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Transformative Leadership Practices and Special Needs Students
at the Elementary and Secondary Level

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ABSTRACT

Transformative leadership is a concept that addresses the impact of inequality and discrimination in schools and prompts school leaders to help students achieve despite these barriers. This study investigated the extent to which school leaders at the elementary and secondary level engaged in transformative leadership practices in connection with special needs students. To determine this, a group of elementary and secondary school administrators in an urban school district located in southern California were given a survey to rate a series of items derived from these practices. A set of interviews were then conducted on a voluntary basis with a select number of school leaders who completed the survey. Although the quantitative findings of this study showed that there were no statistical differences in the extent to which school leaders, consisting of principals and other administrators, engaged in transformative leadership practices regardless of their position, gender, race, or ethnicity, the qualitative results indicated that they felt strongly about inclusive practices that support special needs students in regular educational environments. A comparison of both sets of data indicated that the participants were generally unfamiliar with the social justice theories linked to the items on the survey. School leaders who have a better understanding of social justice and undergo a process of transformative learning will become more effective in applying transformative leadership practices to ensure the success of their special needs students in schools throughout the United States.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgements	2
Abstract	3
Chapters	
I. INTRODUCTION	8
Background of the Study	8
Statement of the Problem	9
Purpose of the Study	10
Significance of the Study	11
Research Question	11
Definition of Terms	12
Summary	13
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	14
Theoretical Background on Social Justice	14
Transformative Leadership, Social Justice, and Special Education	17
Alignment of Transformative Leadership Practices and Social Justice Theories	20
Transformative Practices and Knowledge and Action Debates	23
Transformative Leaders and Redistribution of Resources	27
Macro and Micro-Level Distinctions and Transformative Leadership	31

The Role of Transformative Leaders in School Settings	33
The Role of Transformative Leaders Working with Special Needs Students	36
Conclusions and Research Direction	41
III. METHODS	43
Introduction	43
Selection of Participants	44
Setting	46
Data Collection	47
Data Analysis	47
Measures	48
Recruitment	52
Summary	52
IV. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA	54
Quantitative Data Analysis	54
Qualitative Data Analysis	78
Alignment of Quantitative and Qualitative Data	97
V. SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	107
Summary	107
Implications	113
Recommendations	115
REFERENCES	117

TABLES

Table 1 – Core Transformative Leadership Practices	49
Table 2 – Group Statistics – Principals versus Other Administrators	56
Table 3 – Group Statistics – Gender	61
Table 4 – Group Statistics – Race/Ethnicity	65
Table 5 – Cohen’s d and Effect Size	72
Table 6 – Interview Themes and Sample Statements	82
Table 7 – Inclusion – Strongest to Incidental Statements – Elementary School Leaders	90
Table 8 – Inclusion – Strongest to Incidental Statements – Secondary School Leaders	91

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Functions of Transformative Leaders Working with Special Needs Students (Survey)	124
APPENDIX B – School District Statement of Agreement	128
APPENDIX C – Informed Consent Letter for Transformative School Leaders Working with Special Needs Students	130
APPENDIX D – Transformative Leadership and Special Needs Students Protocol and Interview Questions	132
APPENDIX E – Interview #1 – Elementary Administrator	134
APPENDIX F – Interview #2 – Elementary School Principal and Middle School Administrator	139
APPENDIX G – Interview #3 – High School Assistant Principal	150
APPENDIX H – Color Codes for Interview Transcripts	155

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Transformative educational leadership is an approach grounded in a critical theoretical perspective (Quantz, Rogers, & Dantley, 1991; Weiner, 2003; Dantley & Tillman, 2006). Its purpose is to change traditional school practices that have put traditionally under-represented and special needs students at a significant disadvantage compared to their regular education peers when it has come to their academic achievement (Dantley & Tillman). This concept has particular salience given the current national focus on accountability reflected, for example, in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001). School leaders are expected to produce high levels of student achievement and, in doing so, serve the needs of their stakeholders, including parents, district officials, and community leaders (O'Donnell & White, 2005). The focus, however, has been primarily on outcomes operationalized too often in test scores with much less emphasis given to educational practices, transformative in their design, that would help foster diversity and equity in schools (Bates, 2005). One result is that schools have placed special needs students into separate programs which have been inadequate in serving their academic needs and have marginalized them from the rest of the student population (Katsiyannis, Zhang, Ryan, & Jones, 2007; McKenzie et al., 2008; Solórozano, 2008).

Despite this trend, some principals and other school leaders have succeeded in changing traditional school systems through transformative leadership practices such as inclusion and, in doing so, meeting the academic needs of special needs students (Brooks, Jean-Marie, Normore & Hodgkins, 2007; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis & Causton-

Theoharis, 2008). However, they have accomplished this largely on their own initiative; for although theorists, e.g. Freire, 1970, 1998; Giroux, 1997, have discussed transformative leadership at a conceptual level, research focusing on its instruction and practice has been scant. Having tangible evidence of what transformative school leaders have learned and practiced at the elementary and secondary level in accommodating students identified with special needs would have a profound impact on the way schools are organized and managed throughout the United States.

A necessary first step in this regard would be to have a common understanding of transformative leadership, an understanding which does not yet exist. This study, using the lenses of critical theory and critical race theory, will identify the key practices of transformative leadership and its relevance to supporting special needs students at the elementary and secondary level helping to address a significant gap in the literature. Integral to the study will be the application of a prototype analysis which Hofsess and Tracey (2010) defined as an approach that allows researchers to organize information in a way that provides the best example of the concept being studied; in this case, transformative leadership and the practices that transformative leaders engage in when supporting their special needs students.

Statement of the Problem

A definition for the term “transformative leadership” is necessary because theorists have had varying opinions as to what it truly means, particularly as it has related to public schools. Quantz et al. (1991) explained that transformative leadership has empowered followers to become leaders in the school community, allowing all members to have a role in the operation of a school. Weiner (2003) asserted that it is an exercise of

power rooted in justice and democracy, comprising of such elements as individual accountability and social responsibility. Dantley and Tillman (2006) defined it as a concept where school leaders have a thorough knowledge of the practices that have generated inequities marginalizing individuals due to race, class, gender, and ability. Shields (2009) asserted that it has addressed the impact of systematic discrimination while promising greater individual achievement and “a better life lived in common with others” (p. 55).

Despite these views, school administrators who have neither learned nor have implemented transformative leadership practices have tended to make institutional changes in their schools based primarily on standardized test results. Although this is not new behavior, NCLB (2001) has contributed to this practice. This has resulted in tracking of special needs students, their placement in separate English language learner and special education programs, their retention, and a decrease in high school graduation rates (Katsiyannis et al., 2007; Solórozano, 2008). It is reasonable to hope that transformative leaders would address these issues in new ways; ways that better meet the needs of these students. But to prepare such leaders requires that they have a fundamental understanding of what constitutes transformative leadership and how this applies to their special needs learners.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which the key practices of transformative leadership apply to special education students at the elementary and secondary level. School leaders, including principals and other administrators, who have a fundamental knowledge of these practices can focus their efforts on improving schools

as places where student academic needs are fostered (Rodriguez, Murakami-Ramvalho, & Ruff, 2009). Based on the findings of this study, suggestions will be made regarding how these practices can be implemented on a wider scale to assist special needs learners in elementary and secondary schools throughout the United States.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study are intended to demonstrate how transformative leadership practices provide special needs learners more opportunities to be academically successful. As Bates (2005) explained, “Educational administration as a field can no longer escape the consideration of such issues . . . We . . . need a model of educational administration centered around the problem of the justice and fairness of social and educational arrangements” (p. 16). Hopefully, this study will be instrumental in meeting this goal, helping social justice leaders improve their own school sites, and support special needs learners in the process.

Research Question

The following question will guide the research: Is there a difference in the extent to which principals and other school leaders apply transformative leadership practices in connection with special needs students at the elementary and secondary level? A secondary focus of this study will be to examine if such factors as gender, race, or ethnicity affect the extent to which these school leaders apply such practices when working with these learners.

Definition of Terms

- *Critical Theory*: A theoretical approach that focuses on how human beings are empowered to overcome the barriers that are put before them due to race, class, and gender (Fay, 1987).
- *Critical Race Theory*: A theoretical analysis which focuses attention on the subject of race and the impact of racism on American society (Parker & Lynn, 2002).
- *Democratic Discourse*: A form of discussion among participants characterized by a free exchange of ideas which promotes trust and increases the capacity for members of the school community to address such problems as inequality and inequity (Riehl, 2000).
- *Dialectical Thought*: A theoretical approach that enables parties to investigate both sides of a social contradiction (McLaren, 1989).
- *No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001)*: A United States Act of Congress passed in 2001 and signed into law in 2002 establishing the implementation of standards and measurable goals to improve individual educational outcomes for all students.
- *Transformative Leadership*: A theoretical concept which deals with how school leaders create equitable school practices that serve the needs of all students.
- *Transformative Learning*: A process that enables adult learners in administrative preparation programs to expand their frame of reference regarding school systems and their impact on students of diversity (Mezirow, 1997, Cranton, 2002, Dirkx, 2001).

Summary

It is hoped that people who read this study will understand the theoretical background on transformative leadership and to what extent school leaders at the elementary and secondary level apply transformative leadership practices when working with their special needs students. It is also hoped that they will have a better understanding of social justice theory and address the inequitable practices that have undermined the academic progress of these learners. Given its theoretical nature, this study will not examine the effectiveness of one particular transformative leadership practice over another. Furthermore, discussion of successful transformative leadership practices pertaining to all learners will not be reviewed, only that of special needs students.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the range of literature pertaining to transformative leadership theories and examples of school leaders who have engaged in transformative leadership practices based on their work with special needs students. Before providing an in-depth analysis of these concepts, a review of education and social justice theories will be outlined, tracing their origins and development through critical pedagogy. Such an analysis will provide a deeper understanding of the historical and theoretical foundations of transformative leadership and the key practices derived from them which help to support special needs students at the elementary and secondary level.

Theoretical Background on Social Justice

When investigating critical pedagogy and theory, one should first consider the work of the Frankfurt School and its founding members — Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and Theodor Adorno (Giroux, 1983) — who, in their scholarship, believed the truth, as those perceived it, was not incontestable. One must be willing to challenge “facts” in order to discover what the actual truth is supporting a particular concept or idea. Those who have engaged in the “fetishism of facts” and “value neutrality” (p. 33) by failing to challenge certain political and social practices have merely reinforced the influence that the status quo has had over society.

The Frankfurt School believed it was necessary for thinkers and intellectuals to engage in dialectical thought to reveal the contradictions that are inherent in social and political systems. This approach has allowed new ways of thinking and approaching problems that have affected those most oppressed by these systems (Giroux, 2001; McLaren, 1989). In regard to schools, transformative school leaders have needed to

engage in dialectical thought, discussing with their stakeholders (parents, teachers, students, and district personnel) various solutions in dealing with the vast inequities that are embedded within school systems. Boscardin (2007) discussed the need for school leaders to engage in a problem-solving model. Similar to dialectical thought, this has fostered a school culture in which all voices of the school community have been heard in addressing the needs of those that have been the most impacted by school systems, particularly special needs learners.

Dialogue has been essential for school leaders to critically analyze their thoughts and actions. It has encouraged them to collaborate with others to find solutions to problems. Though at times it has been challenging for parties to discuss such sensitive issues as race, ability, and class, dialogue has fostered trust rather than resentment among its participants. However, it has been necessary for all of those involved to constantly engage with one other through critical reflection to sustain that trust and get to the root of the problems at hand affecting schools (Allman, 1994).

School leaders have also needed to engage in democratic discourse which, like dialectical thought and dialogue, has been characterized by a free exchange of ideas among members of the school community to highlight critical issues involving justice and equity (Riehl, 2000). Such a form of discussion has been lacking in schools where many school leaders have failed to acknowledge the challenges that traditionally under-represented students and special needs learners have faced on a regular basis (Freire, 1970; Riehl, 2000). For these individuals to become transformative intellectuals — critical thinkers who use discourse to challenge and change oppressive systems — they have needed to meet with their various stakeholders and, through shared dialogue and

exploration, have critically analyzed the various contradictions and inequities within school settings. This has enabled them to emancipate students from traditional school practices that have hindered their academic progress (Giroux, 2005).

Boscardin (2005) stressed the need for school personnel to work together in addressing the needs of their students, particularly those in special education programs, through problem solving. Boscardin defined this approach as “distributive leadership” where everyone at the school site has a role in finding the best approaches to help students become academically successful. They have also been willing “. . . to forego ownership of any particular perspective [which] is critical to successfully implementing a problem-solving approach that focuses on the whole student and not limited to discreet aspects of performance” (p. 26). Using this approach has allowed school personnel to address such issues as discrimination, inequality and inequity, and the rights of students with disabilities. This has also helped to create “. . . better educational outcomes for students and improved instructional practices for teachers” (p. 28).

School leaders who have been involved in dialogue, democratic discourse, and problem solving, have also been engaged in what Mezirow (1997) called transformative learning. This is a process that has allowed adult learners to expand their frame of reference regarding school systems and how students are affected by them. Such a frame of reference is comprised of two components: habits of mind, which are broad, abstract, habitual ways of thinking and points of view, the combination of beliefs, value judgments, and feelings that shape an adult learner’s interpretation of the world. Dialogue has been essential in compelling school leaders to critically analyze their

assumptions upon which their habits of mind are based, preventing their frames of reference from being subject to prejudice and ethnocentrism.

Similarly, Cranton (2002) argued that critical reflection through conversation and exchanging ideas is necessary in getting individuals to work through their beliefs and assumptions as well as examine their underlying premises. Such discourse is also vital for school leaders in meeting the needs of their students. Brown (2005) emphasized the need for school leaders in educational programs to undergo this process. She engaged her leadership students in assignments and activities that challenged their preconceived notions of race, class, and gender among others. These activities incorporated transformative learning strategies, involving the study of such subjects as multiculturalism, oppression, prejudice, and discriminatory practices against traditionally under-represented students and special needs learners. These provided the students a better understanding of themselves and improved their frame of reference regarding school systems as a result.

Transformative Leadership, Social Justice, and Special Education

There are several factors which have contributed to the marginalization of students within school systems. Aronowitz (2004) argued that traditionally under-represented and special needs students have lacked a great degree of cultural capital which, compared to their peers in regular education, would enable them to understand the hidden rules regarding school curriculum, testing, and standards. Similarly, Delpit (1988) asserted that schools have always reflected the cultural code of the White middle class. Children from that social group have known the rules of the classroom well and have been able to interpret the teacher's indirect way of expressing himself or herself.

Children of diverse backgrounds have remained disadvantaged from the time they have begun school. Some have been expected to speak and write in an unfamiliar form of English; others have been confused by the teacher's form of expression.

Aronowitz (2004) added that schools have relegated under-represented and special needs learners to the bottom rungs of the educational system through punishment and disciplinary procedures. If schools were to adopt a more enriched perspective in school practices and placed less emphasis on high stakes tests driving the curriculum and pedagogy, this would give students of diversity more opportunities to be successful. Transformative school leaders in this regard have needed to find ways to make schools more inclusive and less subject to authoritarian control through methods of standardization. Several school administrators have achieved this by establishing goals, obtaining resources, improving understandings, changing structures, and promoting practices that have improved learning experiences and outcomes for all students, including those with special needs (Riehl, 2000).

To promote inclusion within schools, school leaders have needed to be aware of the dual educational systems that have separately served regular education students and traditionally under-represented learners and have "prevent[ed] systemic changes to make education responsive to an increasingly diverse society" (Artiles, Harris-Murray, & Rostenberg, 2010, p. 261). Efficacy is a form of discourse whose proponents have challenged this dual system, critiquing the establishment of segregated classrooms. They have argued that inclusive educational models should replace these to help regular education students, traditionally under-represented learners, and students with special needs become academically successful. School leaders who have implemented inclusion

models well have enabled their school personnel to work towards addressing student needs and improve all students' sense of belonging within the learning environment.

Other than through inclusive models, McLaren (1989) contended that schools have a responsibility to promote student empowerment and self-transformation. For this to occur, teachers have needed to utilize an educational model that helps students understand the political, social, and economic foundations of society. Schools have traditionally emphasized two approaches to education: technical knowledge, based on learning facts and figures, and practical knowledge, which has enabled individuals to make sense of social situations in historic terms. Rather than continuing to promote these two approaches, schools should provide students with emancipatory knowledge to illustrate how power and privilege can manipulate relationships within social settings (Habermas, 1971). Such an understanding has been essential for students in creating a foundation for social justice, equality, and empowerment. Having this knowledge would also enable students, particularly those with special needs, to overcome the barriers that have impeded their progress within the educational system and society as a whole.

McLaren (1989) further discussed the concept of hegemony in which the dominant culture has exercised its control over subordinate groups through social practices evident in school systems. Those in power have won the support of those they have oppressed who have unknowingly participated in their own oppression. School leaders through the application of dialectical thought have mitigated these hegemonic practices that have continually undermined the academic progress of traditionally under-represented and special needs students. Learning in this case has become more communicative in which individuals strive to reach an understanding based on their

beliefs and achieve consensus about particular issues regarding students (Habermas, 1981; Mezirow, 1997).

As was previously mentioned, transformative school leaders have used a problem-solving model when discussing moral and ethical issues with their stakeholders in regards to the treatment of special needs learners (Boscardin, 2005). Comparable with Freire's (1970) and Giroux's (2001) views, this approach has enabled stakeholders to have conversations about injustice, discrimination, inequality, and inequity. These "can act as an introduction to the problems of difference and discrimination that serve to better contextualize the diversity of individuals with disabilities" (Boscardin, 2005, pp. 26-27), preventing them from being further marginalized in school settings.

Alignment of Transformative Leadership Practices

and Social Justice Theories

In the following section, transformative leadership practices are aligned with social justice theories which have become a core thread within the weave of social justice research. This research has also been essential in developing a set of criteria for transformative school leaders to follow when working with special needs students. These will be discussed along with their applications in helping students with special needs become academically successful in educational settings.

Quantz et al. (1991) described transformative leadership as an approach where the leader asks his or her followers to achieve goals that the individuals may not have even considered in their traditional roles. Instead of leaders having power *over* their supporters, they have freely given power *to* them (Burns, 1978). By working together, leaders and followers have created a culture that gives meaning and purpose to their lives

and their organization (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). It also has enabled both parties to critically discuss what their vision is, a core principle of transformative leadership, and has allowed all voices be heard regardless of their socioeconomic or cultural background (Foster, 1986). Burns (1978) added that transformative leaders have needed to act in a moral capacity by elevating their followers and, in turn, being elevated by them so that both parties work together for the good of the school and the students rather than their own self-interest.

Dantley and Tillman (2006) advanced the concept of how social justice has been interconnected with school leadership. Its main purpose has been to investigate and find solutions for issues that create and reproduce societal inequities within a school setting. Starratt (1991), highlighting another core transformative leadership practice, suggested that leaders have based their practices on the ethics of care, justice, and critique by investigating how students from diverse backgrounds have been socialized into an educational setting and have made accommodations for them whenever possible. Similar to Burns (1978), educational leadership has needed to take a moral stance when focusing on school policies and procedures which have tended to discriminate students based on their race, class, gender, social background, or ability.

