. The teacher spoke with an aide providing guidance when a student seemed to be eating something and the aide became concerned. The teacher instructed the aide not to go to the child saying the student had "asked" for candy and had been given some to reward her use of oral language. This was done with only a few words and the aide seemed comfortable and reassured as she smiled and continued with her task.

This resource room shows the concentrated support for instruction of students with severe disabilities. Management of the classroom was handled by the special educator, with the aides following her directions. Functional and academic skills were addressed as some students worked on reading and writing while one student was rewarded for using oral language.

A second resource room setting, in School C, was a small room that was separated from the main halls of the school building by the gym. The room was a locker room at one time. Seven students were in the room. Desks were arranged in rows and the room was filled with materials, plants, and posters. The components of a behavior management system were displayed on a large freestanding metal frame near the back of the classroom. The following observation is disclosed in the field notes.

The subject for instruction was spelling. The teacher said, "I see some *amp* words" and identified other word families. She asked students to call out words for *ath*, and, *oth* and *unch* families. Students responded with enthusiastic participation. The teacher explained that two letters that make one sound are called blends. The teacher distributed worksheets with graphic organizers to help students order words into word families. When the teacher observed that most of the class was finished, she asked students to give her their attention. Several students wanted to continue working, saying, "No, wait"! The teacher and class began to review their work and check it for accuracy. The teacher instructed students not to mark their work wrong. She said, "Make it right as we go over it together." At the end of the lesson she reminded them to "make sure your papers are right."

As in the previous resource setting, the special educator was responsible for instruction and classroom management. The lesson involved using graphic organizers and models to address grade level standards, keeping the students involved in the content of their grade level peers. The location of the classroom, which was reminiscent of past isolation of disabled students and of initial concern to the researcher, was seen by the teacher as an asset, because it allowed for noisy and physical activities.

Another resource room, in School D, was located in a standard classroom in one of the school's main halls. There was a number carpet in the reading area of the room. Instructional posters were displayed around the room. One poster stated, "Be the Best You Can Be." There were four computers located in various parts of the room. Desks were arranged in three groups of four or five each. One desk stood alone.

When the researcher entered, an aide was working with 2 students at a table on one side of the room, the teacher worked with 3 students at a table on the opposite side of the room and 3 students were working at desks. The teacher and students were discussing their daily journals that included writing and colored drawings. The students and teacher reviewed the most recent entries. The teacher led the discussion with questions such as "How many sentences did you write"? After students read their entries, the teacher modeled fluency by re-reading each student's work. The following observation was recorded in field notes.

The journal entry for the day was; if you weren't at school today what would you be doing? The teacher answered the question first. She would be doing laundry. The students commented on her answer. Then the students answered, "go to Chuck E Cheese's, go to Wal-Mart to get a new game, ride my bike, shop."

The teacher changed the activity with her group while other students in the class continued to work on assignments recorded on their learning tickets. The next activity for the small group was focused on short vowel sounds and blends.

The teacher distributed a purple sheet of paper and a sheet of words to each student. She told the students to "Cover the word sheet with the purple paper at the point where only six words are showing." She reviewed the sounds *sh* and *ch*, and asked if anyone wanted help. She asked students to give examples of words beginning with those sounds. Students gave examples of cherry and China. They continued the discussion with *wh* and *th*. The teacher told the group that she would go around the table and each student would read all three words in their row. All words had short vowel sounds. The next student gave the sounds of letters. The teacher cued and redirected and encouraged guessing. The student moved on and got all of the sounds right. As the students worked the teacher gave positive comments. Next the teacher asked the students to cut across the dotted line below each row of words, and then cut all of the words apart. "Glue your five short vowel words across the top of your booklet, the folded purple paper, and then glue the rest of the words under the correct word family. When you finish you can start on your journal. Go to your desks."

This classroom illustrates the themes of high expectations and standards based instruction. Learning tickets structured the day enabling disabled students to manage their own schedule of activities. The teacher used modeling, cuing, and re-direction to support students in a non-threatening environment where students received the specialized



instruction and support that made it possible for them to spend much of their day learning in general education classrooms.

### *Common Strategies*

In classroom observations the researcher found practices that were used in all buildings during delivery of instruction. Teachers and aides implemented common strategies across settings demonstrating effective instruction. Data revealed eight major points. Teachers used connections to prior learning, standards-based instruction, multiple teaching strategies, multiple means for student responses, clear communication, student-centered approaches including cooperative learning, learning centers and hands-on activities, active student engagement, and courteous student-teacher engagement. These practices are aligned with many that are found in the checklist for classroom observation developed by the West Regional School Improvement Team (Ohio Department of Education, 2004b) and used by coaches to improve classroom instruction.

### *Program Strengths*

Teachers and other staff members addressed topics in interviews that they identified as instructional practices that were “strengths” of their programs. They are presented here in the order of frequency with which the topic was cited.

### *Standards*

Standards-based education in classrooms consists of high expectations, instruction aligned to appropriate grade level indicators and benchmarks, models of proficient work for students, links to prior knowledge, research based teaching strategies, active student engagement, and timely assessment and revised instruction (Ohio Department of Education, 2004b). Each teacher in the study identified standards-based instruction as the

foundation for student achievement. The following voices from teacher interviews describe the ways in which teachers incorporated standards into their instruction. Although special educators stated that teaching to the standards was a high priority, they did so in different ways.

A special educator made the following comment:

What I did at the beginning of the year is I set up a schedule of what I need to cover. I do novels; that is what I like to do mostly for my reading time instead of doing the basal readers. I like to get novels. I think that is more interesting. They enjoy it. We vote on which novels we want to read. So for worksheets a lot of the time I have to create my own. I'll go to the content standards book and look at what skill I need to pick up and cover that I haven't covered and make sure that I'm getting in all of my content standards. I was just focusing on cause and effect making sure they have that. I concentrate on two or three skills at one time in my novel. With the next novel I will go back and do about four content standards that I know that I need to work on. That's how I come up with the worksheets that I have or the fun games or activities I do; it's based on content standards.

The following quotes from transcripts give more examples.