Giroux (1997, 2005) stipulated that school leaders have acted as public intellectuals by examining the ways in which schools maintain the social, political, and economic status quo. Instead of acting as managers, they have been required to shape schools in a democratic framework, allowing all students to participate in the educational system. Public intellectuals, according to Giroux (1997), “. . . must struggle to create the conditions that enable students and others to become cultural producers who rewrite their

own experiences and perceptions by engaging with various texts, ideological positions and theories” (p. 263). Students, with the assistance of transformative leaders, have become more responsible for their own learning and have engaged in problem-posing education that Freire (1970) vigorously advanced and supported. Rather than beholden to a traditionally oppressive system, they have transcended it to become active members of their schools and society as a whole.

Giroux’s insights (1983, 1997, 2001, 2005) were aligned with the views of those theorists who have been proponents for the role that public intellectuals play within school systems. West (1999) attested that those who fulfill this role have engaged in critical self-reflection and have critically analyzed educational institutions to expose the racial, social, and cultural forms of oppression they have generated, underlining key transformative leadership practices. Dyson (2003) referred to public intellectuals as “paid pests” whose function has been to disrupt the inequitable practices they observe by asking questions and challenging those who advocate for their continued practice.

Cochran-Smith (2006) stressed the need for public intellectuals to expose the misconceptions related to social and educational justice in school settings. The role of school leaders has not been to make students “feel good,” as many critics of social and educational justice have claimed, but to encourage rigorous academic study while investigating issues relating to equity and inequity. These, too, have been key practices of transformative leadership which have had a profound impact on all students. She asserted, “Contrary to charges made against it, the social justice agenda is unambiguously about ensuring rich learning opportunities for all students and promoting their learning and life chances” (Cochran-Smith, 2006, p. 198). Students have not only been required

to learn facts but also examine the assumptions underlying them, a goal which the Frankfurt School and its proponents (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2001, 2005) had vigorously supported.

Shields (2009) claimed that transformative leadership has gone beyond the traditional operation of school administration. School leaders, more than just creating budgets, overseeing instruction, and achieving accountability, have needed to challenge the abuse of power and privilege in school systems, encourage individual achievement and the public good, and focus on liberation, democracy, equity, and justice. Comparable with these views, Cooper (2009) indicated that proponents of transformative leadership have needed to systematically analyze school systems and confront inequities regarding race, class, gender, and ability. In effect, leadership for social justice has “. . . [encompassed] freedom for all people . . . and [has made] efforts to prevent and remedy socioeconomic and political inequity” (p. 697) for all students in school settings.

Transformative Practices and Knowledge and Action Debates

In order for these transformative practices to have been fully realized, school leaders, regardless of their position or cultural and social background, have needed to apply them at their school sites in addressing the needs of their students. Lynch and Baker (2005) and Giroux (1997) placed this approach in the realm of knowledge and action debates. McKenzie et al. (2008) elaborated that administrative candidates in preparatory programs who have been training to become school leaders at both the elementary and secondary level have not only been required to raise the academic achievement of all students but become social activists. They have had to challenge the injustices affecting the communities where their students live and restructure their

schools to make them more inclusive in design. This has had particular salience to students with special needs, permitting their full access in school systems without having been stigmatized in the process.

McKenzie et al. (2008) asserted that students in leadership preparation programs have needed to develop a critical consciousness to uncover discriminatory practices such as racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism among others that have been constantly perpetuated in school systems. They have also needed to be aware that separate pull-out programs have typically tracked students based on color, language, and disability, particularly special needs students and English language learners, and should be eliminated. Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005) believed that leadership programs needed to guide students in developing “practiced reflexivity” in which they consciously take responsibility for their actions and realize that these have a profound impact on the school community. Regardless of their position, they have needed to learn and ask themselves questions about the day-to-day operation of a school, such as “What are we doing?,” “Why are we doing it?,” “How is what we’re doing affecting all students?,” and “Is what we’re doing privileging one group over another?” (p. 215). Mezirow (1997), Dirkx (2001), and Cranton (2002) were proponents of this form of critical thinking. Adult learners who have been engaged in transformative learning approaches have challenged their own preconceptions, brought forth their feelings and emotions, and found solutions through dialogue and self-exploration.

Ryan and Katz (2007) suggested that the use of case studies have been an effective way to get administrative students to recognize their own assumptions and biases, particularly those that have come from non-diverse backgrounds. The researchers

discovered that students in preparatory programs who were White and middle class were unprepared to deal with many of the cultural and social issues affecting their schools and students. They suggested that providing students with realistic scenarios of school dilemmas and having them respond to these in their writing journals has encouraged them to become critical thinkers in analyzing their own racial and social biases. In one case study, they used the example of a White female assistant principal who was working in a school in a predominantly multi-ethnic neighborhood. The assistant principal had taken it upon herself to attend a series of workshops to learn about students of diversity and how to effectively meet their needs as well as learning to acknowledge her own prejudices and how to overcome them. This would illustrate that school leaders from the dominant majority have needed to be exposed to socially just practices to help them become transformative leaders when working with students of diversity.

Cochran-Smith et al. (2009) explained that teaching for social justice has involved having an understanding of pedagogical strategies as well as how school personnel have thought about and interpreted their varied roles within school settings. It has also required knowledge of how teachers pose questions, make decisions, and form relationships with their colleagues and students. In a study that Cochran-Smith and her co-researchers conducted, they asked first and second-year teachers what it meant to teach for social justice. Twelve candidates participated in the study who taught a variety of subjects including math, English, and science at urban and suburban schools; four of the candidates were White males, five were White females, one was an African-American male, one was an Asian female, and one was a Hispanic-American female.

In the subsequent interviews that took place with the participants, the researchers found apparent themes, consisting of pupil learning, relationships and respect, teachers who advocate for their pupils, and recognizing racial and economic inequities. They also had spoken about such topics as holding students to high expectations, encouraging students to succeed, meeting the range of needs in the classroom, and promoting critical thinking. Though this study focused on classroom teachers, the results would indicate that school personnel, regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity, have been generally concerned about their students from diverse backgrounds and meeting their needs when asked about social justice. Such practices relate to transformative leadership practices and supporting the needs of special needs students.

Brown (2005) conducted a study in which she exposed 40 graduate students of education administration to transformative learning strategies to determine if they would alter their perceptions regarding diversity. Among the participants were 13 males and 27 females; 17 of these were White, 20 were Black, one was Asian, and two were multi-ethnic, ranging in age from 26 to 47. All varied in terms of their teaching experiences, ranging from elementary to high school. They were enrolled as full-time students in a Master's in School Administration program that lasted for two years. All were engaged in a variety of transformative adult learning activities. Throughout the program, the author required the students to write cultural autobiographies and keep reflective analysis journals to document their discussions with their colleagues. Cranton (2002) believed that reflective journals allowed adult students to engage in critical self-reflection and undergo transformation about their beliefs and attitudes. In their second year, the

students completed internships at different school sites and were required to meet together to share and reflect on their experiences.

Results collected during the study indicated that the attitudes and beliefs of the students regarding race, class, and culture changed significantly since the outset of the program. In their journals, the students asked themselves such questions as “How will I make the changes happen that I know need to occur?” and “Do my ideas represent the school's populations, even those who are not in the majority?” (Brown, 2005, p. 23).

After visiting a school for severely handicapped children, one administrative candidate remarked “I realized that kids are kids and I need to treat each of them with dignity and respect, regardless of race, creed, or disability” (p. 22). By reflecting critically on their assumptions, many of them were able to change their perspectives. The students engaged in a process akin to dialectical thought where they were able to uproot their prejudices and improve their understanding of social and cultural issues through critical dialogue and self-reflection (McLaren, 1989). This showed that regardless of the students’ gender, race, or ethnicity, they were able to engage in a series of transformative leadership practices in preparation for their roles as school leaders working with all students.

Transformative Leaders and Redistribution of Resources

Bates (2005) argued that schools have a moral imperative to protect the individual rights of all pupils regarding their freedom and equality. These have extended to their cultural, political, and economic rights as well as the development of their personal and professional capabilities enabling them to contribute to society as a whole.

Transformative leaders, in their capacity as public intellectuals, have needed to maintain these freedoms and implement them into current school practices. They have not

established this moral basis if they have allowed schools to actively segregate students based on their diverse backgrounds or their ability to learn.

Bates (2005) called for schools to redistribute its resources and give students access to the materials they need, to recognize the inequitable practices that have occurred, and find ways to redress these for the benefit of all students. Redistribution relates to the inequalities either in wealth, opportunity, or services that have been present in school systems (Rawls, 1971). These have had profound implications for special needs students, considering that traditional educational approaches, in regards to assessment, curriculum, and instruction, have tended to favor the status quo over those who have been traditionally marginalized in school settings (Delpit, 1988; McLaren, 1989; Aronowitz, 2004).

O'Donnell and White (2005) asserted that school leaders have had four areas of responsibility in this regard: being a resource provider, an instructional resource, a communicator, and a visible presence in the school, all of which have been key practices of transformative leadership. They have also needed to build relationships with various stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and district officials, in their efforts to promote student achievement. Such relationships have been vital in creating positive environments where all students, regardless of their social or cultural background, can learn. Rodriguez et al. (2009) added that leaders who have adopted inclusive strategies and have advocated for the needs of all students have helped to fulfill the moral obligations of their schools. These strategies, similar to those of O'Donnell and White, included maintaining high expectations for all students, treating all students with respect, and building relationships within the school community. These are also similar to those

that Cochran-Smith et al. (2009) found in their study of first and second-year teachers who taught for social justice. Rodriguez et al. (2009) explained that elementary principals in large urban areas have focused more on school-community relations than secondary school administrators, experiencing higher parental involvement as a result.

Lashley (2007) asserted that the advent of NCLB (2001) legislation has changed the role of principals and their responsibilities. Instead of acting simply as managers, they have had to become instructional leaders, monitor the achievement of all learners, and use data to make decisions about students and programs. The law has also forced them to be more accountable in terms of performance, no longer ignoring instruction for certain groups of students such as those with special needs. An important consideration of these principals has been whether special needs learners have had access to the general curriculum, a major tenet under NCLB legislation for students required to take state assessments. This has been one of the reasons why inclusion of special needs students in regular education programs has been such a popular initiative. In some cases, however, mainstreaming has proven problematic because it has not guaranteed that these students will be academically successful.

It has been imperative that principals practice an ethic of care (Starratt, 1991) when making decisions about how to best serve these students and ensure that they have been provided with accommodations and the materials they need in regular education classrooms to be successful. These school leaders have also needed to engage with various stakeholders in the community, including parents, teachers, and other administrators, not only to address student performance but also other issues regarding educational and social equity. This may indicate that principals have had more of a

leadership role in these areas compared to other school leaders, showing a greater sensitivity and inclination to transformative leadership practices when working with special needs students.

Artiles et al. (2010) disagreed with the idea of redistributing resources, feeling that its sole focus has been on individual performance which has not benefitted special needs students as a whole. Distributive approaches have not taken into account the influence of the status quo over unjust school practices like segregating students according to ability. In addition, racial minority students, such as African Americans and Native Americans, have been overrepresented in separate special education programs for many years even during periods when schools have strived to increase access and redistribute resources to special needs students. To counteract this and allow for full inclusion, school leaders regardless of their position have needed to apply transformative models that deal with both individual and systemic issues. These would support the needs of all children, providing them with the resources and materials necessary to be successful regardless of their disability or background.

Riehl (2000) contended that school leaders, specifically principals, have needed to recognize the forms of diversity present in their institutions as well as foster a spirit of inclusion among social groups, and build bridges between themselves and the community. To accomplish this and provide the resources that are necessary, they have needed to incorporate project-based learning programs, smaller schools, blocked scheduling, portfolios, and collaboration among school personnel. Much in line with Freire's (1970) views, these practices have engendered forms of democratic discourse that have allowed all members of the school community, including parents and students,

to be part of the decision-making process. These have also promoted educational practices that serve the needs of all students, particularly special needs learners. As in the previous examples, this would strongly indicate that principals have played a much larger role than other school leaders when it comes to creating programs and engaging in practices that are transformative in design.

Macro and Micro-Level Distinctions and Transformative Leadership

Riehl (2000) articulated views on curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy that have also been integral to theories involving macro and micro-level distinctions about power relations in the educational system. Macro-level issues involve decisions about school management and instructional and curricular planning; micro-level issues involve the relationships between staff and students and among school personnel (Lynch & Baker, 2005). Anyon (2005) suggested that school practices have needed to go beyond curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy at the macro and micro level, similar to those that Riehl (2000) proposed, to ameliorate both the systemic problems affecting the educational system and society as a whole. Elementary and secondary school leaders who have been transformative in their approaches have improved educational programs by modifying traditional educational practices to better serve traditionally under-represented students or those identified with special needs.

Brooks et al. (2007) supported Riehl's thesis about school leaders acting as bridge people within an educational setting. This role has applied to both principals and other school administrators. Although closing the achievement gap, ensuring school safety, and hiring quality teachers have been important aims for school leaders to pursue, bridge people have been those who, as suggested by Dantley and Tillman (2006), have

perceived social justice practices as integral to practices that affect educational outcomes. They have developed communicative relationships with their stakeholders, made partnerships with such agencies as schools, colleges, businesses, and social services, and have been genuinely concerned about how traditionally under-represented and special needs students are socialized within school settings. They have dialogued with those who have challenged their ideas about the educational system. Resembling the views of Freire (1970, 1998) and Giroux (1997, 2005), school leaders who have engaged in these practices have proven they have been committed to “democratic schooling where equity and excellence function as the social contract” (Brooks et al., p. 383) regardless of their position at a school site.

Kose (2007) in support of macro-level issues advanced the creation of socially-just learning in schools, incorporating educational achievement along with developing students’ personal, cultural, and sociopolitical knowledge to address issues affecting their community. Socially-just learning contains five components: rigorous subject matter content, differentiated teaching, an ethic of care, as Starratt (1991) proposed, equitable treatment of all students, including those with special needs, and teaching strategies which engage students in social issues. Principals have been chiefly responsible for creating such learning programs and providing professional development for teachers. This endeavor has given teachers the tools necessary to help students develop a thorough understanding of social issues at the local, national, and global level. Kose added that although principals have not assumed total responsibility for addressing social issues at a school site, the creation of socially just learning practices has not occurred without principal leadership. In contrast to the argument set forth by Brooks et al. (2007), this

would indicate that principals have played a larger role when it has come to engaging in transformative leadership practices than other administrators when meeting the needs of their students.

The Role of Transformative Leaders in School Settings

After reviewing the various theories described here, it is essential to determine how they have translated into the roles that transformative leaders have played within school settings. This would illustrate how school leaders regardless of their position, gender, race, or ethnicity have made schools more equitable for special needs students. The views of other social justice theorists will be examined along with specific examples of those who have engaged in key practices of transformative leadership and have changed their schools in the process.

Brooks et al. (2007) investigated the role of bridge people, as Riehl (2000) identified, at an inner-city public school located in the south-eastern part of the United States. McLuhan High School is situated in a racially-divided, poverty stricken area where student achievement has been low and where the demographic distribution of students has been 85% African American and 12% White. At the time of the study, a total of 80 teachers staffed the school, including the principal, three assistant principals, an academic dean, and a dozen educational specialists, to serve approximately 1,300 children in grades 9-12. Thirty-seven members of the staff identified themselves as White and 39 as Black; one teacher identified herself as Hispanic, and another teacher self-identified as Arab.

After conducting a series of interviews with the entire school personnel, the researchers discovered that they had all met together frequently and discussed how to

connect with students using pedagogical strategies and intellectual appeals that were relevant to their students' identity and background. Aronowitz (2004) made clear the importance of linking student interests with that of the curriculum to help improve student achievement. In addition, several teachers, administrators, and students critically analyzed instruction and curriculum on many occasions and made changes when they deemed it necessary. For example, these individuals investigated texts that they felt represented the hidden curriculum at the school, such as those they considered to be Anglocentric or books that suggested that those of diverse backgrounds were inferior to other individuals. The authors observed that "educators in the school seemed largely content to practice this form of leadership on a situation-to-situation basis — these were random acts of social justice" (Brooks et al., 2007, p. 393). The authors referred to this process as transformative public intellectualism, similar to what other theorists have outlined in their suggested practices (Giroux, 1997; West, 1999, Dyson, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 2006) in which school personnel engaged in critical dialogue regarding certain systemic issues and then collectively devised a course of action.

The school personnel engaged in bridge-work leadership which was designed to assist groups of students rather than individuals. School leaders created community outreach programs which gave students the opportunity to develop their job skills and support their families. Although they encountered difficulties at times when attempting to obtain more resources and supplies for instructional programs, this did not deter them from assisting the students as much as possible. As the staff of McLuhan High School demonstrated, "social justice leaders strive for . . . democracy rather than bureaucracy . . . inclusion rather than exclusion . . . and action for change rather than inaction to preserve

inequity” (Brooks et al., 2007, p. 400). Though the study did not examine how these actions affected special needs students at the school, the actions of the personnel had a profound impact on the student body as a whole. The study also showed that both the principal and the other school administrators along with the teachers and the students played a major role in engaging in transformative leadership practices which benefitted the school community.

Theoharis (2007) examined how a select group of school principals carried out the principles of social and educational justice in everyday practice. The seven individuals he investigated worked in urban schools in the Midwest at both the elementary and secondary level. They came from diverse backgrounds in race, gender, and sexual orientation, and ranged in age from the early-30s to the mid-50s. Four were secondary principals (two high schools and two middle schools) and three were elementary principals. One identified as Asian and six identified as White. Three of the principals were women and four were men. Each of them came into the teaching profession with a passion for social justice based on their previous experiences with their families, field of studies, or personal challenges they faced. Six out of the seven principals eliminated pull-out programs in special education and second language, dismantled remedial level classes that were populated mostly by poor and traditionally under-represented students, and encouraged inclusive practices at their schools, similar to those that Rodriguez et al. (2009) suggested, that raised academic achievement. These changes led to a dramatic increase in test scores among African-American and Latino students.

These principals also led their school personnel in confronting issues regarding race, existing injustice, and historical inequity as they related to schools and learning.

The principals expressed that with their commitment to social justice issues and the resources they had at their disposal, they supported staff growth and learning that focused on equity. The steps that these principals took “enacted a strong resistance against the status quo of schooling that transformed their schools to the benefit of all students but in particular marginalized children” (Theoharis, 2007, p. 235). Freire (1970) and McLaren (1989) wrote about counter-hegemonic practices that have been essential in combating the hegemony of the dominant social order that is entrenched within school systems. These school leaders regardless of their gender, race, or ethnicity demonstrated their commitment to such practices by improving the working and learning environment for their teaching personnel and students, particularly students with special needs at the elementary and secondary level. They also redefined what it meant to be a school leader by focusing on social justice practices transformative in nature and creating equitable schools in the process.

The Role of Transformative Leaders Working with Special Needs Students

Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis (2008) insisted on the need to create schools that were inclusive in design. The authors conducted a study in which they identified experts in the field of inclusive leadership who, as either principals of schools or school leaders, have worked in leadership preparation programs or professional development. One of the participants was a female who had 12 years of public school administrative experience and received a Ph.D. in special education. Another was a male who held positions as special education coordinator and director of instructional services and staff development as well as earning an Ed.D. in Educational Administration and a Master's

degree in Special Education. The third was a female who started in education as a special education teacher and became a pioneering university faculty member in the area of mainstreaming. These were individuals who were imbued with a strong passion for social justice early in their careers. They felt that schools should not segregate kids based on ability or race and that special education programs forced them to fall behind their peers academically and socially.

As administrative program instructors at local institutions, they purposefully selected curriculum and teaching techniques for their leadership students to help develop and sustain inclusive schools. The male administrator said that the students needed to understand that inclusive schools might have its origins in special education, but was really “about social justice and creating equity for all students. . . .” (Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008, p. 236). They felt it was also important for their students to have an understanding of critical theory. Many of the techniques these experts employed were similar to those used in the previous studies (Brown, 2005; Ryan & Katz, 2007; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009), such as dialogue, self-reflection, journals, and discussion panels. They wanted their students to understand that when children are placed into separate programs based on race, class, language, or ability, the school becomes an instrument of oppression as well as marginalization.

Giroux (2001) in his analysis of critical theory discussed the importance of identifying societal structures which are oppressive in nature and advocating for necessary changes to help those most affected by them; in this case, traditionally under-represented students and special needs learners. The students in these preparatory programs were also provided with emancipatory knowledge, similar to Habermas’ theory

(1971), which enabled them to understand systems of domination and how these can be altered through deliberative action geared towards social justice. Based on the examples of these administrative program instructors, their efforts would indicate that both male and female school leaders from various positions have been committed to transformative leadership practices to a great extent when working with special needs students.

Kose (2007) examined the leadership of a middle school principal, Audrey Union (a pseudonym), who's school has served about 400 students in the sixth through ninth grades. The researcher selected her for an in-depth, five-month qualitative study, which entailed several observations, formal and informal interviews with her and her staff, and collecting documents. Approximately 40% of the students at her school came from diverse backgrounds and a similar percentage qualified for free and reduced lunch. In her fifth year as principal, she communicated to her school personnel a vision to bring all students together regardless of their social, cultural, or racial background, develop their individual strengths, and help them become global citizens. The principal and staff wanted to sustain this vision by improving the test scores of each student sub-group, reducing disruptive behavior, and increasing attendance rates. She also stressed the need for differentiating instruction based on the needs of each student and how much academic support they required.

Principal Union also wanted her teachers to be more sensitized to the cultural differences of their students in their forms of expression which could be mistakenly interpreted as misbehavior. This approach was similar to Delpit's (1998) and Aronowitz's (2004) claims about how traditionally under-represented students have been marginalized in school systems, not reflecting the cultural code of the school or lacking

the required cultural capital to understand its rules. The principal believed that professional development in diversity was essential for all staff members, considering that most of them were White and had little experience teaching students of color. She also encouraged her general and special education teachers to collaborate together and determine the best teaching methods necessary when working with special needs students, including those from traditionally under-represented populations and from upper-class backgrounds.

Principal Union's efforts echoed those of Theoharis (2007) and Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis (2008) regarding the implementation of inclusive practices in schools. They also resembled what Brown (2005) and McKenzie et al. (2008) proposed regarding administrative training, in this case, for teachers to help them develop a critical consciousness to work effectively with students. The principal's work has also paralleled Riehl's (2000) views about how school leaders have needed to recognize the forms of diversity present in their institutions, foster a spirit of inclusion among its personnel, and build bridges between themselves and the community they serve. These examples also illustrate that as a middle school principal, Audrey Union was inclined towards transformative leadership practices to a great extent in connection with regular and special needs students.

Rodriguez et al. (2009) in their study selected 16 urban elementary principals from two southwestern states to take part in focus groups from 2005 to 2006. Nine of the participants were male and seven were female; from these, eight were White, six were Hispanic, one was African American, and one was multi-ethnic. The researchers interviewed each of the focus group participants and recorded their responses on audio

tape and transcribed these for analysis. Like those in the Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis (2008) study, they were chosen based on their experiences and expertise in creating inclusive programs at their school sites. These included helping immigrant students to socialize into U. S. schools providing culturally relevant instruction, and developing early intervention strategies. Their backgrounds included regular interactions with students and families experiencing poverty, first generation students, and English language learners.

Some of the principals faced pressures in the regular management of their schools which included meeting adequate yearly progress as defined by state and federal mandates, high stakes testing, and district mandates stemming from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) law. They were concerned about how schools were underserving students identified with learning disabilities, having perceived that there was a conflict between NCLB and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004). They believed that schools in general were forcing students to try and reach proficiency levels on standardized tests, and, consequently, limiting special education services and accommodations they needed. The principals made sure that they had a personal connection with the students by meeting with them individually to check their progress. They also established relationships with members of the community, including meeting students and their parents each morning in the front of the school and greeting them. They also believed that they had to be as visible as possible on school grounds and meet with teachers every few weeks to monitor their progress with students and recommend various interventions.

Despite growing pressure to increase the number of students passing state and federally mandated tests, the principals made it a point to connect with students and parents and build a strong foundation for the future academic success of their students. Their actions demonstrated an ethic of care (Starratt, 1991) and were “. . . [representative of] individuals who serve as advocates for students and who possess a commitment to social justice” (Rodriguez et al., 2009, p. 11), similar to what Brooks et al. (2007) observed of their participants in their study. Their efforts would also indicate that regardless of their gender, race, or ethnicity, their sensitivity and inclination to transformative leadership practices did not vary greatly in regards to helping special needs students become academically successful through inclusive practices.

Conclusions and Research Direction

Based on the research and studies presented in this literature review, it would appear that there were more examples of principals compared to other school leaders (i.e. assistant principals and/or elementary and secondary school administrators) at both the elementary and secondary level who exhibited transformative leadership practices in connection with special needs students. There were few if any examples in the literature of the impact that school leaders aside from principals have made in this regard. However, in some instances where leadership responsibilities were distributed among principals as well as assistant administrators and teachers at school sites, all played an equal role in the extent to which they applied transformative leadership practices when working with their special needs students. They were also concerned about implementing inclusive practices at their schools which they felt would help regular education students and traditionally under-represented students as well as those with

special needs. This was also the case regardless of the gender, race, or ethnicity of the school leaders appearing in these studies.

The focus of the analysis in Chapter IV will be to determine if there are any differences in the extent to which principals and other school leaders, including both males and females and Whites and non-Whites, engage in these practices using quantitative and qualitative data. It is hoped that this analysis will determine whether or not a clear distinction can be made between these groups and, if so, are there any implications in regards to supporting special needs students at the elementary and secondary level. In addition, based on the findings of the study, suggestions will be made as to how school leaders can implement transformative leadership practices at their school sites. It is hoped that these leaders will initiate a process whereby they and their school personnel work collaboratively to develop positive relationships within the school community, create school practices that are more equitable in their design, and help special needs students become academically successful.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

This chapter reports the methods that were used in this study. It describes the participants, measures, and procedures.

Introduction

The overall methodological procedure for this study was a mixed methods approach using both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (audio interviews) tools. Quantitative research has been used to measure and analyze phenomena within a sample in order to determine a relationship between variables that is statistically reliable and can be generalized to the larger population (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). In this study a sample of school leaders responsible for special education programs at the elementary and secondary level, including special education teachers, assistant principals, principals, and district office directors, rated a list of items describing the characteristics of transformative school leaders working with special needs students. Depending on how high they rated these items determined the extent of their inclination towards these practices.

Creswell (2007) has defined qualitative research as a process of inquiry which explores a social or human problem conducted in a natural setting. Qualitative researchers have attempted to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them through the studied use and collection of case studies, personal experiences, and interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). A select number of participants that completed the survey constituting the quantitative portion of this study volunteered to participate in a series of interviews regarding their views on transformative leadership and how these apply to special education students. They responded to a set of questions

derived from the research on transformative leadership practices that required some interpretation based upon the interviewees' individual experiences and backgrounds.

The context for both parts of the study were derived from the research on transformative leadership practices as discussed in Chapter II and the main research question, stating: Is there a difference in the extent to which principals and other school leaders apply transformative leadership practices in connection with special needs students at the elementary and secondary level? A secondary focus of the study investigated if such factors as gender, race, or ethnicity affected the extent to which these school leaders have applied such practices when working with these learners. A prototype analysis, described later in this chapter, was used to analyze and interpret the results based on the survey responses as given.

The researcher who served as the prime member of the research team has been a special education teacher at the middle school and high school level for over a period of 10 years in two school districts. He set aside any biases he may have had regarding special needs students in K-12 education that could have affected the course of the study.

Selection of Participants

The participants for the first part of the study were a sample of elementary and secondary school administrators from various school sites in an urban school district located in southern California each with at least five years of experience at the administrative level and who were actively involved in positions of leadership connected to special education programs and students. Once the district granted its approval for the study, the researcher contacted these individuals via e-mail. He provided them with a brief outline of the study and intentions of the research along with a web-based internet

link to *Survey Monkey*, a professional electronic program where the survey was located. On the survey were 20 items, each ranked on an 8-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (*not at all characteristic of work related to special needs students*) to 7 (*distinctively characteristic of work related to special needs students*) based on transformative leadership practices as found in the literature.

The researcher used a purposeful sampling strategy in order to select participants for the first phase of the study. These were individuals whose role as school administrators fit the criteria of the research— those who work with special needs students and who are engaged in transformative leadership practices (Creswell, 2007). Based on the responses received, the researcher determined whether the participants met these conditions to participate in the study.

Out of 50 surveys distributed, a total of 26 were returned along with informed letters of consent that the researcher distributed himself to the various elementary and secondary school sites throughout the district. The letters were either sent back to the researcher in self-addressed stamped envelopes or returned to the district office that the researcher collected independently. The respondents, ranging in age from 39-61, were made up of 10 males and 16 females representing a variety of leadership positions, including two special education teachers, five secondary assistant principals, seven elementary school administrators, nine secondary school principals, one elementary school principal, and two district office directors. All had graduate degrees from various institutions throughout the Inland Empire, 10 of whom identified themselves as White, four as African American, 11 as Hispanic/Latino, and one as multi-ethnic.

Once the quantitative data was compiled, the researcher calculated the mean scores and standard deviations for the Likert-scaled items on the survey using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), a computer-based statistics program. The researcher organized the output based on the positions (principals and other administrators), gender (males and females), and race/ethnicity (Whites and non-Whites) of the participants. He also utilized an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test to determine the significance of scores based on the gender and race/ethnicity of the participants.

For the second part of the study, four candidates constituted the pool of participants that the researcher interviewed in audio tape format. These included an elementary administrator, an elementary school principal, a middle school administrator, and a high school assistant principal. Both the principal and elementary administrators were females; the principal identified herself as White and the elementary administrator as Hispanic/Latino (non-White) on the survey. The middle school administrator and the high school assistant principal were both male and identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino (non-White). There were no specified criteria that the candidates had to meet in order to participate in the interviews, solely their willingness to volunteer as indicated on the survey.

Setting

A total of three interviews were held with the participants at specific meeting sites throughout the school district. The first took place at the elementary administrator's school site, the second was held in the board room of the school district where the study was conducted with the elementary school principal and the middle school administrator in attendance, and the third took place at the high school assistant principal's school site.

The researcher provided the interview participants with a protocol containing a set of 10 questions derived from the research on transformative leadership practices (see Table 1 in the *Methods* section). Each interview was approximately 1-2 hours in duration.

Data Collection

The researcher collected data in the form of surveys and audio-taped interviews over a period of 4-8 weeks. The participants who completed the survey transmitted them electronically to the researcher who reviewed these and contacted those participants who wished to take part in the interviews. The researcher transcribed the responses from the interviews and read these carefully to determine any themes or patterns that emerged from them. This approach allows a researcher to code information based on certain key phrases or words that a sample of participants use in a set of qualitative data to understand and interpret it better (Creswell, 2007). The researcher found such a series of key words and phrases and highlighted these using a color-coded system. He then organized the information he found in a set of tables for further analysis. The results of this process are further discussed in Chapter IV.

Data Analysis

As the researcher collected specific datum from the participants, it was examined and reexamined in regards to its relationship to transformative leadership practices and its relevance to supporting special needs students. The higher the items were rated on the survey for the first part of the study, the more characteristic they were of transformative school leaders working with special needs learners. The themes and patterns that emerged from the responses of those who volunteered to be interviewed were compared

to how these individuals rated the items on the survey, determining if there were any similarities or differences between both sets of data.

Measures

To determine the essential characteristics of transformative leadership, a prototype analysis was used. A prototype, in general, reflects how a group of people think and talk about a particular construct without specifically defining it. Researchers have used prototypes to identify such difficult concepts as emotion, love, and anger among others. People familiar with such concepts may not be able to describe them accurately but recognize them when they are being exhibited (Hofsess & Tracey, 2010). Horowitz and Turan (2008) added that those who exhibit certain prototypes have characteristics that are more clearly defined based on their relationship to the prototype being examined. For example, love in the romantic sense includes a willingness to be with another person; intimacy is demonstrated by a change in mood observed by one who is close to another. Given the theoretical nature of transformative leadership and the practices associated with it, this type of analysis was the most applicable to the study.

When conducting a prototype analysis, it has been typical for researchers to first gather information from experts in the field about what characteristics they believe represent the concept being studied. They have derived a list of key statements from their responses and then placed these in survey form for other participants to rate. In a series of studies, Fehr (2004) determined what constituted intimacy in the form of friendship between men and women of the same sex. The researcher began with a sample of participants at a university who were able to describe what contributed to an expectation of intimacy in a same-sex relationship. She then conducted a similar study with a sample

of participants from the community and compared the results to the previous study. Her results indicated that both studies had a prototype structure, thus defining what characterized intimacy in a friendship.

The researcher conducted the methods for this study in a similar fashion. However, due to limitations in time, the key practices of transformative leadership, in lieu of querying experts in the field, came directly from the literature review. The researcher refined these in a survey format for school administrators to rate, constituting the first part of the study. In the second part of the study, the questions for the interviews were derived from these same practices. These questions, as shown in the following table, were originally designed to mirror such practices as closely as possible. The researcher changed the order and wording of the questions prior to the interviews to elicit a thorough understanding of the school administrators' experiences and backgrounds and also to avoid leading their responses.

Table 1

Core Transformative Leadership Practices

Core Transformative Leadership Practices	Possible Questions to School Leaders
1 The school leader and school personnel discuss what their vision is for the school (Bennis & Nanus, 1985).	1 How is your vision for the school articulated with your special needs personnel?
2 The school leader supports the school personnel, enabling both parties to work together for the good of the school (Burns, 1978).	2 How do you work together with your school personnel to ensure the well-being of special needs students on a regular basis?

Core Transformative Leadership Practices	Possible Questions to School Leaders
3 The school leader is engaged in critical self-reflection and critically analyzes the racial, social, and cultural forms of oppression that may exist (West, 1999).	3 a) What are some of the concerns you have about the racial, cultural, and social climate of the school? b) How do these concerns apply to special needs students?
4 The school leader ensures that school personnel treat students fairly regardless of their racial, social, or cultural background (Freire, 1998).	4 What message do you communicate to your staff about how special needs students should be treated?
5 The school leader investigates issues relating to equity and inequity that have a profound impact on all students (Cochran-Smith, 2006).	5 What are your views on equity and inequity in regards to special needs students?
6 The school leader builds relationships with various stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, and district officials in their efforts to promote student achievement (O'Donnell & White, 2005; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009).	6 How do you work and communicate with your various stakeholders in the school community in regard to meeting the needs of special needs students?
7 The school leader is active in restructuring his/her school to make it more inclusive in design to accommodate all students (McKenzie et al., 2008).	7 What are your views on inclusion and how do you see that principle being implemented for special needs students?

Core Transformative Leadership Practices	Possible Questions to School Leaders
8 The school leader is a resource provider, an instructional resource, a communicator, and a visible presence in the school (O'Donnell & White, 2005).	8 a) What are your major roles as a school administrator at your particular site? b) How does your role have particular relevance for special needs students?
9 The school leader is committed to creating a socially just learning classroom which incorporates educational achievement along with developing students' personal, cultural and sociopolitical knowledge to address issues affecting their community (Kose, 2007).	9 What do you see as the ideal classroom learning environment for special needs students? What components should be evident?
10 The school leader makes substantial changes regarding curriculum, assessment, and school practices that have an impact on student achievement (Riehl, 2000).	10 How much do you investigate the impact of curriculum and assessment in regards to special needs learners?
11 The school leader makes partnerships with such agencies as schools, colleges, businesses, and social services and is concerned about how students are socialized within a school setting (Brooks et al., 2007).	11 What partnerships have been made with various outside agencies to support student achievement and growth for special needs students?

Core Transformative Leadership Practices	Possible Questions to School Leaders
12 School leaders, more than just creating budgets, overseeing instruction, and achieving accountability, must challenge the abuse of power and privilege in school systems, encourage individual achievement and the public good, and focus on liberation, democracy, equity, and justice (Shields, 2009).	12 How do you balance your role as a school leader while, at the same time, investigate issues that pertain to meeting the academic needs of special needs students?

Recruitment

Several elementary and secondary schools located in the district selected for this study were the primary recruiting sites. School personnel who are responsible for special education programs were contacted at these sites via e-mail as described in the *Selection of Participants* section.

Summary

For this study, the researcher applied a mixed methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative data. The context for the study was derived from the research on transformative leadership practices as described in Chapter II and the main research question posed in the introduction of this chapter. The participants who volunteered to complete the survey and take part in the interviews were school leaders working with special needs students at both the elementary and secondary level in an urban school district located in southern California. The researcher used a prototype analysis to investigate the results of the survey and interviews, determining the extent to which these

school leaders were inclined towards transformative leadership practices in connection with special needs students. A detailed analysis of their responses on the survey and the interviews is presented in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter presents quantitative and qualitative data findings that bear on the extent to which there might have been differences in principals' and other school administrators' transformative leadership practices regarding their work with special needs students. Some focus was also placed on male and female and White and non-White administrators in the same regard. Six presentations of data sets, three quantitative and three qualitative, reveal that although there are no statistically significant differences between principals and various other administrative-level personnel, there are patterns suggesting that principals may have differing levels of sensitivity and transformative leadership inclination than other administrators in connection with special needs students. This may also be true for male and female administrators, as well as White and non-White school leaders, regardless of their position at a school site. Firstly, the chapter unfolds with emphasis on the quantitative data from the surveys sent out to the school leaders then presents an in-depth analysis of the qualitative data in the form of interviews with administrative school personnel. Lastly, the quantitative and qualitative data are aligned together, allowing for further discussion in addressing the main research question as described in the introduction to this study.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The survey, comprising the chief source of quantitative data (see Appendix A), was designed using *Survey Monkey*, a professional electronic, web-based survey program. The items created for the survey were derived from the core principles of transformative leadership representing the views of several social justice theorists and theories as discussed in Chapter II. These principles which are embedded in the text of

each of the items on the survey includes item 3 (“[engaging] in critical self-reflection regarding student needs”), item 4 (“critically [analyzing] the racial, social, and cultural forms of oppression that may exist at [a] school”), item 6 (“[investigating] issues regarding equity and inequity”), and item 8 (“[assisting] in developing and implementing programs that help make schools more inclusive in design”), all in connection with special needs students. The researcher contacted several school districts in southern California and asked their permission for the study to be approved which only one district granted (see Appendix B). The researcher distributed the survey via e-mail and informed letters of consent (see Appendix C) to a variety of school leaders in the participating district responsible for special education programs (principals, assistant principals, district-level personnel, and special education teachers) at both the elementary and secondary level.