Another special educator described the following strategy:

In my classroom we use what we call a "learning ticket." They know exactly what they're working on. All of the items on the learning ticket are aligned with the standards. For the little kids the learning tickets are a little different than they are for the older kids because obviously the standards are different. When they come in the room they go over and pick up their learning ticket if it's not on their desk

and then they follow the ticket and they know what to do. They can refer to the ticket and it gives them all morning and most of the kids are in there anywhere from 2 to 2 hours and 40 minutes of work, so it's a big chunk of time, and it's all things that they are working on independently at their seat. Then we just try to take everything that they're expected to know at that grade level, but bring it to their reading level is what I try to do. I do the same for math. Six years ago we were just totally teaching them at their achievement levels. Now, if they are in fifth grade and their skills are still in second or third grade math then I work on that, but I work a lot with the classroom teachers as well so if they are working on adding fractions in the fifth grade classroom, for example, I will have them add fractions in my classroom but it's going to be in a lot simpler form.

A special educator providing inclusive services described how instruction was related to standards this way:

Our strategy for instruction is driven by our standards. My IEPs are written in accordance with content standards. I look at my students' strengths and weaknesses and I can pull from the content standards and match them. The students I work with primarily have mild learning disabilities. I accommodate them in terms of adaptations. Modifications are documented on their IEP.

Students that fall significantly below, I still try to match them to the content standards. I have a couple of kids on alternative assessment, but again we're looking at age appropriateness, so we're matching content standards the best we can. We may be piggy backing them with daily activities, but I have found that the content standards even for my alternate assessment kids for Grade 6 I can

match. I have been successful with that with my alternate assessments. I look for continuity within their grade span based on the learners that I have had. If in the future I come to an individual that I cannot teach using grade level indicators, then I would go to my administration and we'd decide together as a team how we'd tie that into other content standards. Right now they are grade appropriate.

A fourth special educator said this:

I do try to stay with the standards and I have the standards books right here and we are accountable and that's what I tell the parents we are accountable to the standards. I do write my lesson plans every day to align with the standards. I do try to keep them at the grade level book as much as possible. Now the second graders have just finished one book where in the classroom I think they have read two books. First grade students have only made it to the second book but they are getting the same types of skills, the same phonetic skills. In math, we have to take those same tests, we do the fractions, and we do the geometry. Yes I may have to break it down and it's a lot of modeling and then they do it. I really feel in this day and age we have to teach to the standards. So it's a tight wire walk for me. I try to stick to the standards. I write my lesson plans to the standards and then adjust as I have to and need to adjust. It's a big thing in special education right now because a lot of teachers say they can't, they can't, they just can't. But we are held accountable. I give them the trade books. I put them all on tape and I read them orally. Maybe they can't read the material but many of them enjoy books on tape. They want to know what they are doing when they walk back in that regular classroom. Plus, then, I do the remediation; you have to slip that remediation in,

too. I am further behind in the books, but I have covered everything on the standards that the classroom has covered.

General educators provided standards-based instruction using research-based strategies. Students with disabilities in the general classroom were part of the classroom's educational activities and provided with appropriate accommodations to successfully demonstrate grade level knowledge and skills.

### *Collaboration*

Teachers and principals alike credited collaboration as important to their success. Although collaboration was discussed with great enthusiasm, formal structures for collaboration were not cited as primary support for teacher communication. One principal made the following statement about collaboration in her building.

I think I would just like to highlight the many ways in which it is more informal. I have structured their master schedule so they do have common planning time built in. A lot of times teachers will meet after school over a soft drink and some chips and just talk informally. Or before school or even if they eat lunch together. I think those are the things I see that build those relationships and lead collaborative efforts to take place. Something I would like to see district wide is more of the longitudinal. More of the second grade teachers talking to third talking to fourth—that kind of a thing and our schedule does not allow that to happen unfortunately, but just that opportunity so that we can really understand what teachers are doing at each grade level.

Each school had common planning time for specific grade level teachers including the special educators working with those grades. The time was described as

very limited, typically one half hour, one morning a week. Teachers reported most of their collaboration occurred in the morning before school, at lunch, or after school. Another informal method that was mentioned frequently was communication through post-it notes.

Professional Learning Communities, Continuous Improvement Teams and grade level team meetings were identified as valuable for collaboration. Those structures primarily addressed instructional plans for all students and analysis of test results and were not the venue for discussion of individual students. One teacher made the following comments about collaboration.

You know I feel comfortable with the support I have right now. If something comes up you know like I've tried this and this and it's not working, what else can we do? Our school psychologist is great, very supportive. She asks "what about going this route"? Our principal is always at IAT meetings where we brainstorm what else we can do. So I feel like if I run into a dead end somewhere along the way that I have people here in the building to help.

A second teacher said:

The teachers here are really cooperative. They let me know at the beginning of the week when they have a test. I can pretty much say what everybody is teaching as far as math and reading go in the regular classroom. I know what skills they are working on. They work really well with me especially at the beginning of the year. We meet a lot on our workdays or before school or after school to make sure we're on the same schedule.

One principal highlighted his commitment to collaboration with his staff. He gave the following illustration of his approach.

I'm a strong advocate for collaboration on ideas and things to be done. I don't believe in just coming in when you go to a workshop or see something and come back and say we're going to do this. I sit down and say I went to this workshop. What do you think about this? They'll say well it would work except we can't do this or this part won't work or the other part. We may scrap it altogether or we may modify it around and say it will work this way. So then when you do it that way they are a part of it and they try to make it work and it usually does.

In the experience of the researcher, collaboration between general and special educators was rare prior to the accountability and assessment requirements of the NCLB. The level of support and cooperation evidenced by the participants in this study seems to be a prominent contributor to the student achievement demonstrated in these buildings.

#### *Motivation and Multiple Approaches*

Personnel in each school demonstrated openness to new approaches to teaching and learning. They attached motivation of students to the concept of differentiated instruction. One principal described the perspective of his school this way:

We try a lot of things every year and we almost do them every year. We're afraid to quit doing them because we don't know what works and what doesn't. So we add a thing and add a thing. I resist it when they try to force something on us from the central office. Sometimes it's hard to convince them. Something new comes along and they want us to use it. I feel like we've got a handle on it; we're being successful.