Nine principals (N=9) and 17 other school administrators (N=17) voluntarily completed the survey, first giving their background information (gender, age, race/ethnicity, highest professional degree obtained, year the degree was awarded, institution granting the degree, and current position in education), and then responding to a set of 20 transformative leadership items on a 8-point Likert scale. These ranged from 0 (*not at all characteristic of work related to special needs students*) to 7 (*distinctively characteristic of work related to special needs students*). The researcher calculated the mean scores and standard deviations of each item accordingly and measured them using a prototype analysis. This approach reflected how these professionals thought about transformative leadership practices in relation to their work with special needs students

without having to specifically define these practices for the purposes of completing the survey.

Table 2 represents the first set of quantitative data created from the survey, and is best appreciated if approached in terms of the two sets of information it presents. Firstly, the 20 questions that are listed each touch on a core principle of transformative leadership as discussed in Chapter II. Secondly, we are comparatively shown two groups of school professionals deemed as “principals” and “other administrators.” We can see after quickly scanning the table that principals as a group were smaller in sample size than the other administrators. However, the principals ranked the majority of items, 17 in all, higher on the Likert scale than the other school leaders (items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20) based on the mean scores as displayed.

Table 2

Group Statistics – Principals versus Other Administrators

Survey Items		Position			
		Principals <i>N</i> =9		Other Administrators <i>N</i> =17	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	To what extent do you discuss with school personnel what your vision is for the school in connection with special needs students?	5.89	1.54	4.94	1.78
2	To what extent do you work together with school personnel to improve the functioning of the school and its programs in connection with special needs students?	6.11	1.45	5.76	1.35
3	To what extent do you engage in critical self-reflection regarding student needs in connection with special needs students?	6.11	1.36	5.76	1.39

Survey Items		Position			
		Principals <i>N</i> =9		Other Administrators <i>N</i> =17	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
4	To what extent do you critically analyze the racial, social, and cultural forms of oppression that may exist at your school in connection with special needs students?	6.00	2.00	4.88	1.41
5	To what extent do you ensure that school personnel treat students fairly in connection with special needs students?	6.33	1.41	6.12	1.22
6	To what extent do you investigate issues regarding equity and inequity in connection with special needs students?	5.44	2.46	5.29	2.05
7	To what extent do you build relationships with various stakeholders to promote student achievement in connection with special needs students?	6.22	1.39	6.18	1.33
8	To what extent do you assist in developing and implementing programs that help to make schools more inclusive in design in connection with special needs students?	6.55	0.53	5.75	1.61
9	To what extent do you assume the role of being a resource provider in connection with special needs students?	5.33	2.06	5.59	1.84
10	To what extent do you assume the role of being an instructional resource in connection with special needs students?	5.75	1.58	5.71	1.26
11	To what extent do you assume the role of being a communicator in connection with special needs students?	5.78	1.64	5.82	1.29
12	To what extent do you assume the role of being a visible presence in the school in connection with special needs students?	6.22	1.56	6.19	1.22

Survey Items		Position			
		Principals <i>N</i> =9		Other Administrators <i>N</i> =17	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
13	To what extent do you assist in implementing teaching methods and strategies that accommodate student needs in connection with special needs students?	6.22	0.83	6.00	1.41
14	To what extent do you develop school programs that enhance students' personal, cultural, and sociopolitical knowledge in connection with special needs students?	5.00	2.24	5.24	1.25
15	To what extent do you investigate the impact of curriculum and assessment on student achievement in connection with special needs students?	5.89	1.45	5.47	1.59
16	To what extent do you make partnerships with such agencies as schools, colleges, businesses, and social services in connection with special needs students?	5.56	1.74	4.35	1.84
17	To what extent do you reflect on how students are socialized within a school setting in connection with special needs students?	6.00	1.41	5.24	1.30
18	To what extent do you challenge the abuse of power and privilege in school systems in connection with special needs students?	4.89	2.20	3.35	2.55
19	To what extent do you encourage individual achievement and serving the public good in connection with special needs students?	5.67	1.50	5.29	1.31
20	To what extent do you feel that school programs should focus on liberation, democracy, equality, and justice in connection with special needs students?	5.44	1.74	4.71	1.31

Upon close examination of the data, we find that there is no statistical significance when calculating the differences in mean scores between the principals and other administrators. For example, when looking at the first item which asks, “In connection with special needs students, to what extent do you discuss with school personnel what your vision is for the school?” We see that the mean score for principals is 5.89 versus other administrators at 4.94. The difference between the two scores is 0.95 which is fairly small. The same holds true for almost all of the other items in terms of their narrow spread. This would seem to indicate that both groups are in accordance with one another in rating each item as being distinctively characteristic of work related to special needs students regardless of their position at a school site.

While this pattern of statistical non-significance exists for both principals and other administrators, we see that item 8, which asks if school leaders assist in developing and implementing programs that help make schools more inclusive in design, has the highest mean score ($M=6.55$) and the lowest standard deviation ($SD=0.53$) out of all the other items listed. Based on these findings, we can say that although the data is not statistically significant, the mean score for item 8, when compared to the mean score of other administrators for the same item ($M=5.75$), may indicate that principals believe that it is more distinctively characteristic of work related to special needs students than other administrators. This could also indicate that principals feel that they have more of a responsibility in this area than other school leaders given their various duties at a school site when it comes to accommodating their special needs populations.

As previously discussed, there also would appear that there is a pattern in the data where principals ranked the majority of items higher on the Likert scale than did other

school leaders based on the mean scores. Item 9 ($M=5.59$), item 11 ($M=5.82$), and item 14 ($M=5.24$) are the only ones that yield higher scores among the other administrators. This would seem to suggest that they are more inclined to the higher end of the Likert scale compared to principals in areas such as assuming the role of being a resource provider, assuming the role of being a communicator, and developing programs that enhance students' personal, cultural, and sociopolitical knowledge in relation to students with special needs. However, given the data in general, we might conjecture that principals have more of an inclination to the core principles of transformative leadership in connection with special needs students than those in other positions given their various roles and duties at the elementary and secondary level which are much broader in scope. We cannot say, though, that there is any statistical significance to this analysis.

Table 3 represents the second set of quantitative data derived from the responses on the survey analyzing the differences between male ($N=10$) and female ($N=16$) school leaders. This table does not distinguish between principals and other school administrative personnel. Both the mean scores and standard deviations were calculated based upon the participants' responses for the items on the Likert scale. The researcher combined these with an analysis of variance (ANOVA) test to determine if any of the responses were statistically significant. Items were arranged from the highest to the lowest according to the total mean scores indicating the extent to which both male and female and White and non-White participants believed that each item was distinctively characteristic of work related to special needs students regardless of their position at a school site. A further explanation of this ranking phenomenon will be discussed later in this section.

Table 3

Group Statistics – Gender

	Survey Items	Gender					
		Male N=10		Female N=16		ANOVA	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
1	To what extent do you assume the role of being a visible presence in the school in connection with special needs students?	6.10	1.45	6.27	1.28	.09	.765
2	To what extent do you ensure that school personnel treat students fairly in connection with special needs students?	6.00	1.49	6.31	1.14	.37	.551
3	To what extent do you build relationships with various stakeholders to promote student achievement in connection with special needs students?	5.90	1.60	6.38	1.15	.78	.386
4	To what extent do you assist in implementing teaching methods and strategies that accommodate student needs in connection with special needs students?	6.30	1.25	5.94	1.24	.52	.476
5	To what extent do you assist in developing and implementing programs that help to make schools more inclusive in design in connection with special needs students?	5.22	1.99	6.50	0.52	6.08	.022
6	To what extent do you work together with school personnel to improve the functioning of the school and its programs?	5.60	1.51	6.06	1.29	.70	.412

Survey Items		Gender					
		Male		Female		ANOVA	
		N=10		N=16			
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
7	To what extent do you engage in critical self-reflection regarding student needs in connection with special needs students?	5.80	1.55	5.94	1.29	.06	.809
8	To what extent do you assume the role of being a communicator in connection with special needs students?	5.50	1.58	6.00	1.26	.79	.382
9	To what extent do you assume the role of being an instructional resource in connection with special needs students?	5.56	1.59	5.81	1.22	.00	1.000
10	To what extent do you investigate the impact of curriculum and assessment on student achievement in connection with special needs students?	5.70	1.57	5.56	1.55	.50	.485
11	To what extent do you assume the role of being a resource provider in connection with special needs students?	5.50	2.27	5.50	1.67	.00	1.000
12	To what extent do you reflect on how students are socialized within a school setting in connection with special needs students?	5.70	1.16	5.38	1.50	.34	.565
13	To what extent do you encourage individual achievement and serving the public good in connection with special needs students?	5.70	1.57	5.25	1.24	.66	.423
14	To what extent do you investigate issues regarding equity and inequity in connection with special needs students?	5.80	1.62	5.06	2.43	.71	.407

Survey Items		Gender					
		Male		Female		ANOVA	
		N=10		N=16			
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
15	To what extent do you discuss with school personnel what your vision is for the school in connection with special needs students?	4.70	1.89	5.63	1.59	1.81	.191
16	To what extent do you critically analyze the racial, social, and cultural forms of oppression that may exist at your school in connection with special needs students?	5.40	1.51	5.19	1.83	.09	.762
17	To what extent do you develop school programs that enhance students' personal, cultural, and sociopolitical knowledge in connection with special needs students?	5.50	1.35	4.94	1.77	.05	.828
18	To what extent do you feel that school programs should focus on liberation, democracy, equality, and justice in connection with special needs students?	5.20	1.75	4.81	1.80	.29	.594
19	To what extent do you make partnerships with such agencies as schools, colleges, businesses, and social services in connection with special needs students?	5.10	2.18	4.56	1.67	.50	.485
20	To what extent do you challenge the abuse of power and privilege in school systems in connection with special needs students?	4.70	2.16	3.38	2.63	1.78	.195

Upon close examination of the data, we find that there is no statistically significant difference between males and females when calculating the spread between mean scores. However, item 5 which asks to what extent school leaders assist in

developing and implementing programs that help make schools more inclusive in design, has a p value of .022, perhaps indicating that it is statistically significant ($p < .05$). It also has the highest mean score in the female category ($M=6.50$) and has the lowest standard deviation ($SD=0.52$) among males and females. This was the same item that principals and other school leaders ranked the highest in Table 2 (item 8). In addition, females ranked nine of the 20 items (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 15) higher than men. These items show the biggest spread in mean scores. They are also, perhaps, gender-based in terms of behavior, indicating that female administrators have a higher level of sensitivity and inclination to transformative leadership practices compared to male administrators regardless of their position at a school site. However, there is no preponderant pattern to determine any type of statistical significance.

In addition, the convention of employing .05 as the threshold level of significance means to assume the risk that 1-in-20 times statistical significance will be obtained simply by chance. Multiple comparisons within a study increase the risk of erroneous statistical significance. One available correction that researchers have to control for this risk of experiment-wise Type I error is using Bonferroni's technique, which is to divide .05 by the number of comparisons and using that resulting figure as the value for determining statistical significance (Field, 2005). In this case, .0025 (i.e., $.05/20$ items) becomes the threshold. This is a very conservative approach that can result in increased Type II error; missing real between-group differences. Yet, the benefits of using the Bonferroni's correction in this study were deemed to outweigh its potential risks. Therefore, item 5 is no longer statistically significant but may become more relevant

when the effect size between male and female administrators is discussed later in this section.

Table 4 represents a third set of quantitative data derived from the responses on the survey analyzing the differences between White (N=10) and non-White (N=16) school leaders to determine whether both groups believed that each item was distinctively characteristic of work related to special needs students. Similar to Table 3, it also does not distinguish between principals and other school administrative personnel. Both the mean score and standard deviations were calculated based upon the participants' responses for the items on the Likert scale. An ANOVA test was performed to determine the significance of the differences between White and non-White school leaders. As in Table 3, the items are arranged from the highest to the lowest total mean scores indicating both groups' rating of each item as being distinctively characteristic of work related to special needs students.

Table 4

Group Statistics – Race/Ethnicity

Survey Items		Race/Ethnicity						Total	
		White N=10		Non-White N=16		ANOVA		N=26	
		M	SD	M	SD	F	p	M	SD
1	To what extent do you assume the role of being a visible presence in the school in connection with special needs students?	6.10	1.45	6.27	1.28	0.09	.765	6.20	1.32
2	To what extent do you ensure that school personnel treat students fairly in connection with special needs students?	6.00	1.33	6.31	1.25	0.37	.551	6.19	1.27

	Survey Items	Race/Ethnicity						Total	
		White N=10		Non-White N=16		ANOVA		N=26	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
3	To what extent do you build relationships with various stakeholders to promote student achievement in connection with special needs students?	6.20	1.32	6.19	1.38	0.00	.982	6.19	1.33
4	To what extent do you assist in implementing teaching methods and strategies that accommodate student needs in connection with special needs students?	6.10	1.10	6.06	1.34	0.01	.942	6.08	1.23
5	To what extent do you assist in developing and implementing programs that help to make schools more inclusive in design in connection with special needs students?	6.10	0.57	6.00	1.73	0.03	.862	6.04	1.37
6	To what extent do you work together with school personnel to improve the functioning of the school and its programs?	5.60	1.35	6.06	1.39	0.70	.412	5.88	1.37
7	To what extent do you engage in critical self-reflection regarding student needs in connection with special needs students?	5.80	1.14	5.94	1.53	0.06	.809	5.88	1.37
8	To what extent do you assume the role of being a communicator in connection with special needs students?	5.80	1.32	5.81	1.47	0.00	.983	5.81	1.39
9	To what extent do you assume the role of being an instructional resource in connection with special needs students?	5.60	1.35	5.80	1.37	0.13	.723	5.72	1.34

	Survey Items	Race/Ethnicity						Total	
		White N=10		Non-White N=16		ANOVA		N=26	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
10	To what extent do you investigate the impact of curriculum and assessment on student achievement in connection with special needs students?	5.30	1.70	5.81	1.42	0.69	.416	5.62	1.53
11	To what extent do you assume the role of being a resource provider in connection with special needs students?	5.20	1.99	5.69	1.85	0.40	.531	5.50	1.88
12	To what extent do you reflect on how students are socialized within a school setting in connection with special needs students?	5.00	1.49	5.81	1.22	2.30	.143	5.50	1.36
13	To what extent do you encourage individual achievement and serving the public good in connection with special needs students?	5.20	1.14	5.56	1.50	0.43	.520	5.42	1.36
14	To what extent do you investigate issues regarding equity and inequity in connection with special needs students?	5.60	1.58	5.19	2.48	0.22	.644	5.35	2.15
15	To what extent do you discuss with school personnel what your vision is for the school in connection with special needs students?	4.60	1.78	5.69	1.62	2.57	.122	5.27	1.73
16	To what extent do you critically analyze the racial, social, and cultural forms of oppression that may exist at your school in connection with special needs students?	4.50	1.78	5.75	1.48	3.75	.065	5.27	1.69

	Survey Items	Race/Ethnicity						Total	
		White		Non-White		ANOVA		N=26	
		N=10		N=16		F	p	M	SD
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
17	To what extent do you develop school programs that enhance students' personal, cultural, and sociopolitical knowledge in connection with special needs students?	5.10	2.08	5.19	1.33	0.02	.896	5.15	1.62
18	To what extent do you feel that school programs should focus on liberation, democracy, equality, and justice in connection with special needs students?	4.40	1.71	5.31	1.74	1.71	.203	4.96	1.75
19	To what extent do you make partnerships with such agencies as schools, colleges, businesses, and social services in connection with special needs students?	4.90	1.60	4.69	2.06	0.08	.783	4.77	1.86
20	To what extent do you challenge the abuse of power and privilege in school systems in connection with special needs students?	3.10	2.42	4.38	2.50	1.64	.213	3.88	2.50

When examining the data, we discover that there are no statistical differences between White and non-White school leaders in their inclination towards transformative leadership practices. However, item 2, which asks if school leaders ensured that school personnel treated students fairly, has the highest mean score in the non-White category (M=6.31) and is the highest among all White (M=6.00) and non-White participants for the same item. We may conjecture that non-White administrators have a stronger level of sensitivity and transformative leadership inclination than White administrators regarding the fair treatment of special needs students, feeling empathy, perhaps, for those who are perceived to be different compared to their regular education peers. In addition, non-

Whites have a higher mean score for a majority of items than Whites which include items 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 20. This may indicate that non-White school leaders have a stronger affinity for these issues compared to White school leaders based on their diverse social and cultural backgrounds, enhancing their connection to special needs students. This shows a discernable pattern in the data but it cannot be considered statistically significant.

Confusion may arise when noticing that each of the items appear to change from Table 2 to Tables 3 and 4. All items from 1 to 20 remain the same in each table, but each are arranged according to highest-to-lowest mean score which yield some interesting patterns in the data. For example, item 1 in Table 4 shows the highest mean score obtained for this survey item ($M=6.20$) among males and females and Whites and non-Whites, asking if they assume the role of being a visible presence in the school. Readers will note that the scores descend from that point on with item 2 being slightly lower than the first item ($M=6.19$). This pattern maintains until we see the lowest score for item 20 which asks if school leaders challenge the abuse of power and privilege in school systems ($M=3.88$). This item may have been ranked the lowest because this type of practice is not something that school leaders, regardless of their affinity to transformative leadership practices in connection with special needs students, would engage in regularly, challenging the status quo and, perhaps, risking their careers in the process. In contrast, the first item is something that these school leaders would perform regularly as transformative leaders supporting special needs students with no risk to their respective positions. However, these statements are only conjectures and the data does not bear any statistical significance in either regard.

We may also ascertain from the data in Table 4 that those items which ranked the highest, such as item 1 (being a visible presence in the school, $M=6.20$), item 2 (treating students fairly, $M=6.19$), item 3 (building relationships with various stakeholders, $M=6.19$), and item 4 (assisting in implementing teaching methods that accommodate student needs, $M=6.08$), fit the more traditional roles that school leaders fulfill regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity when it comes to transformative leadership practices in connection with special needs students. Items that were ranked lower such as item 16 (critically analyzing racial, social, and cultural forms of oppression, $M=5.27$), item 18 (feeling that school programs should focus on liberation, democracy, equality, and justice, $M=4.96$), and item 20 (challenging the abuse of power and privilege in school systems, $M=3.88$), are more aligned with transformative leadership practices related to social justice theory based on the terminology and language derived from the literature. School leaders may not be as familiar with these types of prototypical behaviors based on their limited exposure to them throughout their academic and professional training. In essence, we might propose that school leaders, regardless of their gender, race, or ethnicity, may have a stronger identification with those practices reflecting their established roles at a school site than those that are more theoretical in design. However, there is no statistical significance in the data to support this conclusion.

When comparing both male and female school leaders in Table 3 and White and non-White administrators in Table 4, we observe some other interesting patterns in the data. The total number of female and non-White participants are the same ($N=16$) as is the number of male and White participants ($N=10$). The total mean scores for both groups ranks the highest ($M=6.20$) out of all the items listed beginning with item 1

(assume the role of being a visible presence in the school). Also, the mean scores for females and non-Whites for item 1 are identical ($M=6.27$) as are the mean scores for males and Whites ($M=6.10$). Their standard deviations are also the same (females/non-Whites, $SD=1.28$; males/Whites, $SD=1.45$). This, perhaps, indicates that regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity, both groups of administrators share a strong level of sensitivity and transformative leadership inclination about being a visible presence in the school in connection with special needs students, though the data is not statistically significant.

Females and non-Whites also share identical mean scores for item 2 ($M=6.31$), item 6 ($M=6.06$), and item 7 ($M=5.94$). Males and Whites show identical scores for the same items (2, $M=6.00$; 6, $M=5.60$; and 7, $M=5.80$). This may demonstrate that both groups share an affinity for the same transformative leadership practices (treating students fairly, working together with school personnel to improve the functioning of the school and programs, and engaging in critical self-reflection regarding student needs) in connection with special needs students. However, the mean scores for females and non-Whites are higher than those for males and Whites. We could surmise from this data that the former has a stronger level of sensitivity and transformative leadership inclination to these items in connection with special needs students compared to the latter. But because the number of participants are larger in one category (females/non-Whites, $N=16$) than the other (male/White, $N=10$), it is possible that the former were inclined to the higher end of the Likert scale due to their sheer number, not to any social or cultural reasons in regards to supporting special needs students. In either case, the data shows no statistical significance to support this analysis.

It was also noted that there were no statistically significant differences observed in Table 3. However, when effect sizes were considered, some relatively robust between-group differences were obtained. Tests of statistical significance simply indicate the probability of the particular results being obtained by chance and are vulnerable to factors such as samples size. What statistical significance does *not* indicate is whether the effects being measured are either meaningful or important (Field, 2005). Therefore, the mean scores, standard deviations, and sample sizes from Tables 2, 3, and 4 were used to calculate Cohen's *d* and the corresponding *r* value. The results, shown in Table 5, were for between-group differences on each of the items on the survey, categorized by (a) position (principals and other administrators), (b) gender (male and female administrators), and (c) race/ethnicity (White and Non-white administrators).

Table 5

Cohen's *d* and Effect Size

		Position		Gender		Race/Ethnicity	
		(Principals/Others)		(Male/Female)		(White/Non-White)	
		<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>
1	To what extent do you assume the role of being a visible presence in the school in connection with special needs students?	0.02	0.01	0.12	0.06	0.12	0.06
2	To what extent do you ensure that school personnel treat students fairly in connection with special needs students?	0.16	0.08	0.23	0.11	0.24	0.12

		Position		Gender		Race/Ethnicity	
		(Principals/Others)		(Male/Female)		(White/Non-White)	
		<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>
3	To what extent do you build relationships with various stakeholders to promote student achievement in connection with special needs students?	0.03	0.01	0.34	0.16	0.01	0
4	To what extent do you assist in implementing teaching methods and strategies that accommodate student needs in connection with special needs students?	0.67	0.32	0.29	0.14	0.03	0.02
5	To what extent do you assist in developing and implementing programs that help to make schools more inclusive in design in connection with special needs students?	0.19	0.09	0.88	0.4	0.08	0.04
6	To what extent do you work together with school personnel to improve the functioning of the school and its programs in connection with special needs students?	0.25	0.12	0.32	0.16	0.34	0.17
7	To what extent do you engage in critical self-reflection regarding student needs in connection with special needs students?	0.25	0.13	0.1	0.05	0.1	0.05

		Position		Gender		Race/Ethnicity	
		(Principals/Others)		(Male/Female)		(White/Non-White)	
		<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>
8	To what extent do you assume the role of being a communicator in connection with special needs students?	0.02	0.01	0.35	0.17	0.01	0
9	To what extent do you assume the role of being an instructional resource in connection with special needs students?	0.02	0.01	0.18	0.09	0.15	0.07
10	To what extent do you investigate the impact of curriculum and assessment on student achievement in connection with special needs students?	0.28	0.13	0.09	0.04	0.33	0.16
11	To what extent do you assume the role of being a resource provider in connection with special needs students?	0.13	0.07	0	0	0.26	0.13
12	To what extent do you reflect on how students are socialized within a school setting in connection with special needs students?	0.56	0.27	0.24	0.12	0.59	0.29
13	To what extent do you encourage individual achievement and serving the public good in connection with special needs students?	0.27	0.13	0.32	0.16	0.27	0.13

		Position		Gender		Race/Ethnicity	
		(Principals/Others)		(Male/Female)		(White/Non-White)	
		<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>
14	To what extent do you investigate issues regarding equity and inequity in connection with special needs students?	0.07	0.03	0.36	0.18	0.2	0.1
15	To what extent do you discuss with school personnel what your vision is for the school in connection with special needs students?	0.57	0.27	0.53	0.27	0.64	0.3
16	To what extent do you critically analyze the racial, social, and cultural forms of oppression that may exist at your school in connection with special needs students?	0.65	0.3	0.13	0.06	0.76	0.36
17	To what extent do you develop school programs that enhance students' personal, cultural, and sociopolitical knowledge in connection with special needs students?	0.13	0.06	0.36	0.18	0.05	0.03
18	To what extent do you feel that school programs should focus on liberation, democracy, equality, and justice in connection with special needs students?	0.47	0.23	0.22	0.11	0.53	0.26

		Position		Gender		Race/Ethnicity	
		(Principals/Others)		(Male/Female)		(White/Non-White)	
		<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>r</i>
19	To what extent do you make partnerships with such agencies as schools, colleges, businesses, and social services in connection with special needs students?	0.68	0.32	0.28	0.14	0.11	0.06
20	To what extent do you challenge the abuse of power and privilege in school systems in connection with special needs students?	0.65	0.31	0.55	0.26	0.52	0.25

Most of the reported effect sizes were small. For example, the first item which asked the extent to which the participants, regardless of position, gender, or race and ethnicity, assumed the role of being a visible presence in the school in connection with special needs students, the effect sizes ranged from 0.01 to 0.06. The second item which asked the extent to which school leaders ensure that school personnel treat students fairly in connection to special needs students provided effect sizes ranging from 0.08 to 0.12.

A useful reference point for this is Cohen's (1988) assertion that an effect size was small if $d = 0.20$ or if $r = 0.10$. But there were some results that were in what Cohen would maintain to be in the range of medium effect sizes. Item 4, which asked the participants the extent to which they assisted in implementing teaching methods and strategies that accommodate student needs, had an effect size of 0.32 among principals and other school administrators. Item 15, which asked the extent to which the participants discussed with school personnel what their vision was for the school, had an

effect size of 0.30 among White and non-White administrators. The d scores for this item were also high in each of the categories, ranging from 0.57 to 0.64. Other items that ranged in effect size from 0.30 to 0.32 in the category of principals and other school leaders were items 16, 19, and 20. These asked the extent to which the participants critically analyzed the racial, social, and political forms of oppression that may exist at their school, made partnerships with such agencies as schools, colleges, businesses, and social services, and challenged the abuse of power and privilege in school systems. These items resulted in a medium effect, having either an r value of 0.30 or a d score of 0.50 or higher.

In all cases, none of the items had r scores above 0.50. We can surmise that the magnitudes of the effect sizes for each item as presented are consistent in the areas of social psychology and education. However, item 5 which asked school leaders the extent to which they help assist in developing and implementing programs that help make schools more inclusive in design, had a d score of 0.88 in the gender category. This was the highest score among all the categories. Although such large effects would only be found in such fields as sociology, economics, and experimental and physiological psychology, we could say that this particular item indicates an important distinction when comparing it to the other items (Cohen, 1988). Even though it is not statistically significant, it would support the idea that female administrators have a higher level of sensitivity and inclination to transformative leadership practices compared to male administrators regardless of their position at a school site.

It was, though, difficult to discern any pattern in the data. It is interesting to note, however, that items 15, 16 and 20 all had effect sizes in the medium range in at least two

categories as indicated by their *d* or *r* scores. These particular items were more aligned with social justice theory with which the participants may not be as familiar compared to the other items, perhaps explaining the variance in scores. In fact, item 16 had the highest *d* score (0.76) and *r* score (0.36) in the race/ethnicity category compared to the items in the remaining categories. Aside from these items, none of the others showed any similar variance. We could say that the magnitude of effect sizes indicate that the extent to which school leaders engage in certain transformative leadership practices based on position, gender, or race and ethnicity may be more important than others. However, the quantitative findings as analyzed provide a strong indication of the types of prototypical behaviors school leaders engage in when working with their special needs populations as evidenced by the differences in mean scores.

Qualitative Data Analysis

This next section will now describe the qualitative data that was collected for this study in the form of interviews conducted at various school sites in the participating district. The researcher decided that a follow-up to the survey from a select number of participants might yield further insights and provide more depth to the study. As was discussed in the quantitative data analysis section, some school leaders may have differing levels of sensitivity and transformative leadership inclination than others based on their positions of leadership (principals and other administrators). Male and female administrators, as well as White and non-White administrators, may also have varying degrees of sensitivity and transformative leadership inclination in the same regard. The questions for the interviews were derived and summarized from the items listed on the survey, mirroring the practices that were outlined in the literature as described in

Chapter II. For example, the first question which asks, “What are your major roles as a school administrator at your particular site [and] does your role have particular relevance for special needs students?” resembles items 9 through 12 on the survey which asked “In connection with special needs students, to what extent do you assume the role of being a resource provider, an instructional resource, a communicator, a visible presence in the school?” This was done to give the participants an opportunity to elaborate upon these items. Having the responses of this select group provides us a clearer understanding of the prototypical behaviors that transformative school leaders engage in when supporting their special needs learners.

Four out of the 26 participants who completed the survey agreed to be interviewed and provided their contact information. These included an elementary administrator (similar to an assistant school principal), an elementary school principal, a middle school administrator (also an assistant school principal), and a high school assistant principal. Both the principal and elementary administrators were females; the principal identified herself as White and the elementary administrator as Hispanic/Latino (non-White) on the survey. The middle school administrator and the high school assistant principal were both male and identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino (non-White). It is regrettable that so few participants agreed to be interviewed who, if larger in number, may have reinforced some the findings in the quantitative data in regards to its statistical significance. A total of three interviews were arranged with the participants and held at specific meeting sites. The first took place at the elementary administrator’s school site, the second was held in the board room of the participating district with the elementary school principal and the middle school administrator in attendance, and the

third took place at the high school assistant principal's school site. Each of the participants were given a set of instructions based upon a protocol (see Appendix D), including a set of 10 questions derived from the items on the survey. The researcher audio taped all interviews during each scheduled session, posing each question to the participants as listed and then receiving their responses in exchange.

After the interviews were completed, the researcher carefully listened to the responses and transcribed them word for word, including the introduction and the questions, for each set of interviews. These were numbered from one to three, starting with the elementary administrator (Interview #1, abbreviated "EA" in the transcribed responses – see Appendix E), then the elementary school principal and middle school administrator (Interview #2, abbreviated "EP" and "MSA" respectively – see Appendix F), and, finally, the high school assistant principal (Interview #3, abbreviated "HSAP" – see Appendix G).

To organize the data in the most effective way possible, the researcher analyzed the data searching for emerging themes and patterns. This is an approach that allows a researcher to manage, describe, classify, and represent information in a way that makes it easier for both the reader and the researcher to understand and interpret it (Creswell, 2007). It also enables the researcher to create codes based on certain key phrases or words that the participants use in each of their responses and determine particular themes or patterns that emerge from them. From these, the researcher can provide descriptions of patterns or themes representing the authentic voices of the participants, and present an in-depth analysis of the data given using tables for greater emphasis. This approach also

helps the researcher to draw relevant conclusions in relation to the research question and provide a thorough interpretation of the qualitative data as given.

Once the transcriptions were completed, the researcher read these thoroughly and looked for words and phrases that were repeated often, indicating sensitivity to transformative leadership practices in connection with special needs students. These key words and phrases were put in boldface. Next, particular sections of the responses containing these words and phrases were highlighted using color codes to differentiate them (see Appendix H). For example, if the interviewee mentioned anything about “intervention,” their response was highlighted in yellow, incorporating the word in boldface. This was the same with other words and phrases such as “response to intervention,” “communication,” “professional learning communities,” “special needs students,” “equity/accommodations,” “mainstreaming/inclusion,” “community,” and “compliance,” using several other colors. This enabled the researcher to see if any various themes emerged in the data relating to transformative leadership practices that school leaders employed when supporting special needs students.

A summary of these repeated words and phrases and color-coded statements appear in Table 6. These are categorized as “themes;” the color-coded statements are shown as “sample statements.” After examining interviews 1, 2, and 3 in sequence, both the labels and sample statements roughly appear in the order of responses that the administrators provided for each question. Each speaker is identified with their specific response using the abbreviations as previously described. The design of this table is intended to give readers a “flavor” for the responses provided in terms of what

transformative leadership practices these leaders engage in when supporting their special needs students.

Table 6

Interview Themes and Sample Statements

Themes	Sample Statements
1 Importance of Intervention Team Meetings (ITM) and intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EA: “I oversee the intervention team meetings which is the beginning part of when we start to see when students have needs.” • EP: “This particular year, we started our intervention team meeting process. It had been in previous years a student study team and I felt it was important that we reach out to all students so that none of them are left without what they need to reach their potential . . .” • HSAP: “. . . and that’s why we all work with the teachers is to have patience or find intervention instead of just sending them out of the class and try to suspend them and do interventions, call a counselor, call parents, and set up a meeting . . .”
2 Importance of using Response to Intervention (RtI) to support student success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP: “. . .if we feel it’s necessary for either using the RtI model to identify or using assessment to see if the child qualifies for special education and I feel my role in that whole process is being the facilitator . . .” • EP: “. . .the response to intervention . . . having them understand the unique needs of all students if they are going to go to special education or not. Every child has unique needs and we need to look at that . . .”
3 Importance of communication among stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EA: “. . .if all the correct things are at play everybody is communicating and the staff is working as a team, for example, the administrators with the special education teacher with the special education program and the regular classroom teachers, if that’s the case, then equity is obtainable . . .” • MSA: “We’re in the process of making a plan so that we can communicate to teachers what is the process and making sure that they understand there are instructional strategies that they can use to help those students who are having difficulties who are at risk . . .”

Themes	Sample Statements
4 The value of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to ensure collaboration among teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP: “. . .making sure that we’re having professional learning communities meetings. I have right now, on a weekly basis, in which teachers are looking at data to make sure that the children who are having difficulty have access to the curriculum at their level.” • EP: “. . .meeting with the teachers and their PLCs, finding out what they feel their essential standards are and then the pre- and post-tests for each of those essential standards and then assisting the teachers in making sure that the children that are having difficulties [are getting help]”
5 Administrative strategies for meeting the needs of special education/needs students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EA: “. . .that . . . we are meeting the goals at the district level, here at the site level, attending board meetings, listening, looking again in regards to special needs students . . .” • MSA: “. . .I have meetings with the special education teachers and address concerns; also . . . try to be proactive in dealing with parent issues in regards to students receiving the best possible education. . .” • HSAP: “. . .making sure that the teacher is also checking for understanding, have proper lesson plans that are geared to special education students, that they’re deconstructing the standards and word vocabulary for special education students’ understanding. . . “
6 Promoting equity through accommodations and access to resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EA: “The message I think that our principal that I follow in regards to what his message is that they are our students. They are students just like everybody else, they are treated just like everybody else . . . they should be treated, they need to be treated with equity.” • HSAP: “But they have access to all books, transportation, materials, access to buildings, calculators, and educational materials. They also have . . . they are able to be in classrooms with regular education teachers if they can . . . if their disability allows them to. We’re very proactive in making sure that equity is insured.”

Themes	Sample Statements
7 Promoting a sense of belonging of special needs students among the general student population through mainstreaming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EA: “. . . I was a second year teacher and I took it as an opportunity to be a part of mainstreaming an autistic young girl in my classroom. It was an opportunity for me as a classroom teacher and to see the process and be a part of the process and learn what it’s about, work and support parents that really want to mainstream their child so that they can be a part of a regular classroom. . .” • MSA: “. . . I like to see the student work and I see, okay, if it’s a special day class student, at what point can we start mainstreaming them into the regular education class, so they are learning to be with the mainstream.”
8 Promoting a community of learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSA: “. . . In my school, one of the things that I found is the most essential is establishing a relationship with my different staff members because we try to do the same thing as create a community where the kids are learning but the nitty-gritty is that relationship that you have with individual students. . .” • EP: “You know, a lot of times the parents come back and say “Thank you so much.” That totally steers them in a totally different direction than they thought they would ever go and now they have knowledge, now they’re being educated, now they’re involved in another community in which they’re getting support. . .”
9 Ensuring compliance with legal requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP: “Being in compliance as well. My special education teacher and I talk a lot about the legal issues and making sure that we are in compliance, not just with what is right, but what is legally correct . . . Just doing right by the students by making sure you’re in compliance.” • HSAP: “. . . everybody is in compliance with the special needs, the services for the students, and providing any support I can for teachers for their students at the district or state level, more even at the state level.”
Key: EA – Elementary Administrator; EP – Elementary Principal; MSA – Middle School Administrator; HSAP – High School Assistant Principal	

Upon close examination of the coded themes and sample statements, we can see that the school leaders’ responses were related to supporting special needs students in a variety of areas where they felt these students were experiencing the greatest challenges. These included classes (intervention), unique needs (Response to Intervention - RtI),

forms of instruction (communication), access to the curriculum (Professional Learning Communities - PLCs), teacher and parent concerns (special needs students), school access (equity/accommodations), regular education classes (mainstreaming/inclusion), teacher connection (community), and services (compliance). Sample statements from the administrators illustrated the themes that emerged and are presented in Table 6. For instance, in the area of interventions, the high school assistant principal mentioned that “. . . we all work with the teachers . . . to have patience or find *intervention* instead of just sending [special needs students] out of the class and try to suspend them and do *interventions*, call a counselor, call parents and set up a meeting . . .” In regards to RtI, the elementary principal remarked, “. . . response to intervention [allows us to] understand the unique needs of all students if they are going to go to special education or not. Every child has unique needs and we need to look at that. . . .” For communication, the middle school administrator said, “We’re in the process of making a plan so that we can *communicate* to teachers . . . there are instructional strategies that they can use to help those students who are having difficulties who are at risk. . . .” Finally, the elementary administrator said about mainstreaming, “. . . [when] I was a second year teacher [I mainstreamed] an autistic young girl in my classroom. It was an opportunity for me as a classroom teacher [to] be a part of the process and learn what it’s about . . . so that [special needs children] can be a part of a regular classroom. . . .”