A special educator made the following observation:

If the child is motivated, you try to provide him many opportunities using different techniques and different styles of learning. I believe that they are going to have successful learning if you are providing the opportunities, motivating and having different multi-sensory approaches with tactile and the auditory, things they can touch while they're learning. So I try to bring in as many real things for them to see like when we do our different phonics I'll try to bring in things with that sound. I think a child can learn with proper techniques and motivation. I try to find fun things for the kids to do besides worksheets. I know sometimes we have to use worksheets for evaluation to assess the child, but I try to do fun things with them. For phonics we'll do games. I'll take just ordinary games and I'll try to modify that to make it work to teach that skill like we'll do concentration with our vocabulary words, mix them up and have them find the definitions of vocabulary words so just multi-sensory techniques is what I try to use. I know that if one thing doesn't work, you've got to try something else.

Another special educator added a statement about perseverance to multiple approaches.

She said:

I really try to do things that motivate them, especially if I'm not having success. I kind of test the waters a bit before I find what works. You have to constantly be adapting what the classroom teacher is presenting to their level. I think that's what helps a great deal, too. To be able to adapt the material to what is comfortable and what they can understand. Sometimes it's just that you have to rephrase it. You say it 20 times and one way finally catches. They do catch it. It is just a matter of



being patient enough to continually rephrase the information where it reaches them.

A second principal stated, "We try to give our students a lot of hands-on opportunities, manipulative, hands-on, concept driven opportunities." Principals and teachers often used the terms flexibility, diversity, and differentiation to describe characteristics of instruction. These views of motivation and multiple approaches reflect the views of Schlechty (2001) who suggested that teachers must view themselves as inventors of work for students. He stated that teachers will need to be experts in identifying student motives and creating or adapting activities that require student engagement.

#### *Assessment*

Assessment played an important role in guiding instruction in all 4 buildings. One school used the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) as a research based tool for diagnostic information for Grades kindergarten through 5. The DRA was used in combination with state diagnostics and the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) for Grades 3 through 6.

Two schools gave short-cycle assessments four times a year. Those assessments were closely linked to instruction and state standards. They identified strengths and weaknesses in student achievement and identified areas for intervention.

Two schools did not have established short-cycle assessments, but each relied on frequent assessment to drive instruction. One school reported, "having done a lot of studying on assessment," and achieving the understanding that they needed to continually

assess students. Teachers evaluated assessments that came with texts and revised and aligned them to achievement tests focusing on extended response questions.

The second school not using short-cycle assessments used pre and post assessment to evaluate learning. According to the principal, pre-assessments could be anything, a show of hands or quick 5-minute quizzes. The principal emphasized the value of giving students multiple opportunities to take assessments. Intervention was provided based on the results of assessment and following intervention the students were given an opportunity for re-assessment. The principal stated "We want the kids to learn the stuff. It's not important about so many A's, so many B's. If we end up with all A's on the report card, yippee. Isn't that what we want?"

#### Parents and Community

As with the other Schools of Promise, each school in the study met the criteria that at least 40% of the students in the school were from low-income families. Participants in the study described the parents as struggling to support their children, often without academic skills themselves. Some of the problems facing the parents were single parent homes with parents who worked two jobs at low pay, and had extended family responsibilities. Parents of students with disabilities were caring and typically participated in IEP meetings, but were not often able to volunteer or attend school day functions because of their work schedules. Nevertheless, parents communicated with teachers through daily notes, phone calls, and home visits initiated by the teachers. One teacher explained "We need to understand their lives and change tactics, not expectations."

The personnel in the schools used a variety of activities to engage families. Each school had a strong Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). One PTO provided bicycles as incentives for proficient scores on State Achievement Tests. Principals cited many activities that invited families into the schools. They included back to school nights, Autumn Fest, Bakery Bingo, reading nights, and lunches and breakfasts for parents, grandparents, and "grand friends."

The communities in which these schools were located were involved with the schools in a variety of ways. One teacher described her community as having a "small town feeling" even though it was on the outskirts of a busy industrial area. She said that the community and school had developed a bond of pride. The police department and library were especially supportive, interacting regularly with students. A principal at a second school said that community businesses were involved in educational projects such as sponsoring essay contests and providing prizes. Students at that school were invited into businesses for field trips. The bakery, bank, and hardware store welcomed students for visits. Students were able to walk to the library and fire department.

Principals and teachers told of mutual support for and from parents and community. One principal said that he had "problem solvers, not problem finders" on his staff. A teacher stated, "We accept the challenges we have and do what is necessary to succeed, no excuses."

#### Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs

School personnel in all buildings expressed thoughts, feelings, and opinions revealing attitudes about the students and services of special education. They shared values regarding what was worthy, desirable and important to them in their work and

stated their beliefs, the truths they accepted as they worked with students with disabilities.

The first and most often stated theme was respect for each child. One expression of this value, stated by a special educator, was "I think the main thing to remember myself is that we need to respect the child and try to meet them where they are and not expect all students to be the same type of child because they're not." Other examples of respect were statements that all children were treated as equals and all children were expected to learn. One teacher said this.

I have always had high expectations, not the I can't, but I can. That tryers are winners and that type of thing. I like this building because teachers here are giving kids every opportunity to learn. I see the kids; it's important how you talk to them. If you talk to them with respect, you're going to get respect back. If you ask the teachers here, they get so excited when the kids finally catch on. It doesn't really matter where they come from. I try not to use—well they have a bad home life or you know they're not getting help at home; that's why they're not learning to read or you know things like that. I want the kids to come in and think that they all can learn. I think they can learn.

The often-stated belief that "all students can learn" was identified as a truth in each building. Teachers and other staff stated this belief frequently and one principal expressed it in the following way.

I know there was the "all children can learn" and they all can, but you know that there are still some people that don't believe that. They will use the excuse that we have a disadvantaged population here so we are only going to expect so much.

I tell our teachers if we expect this much they will rise to it. So we are going to expect this much because they will rise to it. I think it's in your core beliefs about kids and how they learn, and what you can do, and what your expectations are. We expect excellence. Everyone is capable of succeeding and we will do anything to help you get to that point. Set your expectations high. Expect them to reach above the bar and I expect myself to reach above the bar. I have found when I set my standards high the people around me strive to reach them. I think the overall philosophy in our building is all students can learn.

Teachers and principals identified individualization as a value. Individualized Education Programs are familiar to educators and associated with disabled students. Teachers in the study talked about individualization for all students. This was evident from teacher comments in interviews. Some of those statements are reported here.

One teacher said:

You have to look at each child as an individual. I know that everybody learns in different ways.

Another teacher stated:

You should meet the kids where they are and start from there. Sometimes it's just a matter of being patient enough to continually rephrase the information where it reaches them. You say something 20 ways and one way finally catches. Basically what I have always said is that you cannot fit a student into the classroom, you have to fit the classroom into the student. My belief is that I cannot expect every one of my students to walk into the classroom and I say this is what everyone will do; we will all complete this worksheet. I can't do that because I know every

student is not that way. So I have to make sure that my classroom invites every learner. If it means that it involves group work with these students, independent work with these students, challenging the gifted, or more manipulatives for those that need it, that's what I have to do.

Love of children was another theme. Many staff members felt that caring about children was an essential quality for successful teaching. One principal told a story that illustrated the extent to which teachers were committed to their students.

Now the fifth graders are going to King's Island. We do it every year. I'm going to take 15 kids. Four or five of the kids don't have money. The teachers pay for them to go—like \$50. They pay for lunch. If they don't have a coat, teachers find coats. It's not uncommon for a teacher to say, "I've got to run down to Wal-Mart." They've taken a kid's foot and drawn a picture of the foot on a piece of paper to take it with them to get them shoes. I think that's a really big part of it. Their willingness to the students to do whatever it takes. They really care about the kids. You never hear these teachers argue with you about "I didn't get my planning time or I missed my lunch." You never have to worry about that. They don't hesitate to jump right in and roll their sleeves up. We have very passionate special education teachers and the other teachers are accepting and helpful to disabled students. I feel like all of the teachers really love the kids and want what's best for the kids. Having a really caring staff that's just willing to become involved with your children and work with them and adapt to their needs and abilities—I think that's a big part of it too.

Personnel in each school in the study believed that school climate contributes to student achievement and made efforts to provide a welcoming environment for students and their families. A non-certified staff member in School B described the value of an affirmative climate in the following way.

First of all I think you need a comfortable place. You need to relax and then you can educate. That's the bottom line here. I think that if you do that, make them feel relaxed, especially these kids because when they are so tense in a classroom they can't perform there. You get them in here and you just can see how they are willing to try and do. So by creating a safe environment here and getting excited with them when they learn something, it just makes them want to do more. I think a lot of them thrive more here than at home because of the pats on the backs. I guess you'd say, the positive reinforcement that any staff member from the custodian to the kitchen lady to the librarians to me.

A principal made the following comment about climate.

School has to be a place where families and kids and teachers, let's face it the staff plays a huge role in this, where they want to be and it's my job to set the tone for that. Many of the students come from places that are not happy places. They need to know that this is a safe happy place to learn. So it's more than just learning, it's the community of learning, it's the village, it's the whole person. It's treating the person with kindness. Accepting when we're not reaching the bar, raising the bar a little bit at a time so we get there.

## System Models

One of three major recommendations made in *New Era* (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002) was, "consider children with disabilities as general education children first" (p. 9). The *New Era* indicated that special education was treated as a separate system even though general and special education share responsibility for educating children with disabilities. It added that special education should not be treated as a separate cost system, but special education needs should be met using a school's comprehensive resources. The systemic similarities and differences among the 4 schools indicating the integration of special education into the general education system revealed themselves in this study.

Each school employed a system that included resource rooms, small group instruction, and general education instruction for students with disabilities. Co-teaching was a level of educational support that was desired in each building, but as one principal stated, "If I could have one thing, it would be more intervention specialists because I could use them to co-teach and disabled children could be in general classrooms more." Only one building described co-teaching as prevalent.

The first choice of educational setting for all students including those with disabilities in all buildings was the general education classroom. The following comments from a classroom aide exemplified the common sentiment.

I think that with regard to all students it is a good thing that our special needs children are included with our regular children so much. It helps both the special needs and the regular children as far as being accepting and it pulls our special needs children along. They really want to come up to the performance of the



regular children; which isn't to say we don't need the resource room. We do use that quite a bit to help them, but I think having them inclusive in the classroom is good.

General educators instructed most students in the areas of science, social studies, health, physical education, music, and art in the general classroom with support from aides and special educators. Only in rare cases of severe disability did instruction in these content areas occur in a resource room. One special educator said that when asked, disabled students in her building identified their general educator as their teacher.

Aides worked to support instruction in general classrooms and resource rooms. Their duties were similar in all buildings. Some aides were assigned to classrooms and others to individual students as required by IEPs. One aide gave the following example of her duties:

When I am in a classroom I work the whole room. If any child needs help I work with them. I don't just work specifically with my special needs children although they are the bulk of my work. I make sure they understand what they are doing and sometimes work with a small group.

Other support for general and special educators included scheduling to facilitate movement of students to and from multiple settings, networks for teacher communication, peer tutoring, buddy classes and administrative backing. A general educator described the value of supports provided to teachers in the following way.

The support that is available to our classroom teachers ensures that learning is occurring. As you observed in the fourth grade, I was there, the intervention specialist was there. We divided up the kids. That's how it is on most days in

terms of how we're delivering instruction to our students. Small classroom sizes, an abundance of personnel, opportunity for communication, administrative support and some pull out programs make us successful.

### Leadership

The principals of the 4 schools described their role as leader to the researcher. They all characterized themselves as facilitators for the success of their staffs. They emphasized collaboration with teachers and respect for teachers as "professionals." The principal of School C pointed out her responsibility to provide materials, resources, and the schedule for her teachers. This principal felt that it was her task to see the "big picture" for her building. Another focused on setting high expectations for himself, his staff and his students. A third principal said the following about his role.

You can call it being a cheerleader. You can call it leading by example. You can name it just about anything you want, but the principal sets the tone. I do that by being very visible. I am in the classroom and hallways. Typically I'm out at recess or in the cafeteria. I try to greet as many kids out front in the morning on my way in as I can and I do that just about every morning. I do that at the end of their day as well. I go outside and wish them goodnight. I talk to some parents here and there so I'm very visible. That has done wonders in itself, just being a visible leader. I greet everybody in the morning. I greet as many teachers going to their classrooms as possible for just a couple of minutes saying, "hey how's it going, anything I can do for you today, have a great day." It's just really brief and I think that sets the tone.