We may surmise from these various examples that transformative leaders, regardless of their position, share similar levels of sensitivity and inclination to transformative leadership practices when it comes to meeting the academic and social needs of special needs students to ensure their success in school. We might also observe

that many of the responses for each of the numbered labels relate specifically to the inclusion of special needs students at both the elementary and secondary level. For instance, the elementary principal spoke about the intervention team meeting process (Theme 1) which helped to “. . . reach out to all students so that none of them are left without what they need to reach their potential. . . .” The elementary administrator spoke about communication (Theme 3), stating that if, “. . . everybody is *communicating* and the staff is working as a team, for example, the administrators with the special education teacher . . . and the regular classroom teachers . . . then equity is obtainable.” The principal also discussed the role of PLCs (Theme 4) in which “. . . teachers are looking at data to make sure that the children who are having difficulty have access to the curriculum at their level.”

Other statements containing such words and phrases as “special needs students,” “access,” “mainstreaming,” and “community” also relate to how transformative school leaders have attempted to accommodate their special needs learners through inclusive practices. For example, the middle school assistant principal said in reference to special needs students (Theme 5) “. . . I have meetings with the special education teachers and address concerns . . . in regards to *students* receiving the best possible education. . . .” For access (Theme 6), the high school assistant principal mentioned, “. . . [the special needs students] have access to all books, transportation, materials, *access* to buildings, calculators, educational materials. They . . . are able to be in classrooms with regular education teachers if . . . their disability allows them to.” The middle school administrator pointed out for mainstreaming (Theme 7) that, “. . . I like to see the student work and I see . . . at what point can we start *mainstreaming* them into the regular

education class. . . .” Finally, in the area of community (Theme 8), the middle school administrator said, “. . . my different staff members [and I] create a *community* where the kids are learning but the nitty-gritty is that relationship that you have with individual students. . . .”

Because inclusion represents an important theme regarding transformative leadership practices in connection with special needs students, the researcher determined that key statements made during the interviews should be organized in a table using a similar qualitative case study analysis (Creswell, 2007) as was used for Table 6. This approach would help to illustrate how strongly these statements align with inclusive practices. Several of the statements, however, vary based on how the researcher initially coded them in the previous table. For example, responses containing the words “mainstreaming,” “inclusion,” “intervention,” “equity,” and “accommodations” were considered to be much stronger in connection to inclusion and inclusive practices than those containing “compliance” or “special needs students” which seem more incidental. To differentiate between each of the participants, the researcher separated the statements of the elementary school leaders (elementary principal and elementary administrator) from those of the secondary school leaders (middle school administrator and high school assistant principal). These were arranged from the strongest to the most incidental based on the key words and phrases the administrators used. If one of the participants mentioned “mainstreaming” or “inclusion” in their response, such as the elementary principal (“. . . where is there an area other than P.E. . . . is a strength for this child that they could be placed or *mainstreamed* into a regular education class . . .”) or the high school assistant principal (“I’m totally for *inclusion*, again, if their disability allows them

and lets them . . . be as equal as regular education students.”), this would be placed higher on the chart than a response containing “compliance.” Such as the elementary principal had stated (“My special education teacher and I talk a lot about the legal issues and making sure that we are in *compliance*, not just with what is right, but what is legally correct.”), or the high school assistant principal (“I just make sure that all of the teachers are following up on their IEPs, they’re testing, everybody is in *compliance* with the special needs, the services for the students.”). These latter comments suggest more of a legal obligation to policies and procedures in connection with special needs students and do not necessarily relate to inclusion. The results are displayed in Tables 7 and 8.

Though the statements are arranged in both tables from the strongest to the most incidental, each one reveals how committed these school leaders have been, regardless of their position, gender, race, or ethnicity, in accepting students with special needs. For instance, the middle school administrator who is male and non-White felt strongly about providing accommodations to special needs students, asserting, “You have to know your teacher, you have to know how they’re teaching in the classroom—are they making accommodations or are they demanding that the special education [student] is going to be a regular education [student] and learn like anyone else?” The elementary administrator who is female and non-White believed that “The optimal learning environment . . . it is instruction . . . that directly benefits this individual student [to ensure] that their needs are being met.” The high school assistant principal said in the same way “. . . they are able to be in classrooms with regular education teachers if they can . . . We’re very proactive in making sure that equity is insured.”

However, when comparing the elementary principal's comments in Table 7 with those of the elementary administrator, we find that the principal provided details for all of the nine categories whereas the elementary administrator gave responses for only six of them, missing key statements in the areas of RtI, community, and compliance. The principal's responses in each of the categories were also much more specific and related strongly to inclusion. When discussing mainstreaming and response to intervention, she used such descriptors as "working with that teacher," "figuring out where [special needs students] could be successful in a regular education program," and "making sure that [teachers] understand there are instructional strategies that they can use to help those students . . . who are at risk." The elementary administrator made no mention of response to intervention and said that she worked with an autistic child who was mainstreamed into her class when she was a regular elementary school teacher, but provided no specifics in terms of programs or practices that were currently in place at her school. She spoke about making sure that interventions were implemented and what steps needed to be taken if students were not responding to these regarding assessment and the IEP process, but nothing further. The principal stated clearly how important it was that everyone on the intervention team at the school site knew the special needs students and were involved in their learning.

Table 7

Inclusion – Strongest to Incidental Statements – Elementary School Leaders

Participants/ Statement Themes	Elementary Principal	Elementary Administrator (Assistant Principal)	
Strongest Statements	Mainstreaming/ Inclusion	...where is there an area <i>other</i> than P.E. ... is a strength for this child that they could be placed or mainstreamed into a regular education class, and so just working with that teacher and looking at the data, looking at the IEP, figuring out where they could be successful in a regular education program.	...when I first began as a classroom teacher and started mainstreaming , it opened up my eyes to a whole other world of what was involved with teaching ... I was a second year teacher and I [had] an autistic young girl in my classroom. It was an opportunity for me as a classroom teacher and to see the process and be a part of the process and learn what it's about,
	Equity/ Accommodations	We should all be treated fairly . Now, okay, there may be a child that has some behavioral issues that has a behavior support plan and things may be a little bit different or a child is autistic ... we need to work with them a little bit differently. However, we should all be treated with respect ... we need to as administrators and teachers to make sure that's provided for them.	They are students just like everybody else. ... Probably the only difference is that they have a different way of learning and we have to as a school, as a staff find out what that way is and ensure that it's being implemented and that their needs are being met so I guess as how they should be treated they need to be treated with equity .
	Intervention	I'm very lucky to have an incredible staff from the clerk in the office to my RSP teacher which is a big part of my intervention team. ... everyone knows all of the children so I feel that that assists them in being the best that they can be from the clerk all the way to the special education teacher is involved in their learning.	I oversee the intervention team meetings which is the beginning part of when we start to see when students have needs and I make sure interventions are in place and if ... students are not responding to those interventions then I ensure that the next steps are taken as far as assessment and the IEP process.
	Response to Intervention	I established a committee to try to create some structure in the student study team, put in the RtI model for intervention . We're in the process of making a plan so that we can communicate to teachers what is the process and making sure that they understand there are instructional strategies that they can use to help those students who are having difficulties who are at risk.	-
	Professional Learning Communities	...we're having professional learning communities meetings. I have right now, on a weekly basis, in which teachers are looking at data to make sure that the children who are having difficulty have access to the curriculum at their level.	We have what are called professional learning communities almost weekly and our special education teacher, RSP teacher; she is a part of that. She is constantly communicating with teachers at different grade levels because she has students across the spectrum. . .

Incidental Statements	Participants/ Statement Themes	Elementary Principal	Elementary Administrator (Assistant Principal)
	Communication	We are all there to support that child and make sure that communication with the parent is happening and having that communication with administration, with the school staff, with the special education teacher and with the parent and making sure that it's a continuing process.	. . .if all the correct things are at play everybody is communicating and the staff is working as a team, for example, the administrators with the special education teacher with the special education program and the regular classroom teachers, if that's the case, then equity is obtainable.
	Community	I had some children that were placed in the severely and emotionally disturbed class in the last couple of years and working with the parent so that they could go to the parent trainings . . . That was a huge community effort with the school, with the teacher, making sure that the parents knew what was out there . . .	-
	Compliance	My special education teacher and I talk a lot about the legal issues and making sure that we are in compliance , not just with what is right, but what is legally correct . . . Just doing right by the students by making sure you're in compliance .	-
	Special Education/ Special Needs Students	So, if all of the staff is understanding of the unique needs of all of the children then we can all support them and making sure that they're getting what they need. . .	The optimal learning environment . . . when I use that term, it is instruction of classroom environment that directly benefits this individual student that their needs are being met. The focus is how does this student learn, what does the teacher need to do to ensure this student is learning whether it's doing cartwheels, what is it. A thorough, take-charge action plan of what the student needs.

Table 8

Inclusion – Strongest to Incidental Statements – Secondary School Leaders

Strongest Statements	Participants/ Statement Themes	Middle School Administrator (Assistant Principal)	High School Assistant Principal
	Mainstreaming/ Inclusion	We're in the process of making a plan so that we can communicate to teachers what is the process and making sure that they understand there are instructional strategies that they can use to help those students who are having difficulties who are at risk because we want them to be successful in the mainstream educational program.	I'm totally for inclusion , again, if their disability allows them and lets them in there and makes them feel and give them the motivation that they can do . . . be as equal as regular education students. Right now on campus we have our . . . we try as much as possible with all of our classes, obviously RSP is the closest of inclusion .

Participants/ Statement Themes	Middle School Administrator (Assistant Principal)	High School Assistant Principal
Equity/ Accommodations	You have to know your teacher, you have to know how they're teaching in the classroom – are they making accommodations or are they demanding that the special education is going to be a regular education and learn like anyone else? The other thing is you realize, wait a minute, you're not making accommodations for this one child, how are you making accommodations for those who are regular education students and who have academic skills at the average level and are very bright?	. . . they have access to all books, transportation, materials, access to buildings, calculators, educational materials. They also have . . . they are able to be in classrooms with regular education teachers if they can . . . if their disability allows them to. We're very proactive in making sure that equity is insured.
Intervention	-	. . . we all work with the teachers to have patience or find intervention instead of just sending them out of the class and try to suspend them and do interventions , call a counselor, call parents, and set up a meeting to see how we can [help them].
Response to Intervention	I think teachers need to have an understanding that, which they sometimes forget, that children learn differently . . . So that is something using the RtI models and the universal access . . . is very fantastic . . . it works tremendously. I'm an elementary school teacher, but I worked in the middle school for 6-8 years and elementary teachers have a bigger repertoire and are more open to using a variety of instructional strategies	-
Professional Learning Communities	-	-
Communication	In the RSP model where there is collaboration, it is important that there is communication between the RSP teacher who is going in there and the regular education teacher. Often, IEPs are not shared with the regular education teacher, so you give them what is essential.	My role is to overlook all of those programs . . . make sure we communicate the proper policies and procedures of special education needs for our children at [this] high school.
Community	In my school, one of the things that I found is the most essential is establishing a relationship with my different staff members because we try to do the same thing as create a community where the kids are learning but the nitty-gritty is that relationship that you have with individual students . . . with staff members to help those individual students.	-

Participants/ Statement Themes		Middle School Administrator (Assistant Principal)	High School Assistant Principal
Incidental Statements	Compliance	-	I just make sure that all of the teachers are following up on their IEPs, they're testing, everybody is in compliance with the special needs, the services for the students, and providing any support I can for teachers for their students at the district or state level, more even at the state level.
	Special Education/ Special Needs Students	I want to train my student study team people . . . it's not about just having the set procedures. It's about the human quality, the human understanding; it's about a philosophy, understanding how your staff see special education students .	Usually, when I go into the classroom I want to make sure the students are getting the proper services . . . to make sure that the students get their proper education, making sure that the teacher is also checking for understanding, have proper lesson plans that are geared to special education students .

The principal and the elementary administrator did share some similar comments in the categories of communication, PLCs, equity/accommodations, and special needs students. Both believed that communication between the school staff and special education teachers in conjunction with the site administrators was essential. For example, the elementary principal said, “We are all there to support that child and make sure that *communication* with the parent . . . with administration, with the school staff, with the special education teacher . . . and making sure that it's a continuing process.” The elementary administrator explained, “. . . if everybody is *communicating* and the staff is working as a team, for example, the administrators with the special education teacher . . . and the regular classroom teachers . . . then equity is obtainable.”

They also spoke about how as administrators they worked with their respective staffs through professional learning communities to ensure that they were all supporting special needs students. The principal remarked “. . . we're having professional learning communities meetings . . . in which teachers are looking at data to make sure that the

children who are having difficulty have access to the curriculum at their level.” The elementary administrator said, “We have what are called professional learning communities almost weekly and our . . . RSP teacher . . . is constantly communicating with teachers at different grade levels because she has students across the spectrum. . . .” In the area of equity, they remarked that special needs students needed to be “treated fairly [and] with respect” (principal) or “with equity” (elementary administrator), regardless of their disabilities, and how important it was to understand and meet their unique needs as effectively as possible.

When comparing the middle school administrator’s responses with those of the high school assistant principal in Table 8, the former provided more details for six out of nine categories than the latter. These comprised of mainstreaming/inclusion, equity/accommodations, RtI, communication, community, and special needs students. The high school assistant principal omitted key statements in the areas of RtI, PLCs, and community. For the first two categories regarding mainstreaming and equity, the middle school administrator described how necessary it was that teachers provide accommodations using appropriate instructional strategies so that special needs students could be more successful in the regular education program. He added that if teachers are “. . . not making accommodations for this one child, how are [they] making accommodations for those who are regular education students and who have academic skills at the average level . . . ?” The high school assistant principal gave few specifics in these areas, saying that special needs students had access to learning materials as well as transportation and could be included in the regular education program as much as their disability allowed, but nothing further.

The middle school assistant principal also discussed the importance of using the RtI model and how teachers needed to use a variety of instructional strategies with children who learn differently. He also stressed the importance of creating a community among the school personnel so that they were invested in their students' learning to the fullest extent possible, stating, “. . . the nitty-gritty is that relationship that you have with individual students . . . with staff members to help those individual students.” The high school assistant principal spoke about interventions replacing the need for discipline where other individuals such as the parents or the counselor could be involved to help a particular student having difficulty in school. He added that his role as an administrator was “to overlook all of those programs” regarding special needs students and that the “proper policies and procedures of special education needs for our children” were communicated to all school personnel. He also wanted to make sure that “the teacher is also checking for understanding, have proper lesson plans that are geared to special education students,” but no information in the areas of RtI or community.

Both secondary school administrators believed that communication was essential between the regular and special education teachers and that the proper policies and procedures regarding the IEP process were understood and followed. The middle school assistant principal felt strongly about how school personnel viewed special needs students and that it was more than just having a set of procedures but “about the human quality, the human understanding; it’s about a philosophy . . .” when working with these students. The high school assistant principal spoke about compliance and “providing any support I can for teachers for their students at the district or state level.” Analyzing these comments, it would appear that the middle school administrator may have more of an

inclination to transformative leadership practices than his high school counterpart. This may be especially true given his comments about the way school personnel should view their special needs learners which show a greater degree of sensitivity. Also, he stressed the need for accommodations, not only for special needs students but also those who are unidentified in regular education classes that could benefit from a variety of instructional strategies.

Comparing the responses at both the elementary and secondary level, the elementary principal addressed all of the issues in explicit detail, ranging from mainstreaming all the way to special needs students. The one area that was incidental and did not relate to inclusion was in the community category regarding her efforts in assisting special needs students who were placed in the emotionally and severely disturbed program. She stated that she “[worked] with the parent so that they could go to the parent trainings . . . That was a huge community effort with the school, with the teacher, making sure that the parents knew what was out there. . . .” Given her role as a principal, it could be posited that she assumed more responsibility in these areas than did the other school leaders who had more limited roles at their respective school sites. The middle school administrator was the only participant who addressed the issue of accommodations, not only for special needs students, but those in the regular education program which he felt would allow both groups of students to be academically successful. All four participants stressed the need for school personnel to communicate with one another when working with special needs students, regardless of their disability or placement.

Professional learning communities seem to play a greater role at the elementary level than at the secondary level. Whereas the secondary school administrators made no mention of these, the elementary school leaders felt that they were vital in addressing the needs of special needs learners and ensuring that they were making academic progress. The elementary principal remarked that she and her staff “. . . [made] sure that the children who are having difficulty have access to the curriculum at their level.” PLCs seemed to also facilitate more communication among school personnel where, according to the elementary administrator, the staff and the special education teacher met weekly and ensured that interventions were in place to help the students improve academically. Yet, regardless of their various positions or levels, each expressed a deep commitment to helping special needs students and making sure that they were treated fairly, whether it was through intervention, mainstreaming, or RtI practices among others. They wanted their school personnel to understand the importance of working closely with their students and using different strategies to ensure their needs were being met at a variety of levels. This sense of commitment resonates strongly with inclusion and the principles of transformative leadership as reported in the literature.

Alignment of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

We now focus our attention to aligning the quantitative and qualitative data that was collected for the purposes of this study. Several conclusions have been suggested within the two sets of data in the previous sections. These will be reiterated connecting the quantitative with the qualitative analysis to show the relationship between these findings. This presentation of the data will also help emphasize the varying degrees of sensitivity and inclination to transformative leadership practices which principals and

other administrators, female and male administrators, and White and non-White administrators, have demonstrated in connection with their special needs students. Though most of the data was not statistically significant in the quantitative section, aligning both sets of data will improve our understanding of the prototypical behaviors that each group of participants engage in when working with their special needs students, answering the research question posed at the beginning of this study.

First, going back to Table 2 which compared principals and other administrators, we noted that item 8 on the survey, which asked to what extent school leaders assisted in developing and implementing programs that help to make schools more inclusive in design in connection to special needs students, had the highest mean score ($M=6.55$) among principals and was the highest among principals and other administrators. Though not statistically significant, we said that because the mean score of this item was higher in comparison to the mean score of the other administrators for the same item ($M=5.75$), this indicated that principals believed it was more distinctively characteristic of work related to special needs students than other administrators. Looking at the qualitative data in Table 7, which compared the responses of the elementary principal to those of the elementary administrator, it indicated that the principal provided details for all nine categories from “mainstreaming” to “special needs students,” whereas the elementary administrator gave responses for only six of them. This was also the case when comparing the principal’s comments with those of the middle school administrator and the high school assistant principal in Table 8 who both responded to six categories each. The principal’s responses were more highly detailed and related strongly to inclusion, using such phrases as “mainstreamed into a regular education class,” “there are

instructional strategies to help those students . . . who are at risk,” and “[making] sure that children who are having difficulty have access to the curriculum.” Based on the results of the quantitative data, we can say, perhaps, that although the results for item 8 are not statistically significant, the high mean score combined with the qualitative data show that principals are more prototypically inclined to transformative leadership practices regarding inclusion in connection to special needs students than other administrators.