In each case, the principals gave credit for the success of their buildings to teachers and students, reminiscent of the characteristics of Level 5 Leadership outlined by Collins in *Good to Great* (2001). Such leadership combines professional will with personal humility. Some characteristics are unwavering resolve and quiet determination, setting standards and channeling ambition through others, accepting responsibility without blaming, and giving credit to others for success.

Another duty discussed by the principals was staffing. All of the principals had added staff while in their current positions. One principal said that she was very honest about the challenges faced at her school when she interviewed.

Realism is that kids come from tough backgrounds. The challenges and needs that come with these kids are intense. I want to let the teachers know that if they are used to parent volunteers, signed notes and returning books on time, they may not get it here. And then realism of expectations, we don't lower expectations. We don't say that it's ok if they don't turn books back in or do homework. But we are more accommodating. We find other ways.

This principal found that once teachers understood the climate and culture of the school and community, they didn't just like it, they loved it. "They know that they're making a difference."

A second principal declared that he was careful to add special education staff members who were seeking special education careers. He had applicants who were looking for opportunities to enter teaching through special education but were planning to move to general education positions when they became available.

All of ours [special educators] are where they want to be. They don't have any aspirations to get out. That's their job. That's what they wanted ... I intentionally try to find those kinds of people that I know are not just in transition for 3 or 4 years then trying to get a different job. My teachers wouldn't take a regular classroom if you begged them.

All principals required teachers to submit lesson plans but each had different expectations of their staff. One principal required that lesson plans be submitted each Friday for review. The second principal expected weekly submissions, but only for the first semester. She was confident that informal monitoring after that period insured adequate planning. The third principal used lesson plans as a management tool and looked for terminology of standards guides and alignment to standards in their content. He also expected references to assessments in the plans. He checked weekly lesson plans in the classrooms. During classroom visits he made sure that plans included pre-assessment, standards indicators, post-assessment, and materials required for instruction. The fourth principal placed a strong emphasis on references to standards indicators in lesson plans. She gave instructions to teachers to tie their lessons back to indicators: "I am not concerned about them taking the math textbook and going through it. The more they are looking at lesson plans and tying them back to indicators the more internal it becomes." Her teachers also submitted lesson plans weekly. None of the schools had a standard format for lesson plans. Teachers were permitted to plan using any vehicle that met their needs.

Principals varied in their ability to support professional development activities for their staff. Only one said that she had a "generous budget" for conferences and

workshops. The others were able to send teachers to a limited number of out-of-district trainings. Some common ways to provide time for in-school staff development were early release days, book studies, exchange days, learning communities and grade level teams. One school spent a year studying Payne's, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (1998) on early release days. Some teachers who attended conferences or workshops were expected to present summaries of the information gained to the rest of the staff. Many topics were cited as popular for staff development. The conferences were on such topics as Autism, differentiated instruction, inclusion, literacy, Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. One principal noted that his teachers wanted to learn about areas that were not their specialty. The teachers wanted to be "well rounded."

A common goal for these principals was to provide an environment in which parents, students, and staff felt safe and supported in order to maximize learning. One principal cited the Family Friendly Schools model developed by Steven Constantino (2003) that he used in his school to achieve that goal. The approach is a family engagement process designed to lead to higher student achievement.

### Summary

This chapter presented data identifying characteristics of 4 schools selected for this study by virtue of their achievement as Ohio State Superintendent's Schools of Promise and receipt of special recognition for the performance of students with disabilities within those schools. Common themes emerged through analysis of transcripts of taped interviews, field notes from observation of classrooms, and review of documents.

The results were organized into eight sections; Profile of Study Participants; Settings and Participants; Delivery of Instruction; Instructional Practice; Parents and Community; Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs; System Models; and Leadership. Sections one and two gave information about the demographics of the study and described the schools, staff and communities that participated. The third section addressed the primary means of delivery of instruction. Interventions, general classroom instruction, co-teaching and resource room instruction were four common means for delivery of instruction. Interventions, which were immediate and flexible and integral to student support, were for all students. General classroom instruction was the first choice for all students with co-teaching support when indicated by the needs of disabled students. Resource room instruction was used for students with the greatest needs and was usually focused on reading and math instruction. Classroom environments were colorful and inviting, displaying student work in a manner that was designed to elicit student interaction and cooperation. Students had access to many materials including books, computers, and manipulatives and were actively engaged in learning. Teachers and aides implemented common strategies across settings, demonstrating effective instruction that was consistent with the West Regional School Improvement Team (Ohio Department of Education, 2004b). The practices were connecting instruction to prior learning, standards-based instruction, using multiple teaching strategies, providing multiple means for student responses, clear communication, using student-centered approaches, active student engagement, and courteous student and teacher engagement.

The fourth section presented common instructional practices that were identified by staff as program strengths. In classroom visits, the researcher observed practices that

were used in all buildings during delivery of instruction. They were standards-based instruction, collaboration, motivation and multiple approaches, and assessment. Fifth, participants indicated an understanding of the challenges faced by parents and described many ways that were used to encourage parent and community involvement in the schools.

Part six revealed attitudes, values, and beliefs. The primary themes that came to light were: respect for each child, all students can learn, individualization, and love of children. The seventh segment, system models, displayed the unified approach to educating all students used by schools in the study. Within one system all students, disabled and non-disabled, had access to supports and services to meet their individual needs. The final section presented the leadership similarities found in the buildings. Each principal required lesson plans that referenced grade level indicators. Each provided staff development opportunities with choices determined through a collaborative process with teachers. All of the principals assumed the role of communicator and facilitator with parents and staff and each credited others for the success of their building.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe characteristics of schools in Ohio that make AYP for students with disabilities and to provide data that may be used to inform policy and practice for educators in Ohio and elsewhere. The schools selected for the study were chosen as State Superintendent's Schools of Promise for 2 or more consecutive years and received special recognition for the performance of disabled students. The investigation explored policies, practices, classroom management, beliefs, attitudes, values, community involvement, parental participation, leadership and use of related services in an effort to reveal patterns and common characteristics of these exemplary schools.

This chapter discusses the results presented in Chapter IV and their implications. First, the chapter discusses the findings of the main analysis in reference to possible explanations of the findings. Next, implications are addressed and recommendations are presented for further research. The chapter is organized following the order of results that were previously presented with implications and recommendations included in the discussion.



### *School Setting and Participants*

The schools that met the criteria for this research were located in separate areas of Ohio and not clustered by region, county, or other geographic category. This suggests that proficient achievement of disabled students is not limited by area, but achievable throughout Ohio. The size of each school and the surrounding communities provided a profile of small to medium enrollments in rural or suburban settings. Relationships within the school and community seem to be strengthened when numbers are moderate and interactions are supportive for student achievement. It may be more difficult to achieve similar student performance in communities that are large, more impersonal and less closely linked to community services and businesses.

The staff of each school reported a variety of personal paths to teaching and special education. Some teachers followed early career goals, while others described their course as unanticipated. This diversity revealed that no one preparation was common to these professionals, and implies that one does not require a specific background to succeed in educating disabled students. The schools shared a common characteristic regarding years of experience of staff members. Each employed a mix of highly experienced teachers with those in the early and middle years of their careers. Principals reported ranges of experience from 5 to 33 years, stated that 45 to 75% of their teachers earned masters degrees. One could expect that a staff with a balance of experience and advanced degrees provide a strong foundation for achievement for students.

### *Delivery of Instruction*

The primary modes of instruction were intervention, general classroom instruction, inclusive/co-teaching, and resource room instruction. The buildings shared

these models of delivery. The researcher did not find unique or specific means of delivery in these schools that differed from common practice. Ohio elementary schools generally have access to the means of instruction used in these schools.

Intervention was commonly provided for all students, disabled and non-disabled, when performance indicators identified weaknesses or intervention was deemed appropriate to enhance performance. Interventions were immediate for struggling students and described as flexible. Although the means to provide intervention varied, teachers and principals considered interventions vital to an effective educational program. Consideration of interventions is a required component in the process of evaluating an individual student when a disability is suspected, but the emphasis of intervention in these buildings was on academic achievement for all. A broad scope of interventions seemed to contribute to student success for disabled students as well as non-disabled students.

The second method for delivery of instruction shared by these buildings was general classroom teaching. Students with and without disabilities were taught in classrooms by one general educator. Students with disabilities were included whose LRE, determined by their IEP team, was the general education classroom. General educators expressed acceptance of their responsibility to educate students with economic and academic challenges. A common sentiment among teachers was that 'high expectations' were held for all students and there were "no excuses" for low achievement. This general education response indicates that these teachers engage in shared responsibility for education with each filling specific roles.

Co-teaching in general education classrooms was less prevalent in each school. While the staff in every building recognized the value of this model, the availability of staff was a major impediment to implementation. Special and general educators engaged in mutual support, and described some situations in which they taught together. The researcher observed one co-teaching situation and interviews revealed other such applications, yet this mode of delivery was described as evolving.

Each building provided resource room instruction for disabled students, sometimes referred to as "pull out programs." IEP team decisions directed placement in this setting when considered necessary to meet the unique instructional needs of students. Common characteristics of these classrooms include direct instruction by a special educator, also referred to as an intervention specialist; classroom and individual aides; and related services provided to individual students such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. The results of this study suggest that intensive direct instruction in reading, language arts, and mathematics in resource rooms is an effective and necessary means for delivery of instruction for selected students with disabilities.

Regardless of delivery of instruction by general educator or intervention specialist, teachers used common strategies. Educators engaged in connection to prior learning; implemented standards-based instruction; used multiple teaching strategies; afforded students multiple means for responses; utilized student centered approaches such as cooperative learning and hands-on activities; actively engaged students; and provided safe, non-threatening, positive learning environments. This is consistent with suggestions in the literature indicating that in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities,

educators should tailor instruction to the learning modalities of these children to facilitate engaging them in learning.

### *Program Strengths*

Teachers identified certain practices as key to student achievement. Common strategies were standards-based instruction; collaboration; motivation and multiple approaches for learning; frequent assessment; and using data to inform instruction.

General and special educators in all buildings reported that following standards and grade level indicators was basic to effective instruction. Special educators anchored teaching to the student's grade level and modified and adapted instruction from that starting point. This finding suggests that students with disabilities respond to grade appropriate content. One can conclude that beginning at grade level and modifying for individual needs can result in grade level student achievement.

Teachers in all of the buildings in this study credited the work and support of others for their success with students. They identified collaboration as a primary source of support. One finding was that most collaboration was informal. Teachers cited before school and after school discussions, talks over lunch, communication by post-it note, and hallway briefings as common. There were also formal structures in each of the locations for collaboration including professional learning communities; continuous improvement teams; grade level team meetings; teacher workdays; and pre-school planning. Collaboration seemed to be another contributor to success with the importance of function overriding form. When teachers discussed collaboration, they described interactions in positive terms. The focus was on problem solving and providing ideas that could help the staff with instruction and the students' achievement. One can describe the

environment in which collaboration occurred as “no fault” in all of the buildings.

Blaming and criticism were absent from the discussions of staff. In this way, a freedom to collaborate about concerns without fear of negative consequences appeared to foster teacher and staff interactions.

Motivation and multiple approaches went hand in hand for many teachers.

Motivation was improved when students had many opportunities to learn using differentiated and multi-sensory approaches. The concept of multiple approaches required patience and tenacity on the part of teachers. As one teacher said, “You try it 20 times and one way finally catches.” Teachers believed that every student wanted to learn and would expend the necessary effort to achieve if given the proper tools. They believed that constant failure discouraged students and looked for ways to help students succeed. The concepts of motivation and multiple approaches appeared to contribute to a climate where students and teachers saw failure as an expected step toward success.

Another key practice identified by teachers in each school was frequent assessment. The schools used different assessment tools, and all used assessment data to identify areas for targeted intervention and to monitor academic progress for all students. Much of the data collected in the schools was obtained in the course of planned instruction. Teachers seemed confident in their ability to develop assessments linked directly to the standards and indicators that guided instruction. The frequent feedback from assessments for teachers and students appeared to contribute to a sense of progress toward meeting academic goals that was seen and celebrated in incremental steps. This reflects the IDEA’s mandate that students with disabilities be assessed periodically to evaluate their continuing needs and the nature of special education that they require.

Moreover, the NCLB also requires educators to assess students frequently as a tool that not only guides instruction but provides diagnoses of the learning needs of the children.