It was also shown in Table 2 that the principals ranked a majority of items, 17 in all, higher on the Likert scale than the other school leaders. This would seem to support the previous conjecture about principals in comparison to other school administrators. However, the spread between the mean scores of each item for both groups was fairly small as in the first item which was only 0.95. Although not statistically significant, this would suggest that both groups believed each of the survey items were distinctively characteristic of work related to special needs students. Looking at the responses given for Table 6, we noted that the school leaders’ comments were all related to supporting special needs students in a variety of areas. These included intervention, response to intervention, communication, professional learning communities, special needs students, equity and accommodations, mainstreaming and inclusion, community, and compliance. They also used such phrases as “reach out to students,” “[understanding] the unique needs of all students,” “equity is obtainable,” “help those students who are having difficulties,” “students receiving the best possible education,” “treated with equity,” “able to be in classrooms with regular education teachers,” “mainstreaming them into the regular education class,” and “create a community where the kids are learning.” We may surmise from these key words and phrases that transformative leaders at the elementary

and secondary level, regardless of their position, are similar in their inclination to transformative leadership practices in connection with special needs students.

Looking back at Table 3 which compared male and female administrators, there was no statistical significance between them in terms of their inclination to the same transformative leadership practices as listed in connection to special needs students as shown in the differences in mean scores. However, item 5 which was the same as item 8 in Table 2, asking school leaders to what extent they assist in developing and implementing programs that help make schools more inclusive in design, had the highest mean score among females ($M=6.50$) and was the highest among males and females. The elementary school principal who is female was able to provide responses for all nine categories listed in Table 6. In comparison, the male secondary school leaders only provided answers for six of the categories. Also, each of the principal's comments based on the key words and phrases she used were strongly linked to inclusion as previously described in the qualitative analysis.

In addition, the responses of both the principal and the elementary administrator in Table 7 closely mirrored one another, particularly in the area of equity. The principal mentioned that "we should all be treated fairly [and] we need to as administrators and teachers to make sure that's provided for [special needs students]." The elementary administrator said, "They are students just like everybody else [but] they have a different way of learning [and] they need to be treated with equity." The comments of the male secondary school leaders in Table 8 were not quite as similar for the same category. The middle school administrator spoke about accommodations in the classroom and the high school assistant principal spoke about access in terms of books, transportation, and

materials which are somewhat different from the former's statements. This may support the notion that female school leaders are more inclined to transformative leadership practices regarding inclusion than male administrators in connection with special needs students.

It was also the case in Table 3 that female administrators demonstrated a stronger affinity toward certain items on the Likert scale compared to male administrators based on the differences in mean scores. These included items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 15, which asked the participants the extent to which they were a visible presence in school, treated students fairly, built relationships with stakeholders, made schools more inclusive, worked together with school personnel, engaged in critical self-reflection, acted as an instructional resource, and discussed their vision with school personnel. These results may be gender-based in terms of behavior, indicating that female school leaders are more inclined to certain transformative leadership practices when supporting special needs students than male administrators. Looking back at Table 7, it indicated that Professional Learning Communities were something in which the female school leaders at the elementary level were highly engaged in comparison to the male administrators at the secondary level who did not refer to PLCs in their comments for Table 8. The elementary principal spoke at length at how PLCs encouraged teachers to look at data and make sure that children facing challenges had access to the curriculum. The elementary administrator discussed how PLCs enhanced communication between the special needs resource teacher and the rest of the school personnel in meeting the needs of the students. The items that ranked highest among females on the survey could be areas linked to PLCs that facilitate the operations of a school, particularly in connection with special

needs learners. Yet, there is no statistical significance in the quantitative data to conclusively prove this analysis.

When re-examining Table 4, it showed that there was no statistical significance between White and non-White school leaders in terms of their inclination to transformative leadership practices. However, item 2 which asked to what extent school leaders ensured that school personnel treated special needs students fairly, was higher for non-Whites ($M=6.31$) than Whites ($M=6.00$) and was ranked the highest among all the items listed. Both the middle school administrator and high school assistant principal are non-White and referred to this issue in their statements on equity and special needs students as shown in Table 8. The middle school administrator mentioned that it was important to “know your teacher [and] how they’re teaching in the classroom – are they making accommodations or are they demanding that the special education is going to be a regular education and learn like anyone else?” The high school administrator said that he needed to “[make] sure that the teacher is also checking for understanding, have proper lesson plans that are geared to special education students.” The elementary administrator who is non-White also spoke about the fair treatment of students as previously described in her comments about equity in Table 7. However, so, too, did the principal who is White for the same category. This would seem to indicate that regardless of race or ethnicity, school leaders are similarly inclined to the core practices of transformative leadership regarding fairness in connection to special needs students. This may be the case because the principal given her various duties would assume as much responsibility in this area as would the other school leaders. However, in comparing both sets of data, there is not enough sufficient evidence to prove this analysis.

It was also the case in Table 4 that non-White school leaders had a higher mean score for a majority of items compared to White administrators (items 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 20). This could indicate that they have a stronger propensity to these practices than Whites when working with special needs students. However, the non-White administrators who were interviewed did not use most of the language contained in these items, such as “engage in critical self-reflection” (item 7), “being an instructional resource” (item 9), “investigate the impact of curriculum and assessment on student achievement” (item 10), “reflect on how students are socialized” (item 12), “encourage individual achievement and serving the public good” (item 13), “critically analyzing racial, social, and cultural forms of oppression” (item 16), “develop school programs that enhance students' personal, cultural, and sociopolitical knowledge” (item 17), “school programs should focus on liberation, democracy, equality, and justice” (item 18), and “challenge the abuse of power and privilege in school systems” (item 20).

In addition, the total mean scores for Tables 3 and 4 were ranked from highest to lowest according to the gender and race/ethnicity of each of the participants and their inclination to the transformative leadership practices as listed. Items 1 to 4, which asked to what extent school leaders were a visible presence in the school ($M=6.20$), treated students fairly ($M=6.19$), built relationships with various stakeholders ($M=6.19$), and assisted in implementing teaching methods that accommodate student needs ($M=6.08$), ranked the highest. The language used in these items, as previously described, came up frequently in the responses for Tables 7 and 8. This, perhaps, is because these areas reflect the more traditional roles that transformative leaders fulfill when working with special needs students. We might say that the language used for the latter items is similar

to that of social justice theory to which the school leaders may not have been exposed given their academic and professional training. Although the non-White school leaders ranked these items higher than their White counterparts, this may mean that they are more familiar with them, but are not well versed to practice them on a regular basis. However, this is only conjecture based on the findings of both sets of data and is not conclusive.

To conclude this section, we can say that there is a strong relationship between the quantitative and qualitative data in regards to the prototypical behaviors of school leaders and their inclination towards transformative leadership practices in connection with special needs students. There are some variations between principals and other administrators, males and females, and Whites and non-Whites, in terms of their relative inclinations to transformative leadership practices in some areas. This is evident in the area of inclusion where female school leaders were more strongly inclined than male administrators as shown in both sets of data. However, because there is very little statistical significance in the quantitative data from the surveys and the qualitative statements of the school leaders in the interviews generally indicate that they share the same amount of sensitivity to these practices, we can say, perhaps, that there are hardly any differences among different groups of school leaders when engaging in transformative leadership practices in regards to special needs students. They all share the same dedication to meeting the needs of this population in a variety of areas at both the elementary and secondary level.

In light of this conclusion, there may be some issues regarding the amount and type of data that was collected for this study. Though the quantitative data represented a

variety of school leaders at both the elementary and secondary level in the district, totaling a sample size of 26 participants, only four of the 26 asked to be interviewed as a follow-up to the survey. Among these four, there were no secondary school principals and no males who classified themselves as Whites. Many of the conclusions that the researcher has made are based primarily on the quantitative data in conjunction with the qualitative. Without the views of these individuals represented in the qualitative data, it is difficult to show how strong their inclination is to transformative leadership practices compared to those who participated in the interviews. If more participants from the original sample had volunteered to be interviewed, including secondary school principals and White males, this would have yielded results strengthening the conclusions drawn from the data.

In addition, there may have been some bias on the part of the researcher when choosing sample statements from the interviews to describe themes that emerged from analysis of the transcribed interviews as described earlier. Many of the participants' comments did not appear in Tables 6, 7, and 8 because of their length and their relevance to the themes that the researcher derived from the key words and phrases that the participants used. If the researcher had decided to input more of the participants' statements into the tables, it is possible that more themes would have emerged. This would have provided a more thorough analysis in showing the inclination of school leaders towards transformative leadership practices, and would have strengthened the connections between the qualitative and quantitative data. However, based on how the researcher designed, collected, and analyzed both sets of data, the results are fairly consistent in illustrating the prototypical behaviors of school leaders and their inclination

towards transformative leadership practices when working with special needs students at both elementary and secondary schools. If the researcher decides to conduct a follow-up study, these issues will be addressed and rectified to either reinforce or challenge the results derived from this current study.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the findings of the study. The researcher wanted to determine the extent to which principals and other school leaders engaged in transformative leadership practices in connection with special needs students at the elementary and secondary level. This will be reported along with the secondary focus of the study, determining the sensitivity and inclination of male and female administrators and White and non-White school leaders toward these same practices. Connections will be drawn between the research and data that the researcher has collected along with the implications of what was discovered and recommendations as to how this study may impact schools throughout the United States.

Summary

Firstly, there are several examples of school leaders who have applied transformative leadership practices in regards to special needs students at about the same extent regardless of their position, gender, race, or ethnicity. Cochran-Smith et al. (2009) in their study showed that when first- and second-year teachers from a diversity of social and cultural backgrounds were asked about teaching for social justice, they spoke about forming relationships and respect, advocating for their students, and addressing racial inequities. They also believed that it was important to hold students to high expectations, encourage them to succeed, meet their academic needs, and have them think critically. Brooks et al. (2007) investigated the role of bridge people, represented by a multiplicity of school leaders, at an inner-city public high school. The school administrators, teachers, and students met frequently to discuss curricular issues and find teaching strategies that related to their students' needs and cultural backgrounds.

The collection of quantitative and qualitative datum and its subsequent analysis also bears this finding out to some extent. When comparing the responses of principals and other administrators on the survey, the spread between the mean scores was fairly small, indicating that both groups similarly rated each of the items as being characteristic of transformative leadership practices. There were also no statistical differences between male and female administrators and non-White and White school leaders in their rating of these items. It was the case that non-White school leaders did rank the majority of items higher than their White counterparts and that females showed a greater level of sensitivity than males in regards to some of the items on the survey. However, the qualitative data showed that they all had similar concerns about their special needs populations when it came to meeting their needs. In the interviews, each had a deep commitment in ensuring that these learners were treated fairly and that they were provided with interventions if they were mainstreamed in regular education classes or programs. They encouraged their school personnel to work closely with their special needs students and use a variety of teaching strategies to support their learning.

There are, however, some examples when principals, regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity, demonstrated a stronger inclination towards transformative leadership practices than other school leaders when working with special needs learners. Lashley (2007) found that principals responsible for special education programs ensured that they provided their special needs students with the accommodations and the materials necessary to succeed on high-stakes standardized tests in light of NCLB legislation (2001). They also met with their stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and other administrators, to address both student performance and educational and social equity.

Kose (2007) asserted that socially-just learning, which incorporates educational achievement along with developing students' personal, cultural, and sociopolitical knowledge, has needed the backing of principals to allow its full implementation.

Theoharis (2007) discovered that urban school principals from the Midwest eliminated special education pull-out programs and encouraged their school personnel to confront such issues as race, injustice, and inequity as far as their impact on students.

In regards to the quantitative data, the principals who completed the survey ranked the majority of items higher than the other administrators according to the spread in mean scores. They were also more inclined to assist in developing and implementing programs to help make schools more inclusive in design. In the interviews, the principal who is also female provided more details for all the key words and phrases that the researcher identified in the transcribed responses as being aligned with inclusion compared to the other school leaders. This may have been the case because she assumed more of a responsibility in those areas than did the other administrators whose roles were more limited in scope. The same seems to hold true in the literature, particularly in Kose's (2007) example of a female middle school principal who encouraged her school personnel to work with all students regardless of their social, cultural, or racial background. The principal also prompted them to use a variety of teaching methods when supporting their special needs learners.

Secondly, inclusive practices seem to be the catalyst which has compelled both principals and other administrators to engage in transformative leadership practices when working with special needs students. This is an issue that is reported heavily in the literature. For example, Rodriguez et al. (2009) reported that school leaders who have

adopted inclusive practices in their schools, such as maintaining high expectations for all students, treating all students with respect, and building relationships within the school community, have helped to fulfill the moral obligations that schools have to their students. Artiles et al. (2010) stated that school leaders who want to implement inclusive practices need to distribute resources to all students who require them rather than separating students according to ability or racial background. Riehl (2000) asserted that principals who recognize diversity and promote inclusion in their schools encourage their school personnel to work together in finding ways to support the academic achievement of students, particularly their special needs populations.

In addition, Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis (2008) identified principals in the field of inclusive leadership who believed that schools should not segregate kids based on their ability. They purposefully selected curriculum and teaching techniques for their students in administrative programs to foster and sustain inclusive practices. Rodriguez et al. (2009) studied a group of urban elementary principals who created inclusive programs for special needs students at their school sites. These programs consisted of providing students with the necessary accommodations they needed when taking standardized tests and recommending various interventions to their teachers to help improve their academic progress. The results for the qualitative data support these findings, showing that many of the statements the participants gave during the interviews, especially the principal, related strongly to inclusion. They used such key words as “mainstreaming,” “inclusion,” “intervention,” “equity,” and “accommodations” in several of their responses and felt strongly about providing support to special needs students, giving them as much access to the regular curriculum as possible.

Thirdly, transformative learning is a vital component in prompting school leaders to critically analyze their own attitudes and beliefs, enabling them to work with students with special needs, and change school practices that traditionally have been oppressive in nature. Mezirow (1997), Dirkx (2001), and Cranton (2002) asserted that exposure to transformative learning techniques enabled adult learners to challenge their attitudes and beliefs and find solutions to problems affecting schools through self-exploration. McKenzie et al. (2008) reported that leadership students who have developed a critical consciousness have exposed discriminatory practices such as racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism that have been constantly perpetuated in schools. Cambron-McCabe and McCarthy (2005) believed that administrative students who developed a practiced reflexivity by asking themselves such questions as “How is what we’re doing affecting all students?” and “Is what we’re doing privileging one group over another?” were able to effectively address inequities in schools (p. 215).

Ryan and Katz (2007) posited that administrative students who were White and middle class lacked the expertise to handle many of the cultural and social issues affecting their schools. Presenting them with realistic case studies of school dilemmas and having them reflect on these in their writing journals compelled them to critically analyze their own racial and social biases and find solutions to the problems in those scenarios. Brown (2005) in her study of administrative education graduate students of varying professional positions and cultural backgrounds exposed them to a series of transformative learning strategies. The students were required to write cultural autobiographies and keep reflective journals to document their progress. The results

from the study indicated that they were able to transform their preconceptions regarding race, class, culture, and ability as they pertained to students of diversity.

The results from the quantitative data indicate that the participants may have varying degrees of knowledge about transformative learning practices in connection to working with special needs students based on their understanding of social justice theory. When examining the ranking of the survey items based on the total mean scores among male and female school leaders and White and non-White administrators, the researcher found that such items as assuming the role of being a visible presence in the school, treating students fairly, and building relationships with various stakeholders were ranked much higher than analyzing the racial, social, and cultural forms of oppression that may exist at their schools and challenging the abuse of power and privilege in school systems. Non-Whites did rank the majority of items higher than Whites, showing that they may have a stronger affinity for them, perhaps, based on their diverse social and cultural backgrounds. The items could have been ranked based on how regularly these leaders engaged in these types of practices and whether certain practices which challenged the status quo could affect their careers. However, several of the items were derived from social justice theory and the participants may not have been as familiar with these types of practices based on their exposure to them throughout their administrative training. Non-White administrators may be more familiar with some of these items compared to White school leaders but may not have the expertise necessary to apply them effectively when working with special needs students.

Implications

Firstly, school leaders, regardless of their position, gender, race, or ethnicity, may generally feel the same way about transformative leadership practices in regards to special needs students and apply them to the same extent but are limited in their knowledge of social justice theory in connection with these practices. Most of the responses given on the surveys as well as the subsequent interviews showed that school leaders were generally concerned about the way special needs students were treated and needed to be provided with accommodations whenever and wherever possible. They also shared similar positions regarding inclusive practices, using such language as “inclusion,” “mainstreaming,” “accommodations,” and “interventions” among others. They also addressed the importance of communicating with their school personnel on a regular basis, meeting with their school staffs within professional learning communities, and using response to intervention techniques to help students be successful.

However, for real transformative change to occur in school systems, school leaders need to become transformative learners if they want to help their special needs students become successful over the long run. They need to undergo a process where they critically analyze their own attitudes regarding race, class, and ability and use that knowledge to improve their schools. This would enable them to change their habits of mind and points of view when it comes to meeting the unique needs of their learners (Mezirow, 1997). This would also allow them to engage in dialectical thought and discuss with their stakeholders (parents, teachers, students, and district personnel) a variety of solutions in dealing with the vast inequities embedded within school systems (Giroux, 2001; McLaren, 1989). Without transformative learning, school leaders will not

have the intellectual resources necessary to eliminate practices that have continued to marginalize special needs students from the rest of the student population.

Secondly, school leaders who develop and implement programs that make schools more inclusive in design are not only supporting students with special needs but also are increasing the extent to which they are engaging in transformative leadership practices. The research, as well as the quantitative and qualitative data, show that inclusive practices proved to be an important concern among transformative leaders who wanted to ensure that their students, particularly those with special needs, were provided with as much academic support and access to the regular curriculum as possible. Such practices include establishing goals, obtaining resources, improving understandings, changing structures, and improving learning experiences and outcomes for their special needs populations (Riehl, 2000).

In most cases, however, principals were chiefly responsible in ensuring that inclusive practices were implemented at both the elementary and secondary level. The results in both the quantitative and qualitative data also seem to indicate that principals have more of a responsibility in this area than other school leaders. For actual transformative change to occur and be sustainable, leadership must be distributed between principals, assistant principals and administrators, teachers, and students. Boscardin (2005) referred to this approach as “distributive leadership” where school personnel work together in addressing the needs of special needs students and engage in problem-solving methods with their personnel to determine the best forms of intervention possible.

This proved successful in Brooks et al.'s (2007) study of bridge people at McLuhan High school where the school personnel met frequently to discuss pedagogical strategies and intellectual appeals that were relevant to their students' background. They also critically analyzed instructional materials, replacing them when necessary, and engaged in what the researchers called transformative public intellectualism. This involved the active participation of school personnel around a particular issue using critical dialogue and then achieving consensus on a particular course of action. Such a process would have a positive impact on special needs learners, having the backing of the entire school administration in meeting their needs.

Recommendations

School leaders need to learn about inclusive practices that could help benefit their special needs populations and their school communities. They also need to increase their knowledge of social justice theory to make them more effective as school leaders when engaging in transformative leadership practices to support special needs students. For these to occur, school leaders need to be exposed to transformative learning strategies which would improve their frames of reference and points of view in connection with special needs students and other student populations (regular education students and traditionally under-represented students). They also need to dialogue with their stakeholders and engage in problem-solving methods to find solutions to inequities that have marginalized special needs students within school systems.