### *Parents and the Community*

Outreach to parents and community partnerships were common to each school in the study. The low socioeconomic component of the criteria for Schools of Promise presented shared challenges. Each school provided opportunities for families to participate in school life. Many parents were reported to have reservations or feel ill at ease in a school environment. In order to remedy these concerns, principals and staff organized many and varied activities intended to develop partnerships with parents. The schools also shared the practice of collaborating with community resources such as the fire department, library, and local businesses to enrich the learning opportunities for students. It seems that the intentional effort to make school safe and inviting for families and to develop supportive community relationships contributes to student achievement. Teachers explained that strong and comfortable relationships with families allow them to guide parents in how to provide academic support for the children at home, thereby helping to enhance the student performances at school. Further, it is worth noting that programs such as Family Friendly Schools, created by Steven Constantino, provide a body of literature to guide schools in their quest to engage families in helping their children to learn.

### *Attitudes, Values, and Beliefs*

Common attitudes, values, and beliefs were found in each school. They were respect for children, high expectations, the belief that all children can learn, individualization, love of children, and positive climate. In several interviews staff

members talked of putting themselves in the place of students and their parents and trying to understand what they needed from their perspective. The staff and their attitudes, values, and beliefs revealed expectations for achievement for themselves and their students. One principal described his staff as problem solvers, not problem finders. These characteristics seem to contribute to a culture of success and are consistent with the literature's suggestions (Collins, 2001) that great organizations have shared values, clear focus, and leaders who look outside of themselves for the success of the enterprise.

### *System Models*

The schools in this study shared the characteristics of functioning as one system with disabled children considered part of general education who were provided with specialized supports and services. This exemplified the definition of Special Education, long stated in IDEA. They also implemented the practice of providing instruction in general education classrooms and providing supports for students in that environment unless the nature of a student's disability required a more restrictive environment. Individualized Education Programs specified the unique needs of disabled students in all cases. Effective implementation of IEPs seemed to rest on good planning and faithful implementation within a unified model.

### *Leadership*

Common characteristics of leadership also emerged in the study. Respect for staff, assumption of the facilitator role, staffing, and instructional leadership were components of the position. Each principal expected teachers to connect lesson plans to grade level indicators and to state assessment procedures, provided teaching materials, provided professional development opportunities based on student and teacher needs, and

sometimes functioned as “cheerleader.” Principals described daily personal contact with staff, students and parents, making it possible for the teaching “experts” to do their job.

### Recommendations for Practice

In response to the findings of this study including means for delivery of instruction, teaching strategies and tools, collaboration, parent and community relationships, systems model, and leadership, the researcher offers four recommendations for practice.

One, districts employ a unified system of instruction for all students. Support the system with a set of beliefs including that the education of all students is the responsibility of all staff.

Two, principals create an environment of collaboration in which all staff is focused on problem solving. Allow individuals to reveal concerns about teaching and learning in a non-judgmental climate while providing supports and tools for teaching such as professional development and materials.

Three, link instruction to content standards and grade level indicators. AYP and *Ohio School Report Card* ratings are dependent upon the performance of disabled and non-disabled students on tests of achievement of those standards. High expectations for all students to acquire the concepts and skills found in content standards, is key to achievement.

Four, develop strong ties to parents and the community. These ties can promote understanding and identify resources that benefit students. This can be accomplished by inviting their participation and considering their needs when developing avenues for communication and activities.



These recommendations should be used by teachers, administrators, and school boards alike to establish policies and practices in efforts to increase the achievement of disabled students. One system for all students in which teachers collaborate freely, link instruction to the Ohio content standards, and parents and the community are actively involved characterizes the 4 schools of this study that demonstrate high achievement for disabled students.

### Suggestions for Future Research

This study focused on schools meeting criteria that included students in socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial categories, as well as achievement of disabled students. Other schools in Ohio demonstrate achievement of disabled students yet do not meet all of the criteria for Schools of Promise. A future researcher might wish to examine a wider range of schools that achieved AYP for disabled students using other less restrictive criteria such as a study of schools that demonstrate proficiency of students with disabilities including schools of all socioeconomic levels. Future research could also encompass elementary, middle and high schools or focus exclusively on middle or high school levels. Another approach might be to focus on specific disabilities and study schools that have proficient performance for a disability category. Because schools are evaluated yearly, a longitudinal study could provide data regarding the characteristics of schools that maintain success. At the time of this study, of the 14 schools selected as Schools of Promise with recognition for performance of students with disabilities for 2003-2004, only 6 repeated the achievement in 2004-2005. It might also be useful to revisit the 4 schools in this study and find if they continue to maintain this level of accomplishment.

As the researcher reflects on her efforts, she recognizes that she could have made several changes to the study. One might enhance future similar research by sending questionnaires to participants in advance to collect personal professional information and demographic data about the schools and communities to ensure that the researcher could compare like representations of information. This would also allow interviews to focus on curriculum, assessment, methods, and other topics that directly address instruction. The research would benefit from interviews with parents and community members and observations of school events such as an evening bake sale. Schools staffs when discussing contributors to the success of the schools mentioned these stakeholders often.

Emphasizing studies of exemplary schools raises the question of studies of schools that perform poorly with students with disabilities. What are the differences? This would be another informative direction for research. Comparisons of parallel categories of information between exemplary and failing schools might provide further keys to success.

In the ever-evolving field of education, special education and the achievement of disabled students is currently a high priority. This study and others are needed to guide educational leaders to achieve the Adequate Yearly Progress that is required for all students.

## APPENDIX A



10 March 2006

Patricia Hoyle  
University of Dayton  
School of Education & Allied Professions  
Doctoral Program

SUBJECT: "Characteristics of Ohio Schools with Adequate Yearly  
Progress for Students with Disabilities"

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed the subject proposal. The proposed research protocol is exempt from human subject regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b) (2) and (b) (4). The procedures you have designed to protect participant confidentiality and to secure informed consent are adequate and conform to accepted ethical standards for this type of research.

Therefore, you have approval to proceed with the study. The Committee expects that the appropriate subject protection measures will be followed, as outlined in your proposal.

Please inform the Committee of any ethical issues that may arise in your study. Please feel free to contact me should you encounter other issues relevant to the protection of human subjects. Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, which appears to read "Jon Nieberding", is written above the printed name.

Jon Nieberding  
IRB Chair

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW  
BOARD FOR THE  
PROTECTION OF  
HUMAN SUBJECTS IN  
RESEARCH

UD Research Institute  
Kettering Labs, Rm. 542  
300 College Park  
Dayton, OH 45469-0104  
(937) 229-2919  
FAX (937) 229-2291

## APPENDIX B

Dear Colleague,

Schools throughout Ohio and the nation are looking for guidance to provide successful educational services for students with disabilities. The Elementary School where you are principal has demonstrated success with its' selection as a School of Promise with special recognition for the performance of Students With Disabilities for 2003-2004 and selection as a School of Promise again for 2004-2005. Only six elementary schools in Ohio hold this distinction. I am conducting a multiple case study of exemplary schools for special education in Ohio and would like the opportunity to study the success of your school.

This is my dissertation focus for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership at the University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio. This research is intended to provide discovery, insight, and understanding and generate hypotheses for further study concerning policy, instructional strategies, and inclusive practices. I would like to visit your school to observe your practices and conduct short interviews with an administrator, a special educator, general educator, and other staff member providing services to students with disabilities.

I will contact you by phone to discuss scheduling visits to your school. Your school's participation will be very valuable because of the distinction of its performance, and the small number of schools achieving such distinction.

Sincerely,

Patricia Hoyle  
35 Beverly Place  
Dayton, Ohio 45419  
937-298-9799 (home)  
937-225-4598 (work)

## APPENDIX C

## **Informed Consent Form**

**Project title-** Characteristics of Ohio Schools With Adequate Yearly Progress for Students With Disabilities

**Researcher-** Patricia E. Hoyle (937) 298-9799

**Purpose-** The purpose of this research is to observe and describe the characteristics of schools in Ohio that achieve adequate yearly progress for their populations of students with disabilities.

**Procedure-** Observations in school settings and interviews of selected administrators and staff will be conducted. The observations and interviews will take place at a time and place that are agreed upon with you. Records and artifacts will be reviewed that may include professional development schedules, class lists, lesson plans, and test results. Classroom observations will be for 30-45 minutes. Observation of other school settings such as cafeteria, playground, and common areas will be conducted. Interviews will be 20-30 minutes in length. Transcripts of the observations and the interviews will be available to you for editing.

**Anticipated Risks or Discomforts-** There are no known risks or discomfort for you as a participant in the observation and interview process. Each meeting will be scheduled in advance with permission from your immediate supervisor. You may discontinue your participation in the study at any time without penalty from the researcher or from your supervisor. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you should experience any risk or discomfort, you may call the researcher listed on the top of this form.

**Benefits of Participation-** You and your school may benefit both from the process and from the results of the study in your school. It may provide understanding and insight into the practices and conditions that are present. As a School of Promise you have been recognized for your achievement in closing the gap in achievement based on race, socioeconomic status, gender, disability, and English language proficiency, and ensuring high achievement for all students. Others who may read reports and articles from this study may benefit from your experiences.

**Confidentiality-** Confidentiality of personal data will be maintained. Your name will not be used in reports of presentations based on this research. All audiotapes and their transcriptions, researcher's notes and journals will be kept in a locked cabinet available only to the researcher.

**Consent to Participate-** I have voluntarily decided to participate in this research project. The investigator named above has adequately answered all questions that I have about this research, the procedures involved, and my participation. I understand that the researcher named above will be available to answer any questions about procedures through this research. I also understand that I may refuse to participate or voluntarily



terminate my participation in this research at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am entitled.

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

## APPENDIX D

## General Educator Interview Protocol

1. How did you become a teacher?
2. What was your pre-service training?
3. What type of training or support have you had regarding your work with students with disabilities? How do you feel about your preparedness?
4. How would you describe your beliefs about students and learning?
5. Please describe the process your school uses when students have learning problems.
6. What instructional practices do you use? Which are the most successful?
7. Does instruction align with grade level content standards for all students?
8. How are all students incorporated into one learning community?
9. How do teachers communicate?
10. What type of community or parent support system is present?

### Special Educator Interview Protocol

1. How did you become a teacher of students with disabilities?
2. What was your pre-service training?
3. How would you describe your beliefs about students and learning?
4. Please describe the process your school uses when students have learning problems.
5. What instructional practices do you use? Which are most successful?
6. Does instruction align with grade level content standards for students with disabilities? How?
7. How are all students incorporated into one learning community?
8. What are the ways in which collaboration occurs among all teachers of students with disabilities?
9. What type of community or parent support system is present?

### Classified Staff Interview Protocol

1. What experiences or training have you had to prepare you for your interaction with Students with Disabilities?
2. How would you describe your beliefs about students and learning?
3. What is your role with students?
4. How would you describe the support system for students in this school?

## Administrator Protocol

1. What are the demographics of your staff?
  - Years of experience
  - Educational background
  - Educational levels
2. What are the professional development policies and practices for all staff?  
Are there differences between general and special education expectations?
3. What are the building level expectations for instructional practices?
  - Alignment to content standards
  - Assessment
  - Lesson Plans
  - Collaboration
4. Is this an integrated or separate system?
5. How is the community involved in the school?
6. What is your role?

## APPENDIX E

### FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

	Admin.	Sp.Ed.	Gen.Ed.	Classified
Best Practices	Staffing	Evidence based practices General education curriculum Assessment	Assessment practices Evidence based practice for all students	
Professional Development	Ongoing teacher preparation	Pre-service preparation On-going professional development	Pre-service preparation On-going professional development	Pre-service preparation
Belief Systems	Instruction Policies Can all children learn?	Instruction Can all children learn?	Instruction Can all children learn?	Can all children learn?
System Model	Integrated or separate	Integrated or separate Educator's Role	Incorporating all students	Individual's Role
Community Involvement	Social Scaffolding	Support System	Parent participation	How support is given

Interview topics include:

#### Best Practices

Prevention/Early Intervention  
Evidence based practice  
Aligned curriculum  
Instructional practice  
Behavior management  
Assessment practices  
State Standards

#### Belief Systems

Results based  
General Education First  
Policies  
Process or Product

#### Community Involvement

Role

#### Professional Development

Pre-service preparation  
Schedule and topics for professional development for general and special educators

#### Systems Model

Integrated or Separate  
Related services  
Incorporation of students in the learning community  
Collaboration



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