It is suggested that administrative programs use the strategies reported in the research to address these issues. Local academic institutions and school districts need to provide trainings to school leaders on an ongoing basis to either help them hone their

leadership skills in social justice or obtain the information they failed to acquire at the outset of their administrative preparation. If we want school leaders to effectively meet the needs of special needs children, it is vital that they have firm knowledge of their traditional roles as school leaders and, simultaneously, an understanding of social justice discourse. More than being a visible presence, ensuring that school personnel treat students fairly, and build relationships with various stakeholders to promote student achievement, elementary and secondary school leaders, regardless of their position, gender, race, or ethnicity, need to engage in critical self-reflection; investigate issues regarding equity and inequity; critically analyze the racial, social, and cultural forms of oppression that may exist at their schools; and challenge the abuse of power and privilege in school systems. It is hoped that the combination of these transformative leadership practices will end hegemonic and oppressive systems that have only benefitted the status quo in public education and will ensure the academic success of special needs students in schools throughout the United States.

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APPENDIX A

**Functions of Transformative Leaders Working with Special Needs Students
(Survey)**

1. School Leader Questionnaire

For each of the following, mark the appropriate circle or fill in the requested information. Be assured that all information will be treated as confidential.

1. Your gender:

- ☐ Male
☐ Female

2. Your age:**3. Your race/ethnicity:**

- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
☐ Black/African American
☐ Native American/Alaska Native
☐ Hispanic/Latino
☐ Multi-ethnic
☐ White (non-Hispanic)
☐ Other

Multi-ethnic/Other (please specify)

4. Your highest graduate/professional degree:

- ☐ MA/MS/MEd
☐ PhD
☐ EdD

5. Year this degree was awarded:**6. Institution granting this degree (optional):****7. Your current position in education:**

Assume the role of being a resource provider?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... an instructional resource?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... a communicator?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
... a visible presence in the school?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Assist in implementing teaching methods and strategies that accomodate student needs?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Develop school programs that enhance students' personal, cultural and sociopolitical knowledge?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Investigate the impact of curriculum and assessment on student achievement?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Make partnerships with such agencies as schools, colleges, businesses, and social services?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Reflect on how students are socialized within a school setting?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Challenge the abuse of power and privilege in school systems?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Encourage individual achievement and serving the public good?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feel that school programs should focus on liberation, democracy, equity, and justice?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. We would welcome any additional comments or suggestions.

3. If you would like to participate in a follow-up interview, please provide your contact information (Full name, school address, work/cell phone number, e-mail).

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We appreciate your help.

APPENDIX B

School District Statement of Agreement

II. STATEMENT OF AGREEMENT

In conducting research in the [REDACTED] School District, the researcher agrees to adhere to the following terms and conditions as follows:

- A. Research Activities will remain in compliance with the following Federal Regulations:
 - a. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA: 34 CFR Part 99) which is designed to protect the privacy of a student's education records at all public elementary and secondary schools and virtually all public and private postsecondary institutions available at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/ferpa/ferpa-findex.html>;
 - b. The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA: 34 CFR Part 98) which is designed to protect the rights of parents and students in programs that receive funding from the Department of Education available at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/ferpa/ferpa-findex.html>; and
 - c. The Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct from the American Psychological Association available at <http://www.apa.org/ethics/codeth.html>
- B. All data collected from the [REDACTED] School District must be used for graduate level work at the aforementioned institution, sponsoring entity or agency which seeks to add to research in the field of education and to inform student academic achievement.
- C. Qualitative studies which involve anecdotal data from students require written permission from parents/legal guardians.
- D. Any modifications or amendments to the original proposal must be submitted in writing to the [REDACTED] School District Instructional Services Division Office of Research, Testing, and Accountability.
- E. The researcher(s) agrees to submit an abstract and executive summary of the findings to the [REDACTED] School District Instructional Services Division Office of Research, Testing, and Accountability.

By signing below, you are indicating that you agree to abide by the terms of this agreement.

Signature of Researcher/Principal Investigator	[REDACTED]	Date	10/27/10
Immediate Supervisor Signature	[REDACTED]	Date	10/27/2010
Director of Research and Evaluation	[REDACTED]	Date	11/15/10
Assistant Superintendent of Instruction	[REDACTED]	Date	12-2-10

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES DIVISION- OFFICE OF RESEARCH, TESTING, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Letter for Transformative School Leaders Working with Special Needs Students

Purpose and Procedures

We are interested in your knowledge of transformative leadership principles and their relationship to supporting students with special needs. Transformative leadership is a concept that addresses the impact of inequality and discrimination in schools and prompts school leaders to help students achieve despite these barriers. For this study, we would like you to do the following:

- Rate the extent to which a series of behaviors and/or activities is characteristic of your work with these students on the attached survey. This should take about 5-10 minutes to complete;
- You may be asked to participate in a series of interviews based on your responses;
- Interviews (to be audio-recorded) will be conducted at the interviewees' school sites and/or offices for approximately 1-2 hours per session;
- The data from the surveys and interviews will be collected over a period of 4-8 weeks.

Your help in this endeavor is greatly appreciated.

Risks

The risks for you to participate in this study are minimal. However, if you are uncomfortable at any time during the study you can schedule a time to meet with this researcher about your concerns.

Benefits

While participation in this study may be of no direct personal benefit to you, the results of this study are intended to determine how the key principles of transformative leadership support the needs of special education learners. The anticipated benefit of the research is that other school leaders and officials who read the results of the study will apply these principles at their school sites and provide students with special needs greater opportunities to be academically successful.

Participants Rights

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to choose what information you want to reveal. You may decline to answer questions or items at any time.

Confidentiality

Please be advised that all information will be treated as confidential and will not be discussed or shared with anyone who is not involved in the study. You have the right to withdraw at any time you deem necessary. Your names will not be on the survey or subsequent interviews. Each will be assigned a number for data collection purposes. Audio taping will be used in the interviews and will be kept safe in an undisclosed location. All identifying material will be purged when quotes or case examples are used in the presentation or publication of study results.

Cost and Reimbursement

There is no cost to you for participating in the study, nor will you be paid.

Impartial Third Party Contact

If you wish to contact an impartial third party not associated with this study regarding any question or complaint you may have about the study, you may contact Dr. Catherine Salmon, University of Redlands, Department of Psychology, at (909) 748-8672 for information or assistance. Otherwise, you may contact me at [REDACTED] (gregory_minton@redlands.edu) or Dr. Alayne Sullivan at (909) 748-8798 (alayne_sullivan@redlands.edu).

Informed Consent Statement

I have read the contents of the consent form and have listened to the verbal explanation given by the investigator. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I hereby give voluntary consent to participate in this study. Signing this consent document does not waive my rights nor does it release the investigators, institution or sponsors from their responsibilities. I may call or contact Greg Minton or Dr. Alayne Sullivan if I have additional questions or concerns. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Signature of Subject

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX D

Transformative Leadership and Special Needs Students Protocol and Interview Questions

Introduction

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. We are interested in your knowledge of transformative leadership principles and their relationship to supporting students with special needs. Transformative leadership is a concept that addresses the impact of inequality and discrimination in schools and prompts school leaders to help students achieve despite these barriers. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to choose what information you want to reveal. You may decline to answer questions or items at any time. Please be advised that all information will be treated as confidential and will not be discussed or shared with anyone who is not involved in the study. Your name(s) will not be on the survey you have previously taken or during the interview. Audio taping will be used in the interview and will be kept safe in an undisclosed location. All identifying material will be purged when quotes or case examples are used in the presentation or publication of study results.

I'm interested in knowing all of your thoughts in response to the questions that are posed. Also, if other thoughts occur to you outside the strict focus of the questions, please feel free to voice those thoughts. (Feel free, as well, to respond to comments that others make.) The questions are posed as a basis to prompt your thoughts about leadership and special education students; anything you can add that would inform this focus would be great for you to discuss.

Questions

1. a) What are your major roles as a school administrator at your particular site?
 b) Does your role have particular relevance for special needs students?
2. What do you see as the ideal classroom learning environment for special needs students? What elements should be evident?
3. How do you work together with your school personnel to ensure the educational progress of special needs students on a regular basis?
4. What message do you communicate to your staff about how special needs students should be treated?
5. What are your views on equity and inequity in regards to special needs students?

6. How do you work and communicate with your various stakeholders in the school community (parents, teachers, school board members, district officials, etc.) in regard to the educational needs of special needs students?
7. What are your views on inclusion (mainstreaming of students with special needs in regular education classes) and is this being implemented for special needs students?
8. In your role as a school leader, how important is it, in your opinion, to closely examine and shape curriculum and assessment in regards to the educational needs of special needs students?
9. What partnerships have you made with various outside agencies to support student achievement and growth for special needs students?
10. How do you balance your role as an educational leader while, at the same time, investigate issues that pertain to meeting the academic needs of special needs students?

APPENDIX E**Interview #1 – Elementary Administrator****EA - Elementary Administrator**

G: All right, I'm starting my first interview this morning on February 22, 2011, at an elementary school in an urban southern California school district. Thank you for participating in this study . . . I really appreciate it. Let's start with the first question:

1. a) What are your major roles as a school administrator at your particular site?

EA: I am what's called an elementary administrator which is the equivalent to an assistant principal. My major role is to oversee, to work in tandem, obviously, with the school principal and, at the same time, work as a partner with him in overseeing all categorical budgets and funding, put into play the vision and the mission of our school, how we are going to use our funding and work together with our leadership team to make sure that those funds are used in order to meet our vision for the year.

b) Does your role have particular relevance for special needs students?

EA: Yes, because as I said I work in partnership with the school principal and they're part of our school, they are our students and what I do as well is I oversee the **intervention team meetings** which is the beginning part of when we start to see when students have needs and I make sure interventions are in place and if those interventions don't . . . students are not responding to those **interventions** then I ensure that the next steps are taken as far as **assessment** and the IEP process.

2. What do you see as the ideal classroom learning environment for special needs students? What elements should be evident?

EA: The ideal classroom learning environment for special needs [students] is an optimal learning environment, depending on whatever their disability is or their needs are is that it's meeting their individual needs in a classroom setting just like everybody else. Elements that should be evident are teachers working with these students again to meet their individual needs, teacher's knowledge of the student's background, what their needs are, where they're coming from, IEP information, all of that is crucial. Also ideal is good **communication** with the regular classroom teacher if that's the case, so there's a correlation to what's happening, for example, in the RSP classroom and what is happening in the regular classroom.

3. How do you work together with your school personnel to ensure the educational progress of special needs students on a regular basis?

EA: Constant monitoring, making sure that teachers are monitoring. We have what are called **professional learning communities** almost weekly and our special education teacher, RSP teacher, she is a part of that. She is constantly communicating with teachers at different grade levels because she has students across the spectrum and there is always that constant communication to make sure that they are growing, that they are also making progress, that it is a focus and that they're a part of the educational plan here at this school.

4. What message do you communicate to your staff about how special needs students should be treated?

EA: The message I think that our principal that I follow in regards to what his message is that they are our students. They are students just like everybody else, they are treated just like everybody else. Probably the only difference is that they have a different way of learning and we have to as a school, as a staff find out what that way is and ensure that it's being implemented and that their needs are being met so I guess as how they should be treated they need to be treated with **equity**.

5. What are your views on equity and inequity in regards to special needs students?

EA: My views on equity. I think that it could be . . . it's a very . . . there's a very fine line as to how special needs students could have inequity. However, again, if all the correct things are at play everybody is **communicating** and the staff is working as a team, for example, the administrators with the special education teacher with the special education program and the regular classroom teachers, if that's the case, then equity is obtainable and, but like I said it's very easy to . . . for special needs students not to be treated with **equity**. For example, here at our school we have our RSP teacher and she is always ensuring that these students are being treated with **equity** . . . there are no excuses . . . they have the same expectations just like everybody else; however, there is a different way, to maybe, for them obtaining these expectations.

6. How do you work and communicate with your various stakeholders in the school community (parents, teachers, school board members, district officials, etc.) in regard to the educational needs of special needs students?

EA: Well, I'm going to start at the school site. It's just **communication** constant. I work in tandem with our RSP teacher, with the regular classroom teachers, with our school psychologist. He's a go-getter; he's very proactive and it just doesn't stay with just if they're struggling academically. If we find other things, we try to work together to find resources for them, parents, constant **communication**, like I mentioned earlier, our RSP teacher . . . she's very proactive. We'll get together; we'll have meetings, herself, the

regular classroom teachers and I and we'll call parents if the expectations aren't being met. She really sees the IEP in regards to the parent as a contract they also have a part in this and it's calling parents at home having meetings, we have special addendum meetings if there are issues and we work as a team to make sure that students are on their way to meeting their goals and objectives. In regards to school board members and district officials, it's following what the protocols are ensuring that we're aware of what it is that . . . we are meeting the goals at the district level, here at the site level, attending board meetings, listening, looking again in regards to **special needs students** like I mentioned. There's a lot of room for error, but if there's a lot of **communication** with these stakeholders then that shouldn't happen.

G: Just out of curiosity, how many resource teachers do you have here?

EA: We have one resource teacher and we have two instructional aides that are in there with her.

G: And how many students does she have?

EA: She has probably on a regular . . . I would say when you walk in maybe about twelve and then they have a different schedule. Some of them are in there for ELA; some of them are in there for math so it's give or take more than that.

7. What are your views on inclusion (mainstreaming of students with special needs in regular education classes) and is this being implemented for special needs students?

EA: My views on it go way back. When I first started teaching . . . I believe I was a second year teacher and I took it as an opportunity to be a part of **mainstreaming** an autistic young girl in my classroom. It was an opportunity for me as a classroom teacher and to see the process and be a part of the process and learn what it's about, work and support parents that really want to **mainstream** their child so that they can be a part of a regular classroom. I completely support it when it is something that will help a student, when it again is the optimal learning environment and also to give them that opportunity to experience a regular education class and again I think it is being implemented for **special education students** but I think people hesitate . . . classroom teachers because depending on what the situation is. It can be difficult but there is a lot of training out there . . . there's a lot of professional development, there's a lot of experts that can help and make this a possibility.

G: I know that this might be getting back to another question but what do you see as the optimal learning environment?

EA: The optimal learning environment . . . when I use that term, it is instruction of classroom environment that directly benefits this individual student that their **needs** are being met. The focus is how does this student learn, what does the teacher need to do to

ensure this student is learning whether it's doing cartwheels, what is it. A thorough, take-charge action plan of what the student needs.

8. In your role as a school leader, how important is it, in your opinion, to closely examine and shape curriculum and assessment in regards to the educational needs of special needs students?

EA: I think it's crucial and it's very important here. I work very closely with my principal and I think that's what works really well here. Here at our school we have an RSP program . . . it's a pull out. These students have to participate in curriculum and assessment that everybody else gets and it's important to ensure that their needs are not overlooked when we are making decisions as a staff, as a leadership team to ensure that this is monitoring them in an accurate way as far as the assessment used for our **special needs students** or even prior to them becoming **special needs students**. That for me has been a big learning experience this year. I've been working really closely with our school psychologist and he's actually been showing me what these **assessments** actually are . . . some of the scales that are used . . . it's been a big focus for me this year. I think it's very important so that I'm aware and I know how these **assessments** are administered, what results they acquire because these are the results and **assessments** that are used to determine where they're headed.

G: What types of assessments are used in particular when the psychologist is testing the students?

EA: He . . . uses the BASC scales for the parents, for the teachers. That's been something I've really learned a lot about because we have a lot of students that have a lot of behavioral issues and it's not necessarily academic which was a big eye-opener for me. I know they do a lot of **assessments** in regards to reading fluency, language arts, and math to determine where they are . . . that there's IQ . . . intelligence **assessments** . . . there's a huge spectrum of assessments that are used.

9. What partnerships have you made with various outside agencies to support student achievement and growth for special needs students?

EA: I think as far as partnerships, our school psychologist this year . . . he is just really resourceful . . . he has a lot of resources whether it be pre-counseling services, through the county, local agencies, when we have our **intervention team meetings** and I now have a huge resource where I can recommend to parents . . . so it's something that's in development for me as far as partnerships go.

10. How do you balance your role as an educational leader while, at the same time, investigate issues that pertain to meeting the academic needs of special needs students?

EA: Well, it's all part of my role as an educational leader. I am very fortunate that I work with a principal, he gives me a lot of room for growth but he also gives me a lot of

guidance and we work very well as a team. Part of the balancing in there . . . it's just part of what I need to do . . . I really am a big part of the **intervention team meetings**. I'm here at the school with my principal and with our team and it's just making sure that it's a priority. Whether I balance it or not, it's a big priority. We have a lot of students here whether they're **special needs** or not we just have a lot of students that have a lot of needs. The balancing act is working well with my principal and staff and keeping it as a focus and as a system in place.

G: All right, those are all the questions that I had. Is there anything else you would like to add?

EA: One thing that I wanted to add was when I first began as a classroom teacher and started **mainstreaming** that **[special needs]** student, it opened up my eyes to a whole other world of what was involved with teaching, that it just wasn't just your regular student . . . everybody has needs. It just . . . opened up my eyes to the world of special education and **special needs** students and also to see how different types of programs are put into place. Before, I used to be a firm believer in that pull-out programs were not the best for our students but just being here at this school and watching our pull-out program going in there and seeing how individualized the instruction is I really feel it works. Also, one of the things that I didn't get to mention was I've been a part of watching students that have **special needs**, that maybe the RSP program is not the solution, maybe a special day class. This year we had three students that were recommended for special day class. It felt good to be part of a process that worked, that got students to where they needed to be and to work with those parents and see and talk to them during the process and after the process and seeing how they saw a difference for their child so in that sense I felt that I had made a difference sticking to the process and the procedures so like I've mentioned these last two years have been a huge growing experience for me. I believe three of those students . . . we just started the **ITM process** last year and now they're in a special day class in what I consider to be the optimal learning environment for them.

Going back to the **equity and inequity** like I mentioned there's a lot of room for error and I can be honest and say when I think of **inequity**, I don't just mean the classroom, I'm talking about parent notification, getting information to parents on time, following the correct procedures, there's so much room for error because there's a lot to learn and when you're new, all these things are just spiraling around you, you got to make yourself aware. It's been a huge learning experience and it's been a big focus for me these past two years and I think that's all I wanted to add.

G: Thank you very much for your time.

APPENDIX F

Interview #2 – Elementary School Principal and
Middle School Administrator

EP – Elementary School Principal

MSAP – Middle School Administrator

G: Thank you for attending today. And again thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. We are interested in your knowledge of transformative leadership principles and their relationship to supporting students with special needs. Transformative leadership is a concept that addresses the impact of inequality and discrimination in schools and prompts school leaders to help students achieve despite these barriers. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to choose what information you want to reveal. You may decline to answer questions or items at any time. Please be advised that all information will be treated as confidential and will not be discussed or shared with anyone who is not involved in the study. Your name(s) will not be on the survey you have previously taken or during the interview. Audio taping will be used in the interview and will be kept safe in an undisclosed location. All identifying material will be purged when quotes or case examples are used in the presentation or publication of study results.

1. a) What are your major roles as a school administrator at your particular site?

EP: I can start at the elementary level. This particular year, we started our **intervention team meeting** process. It had been in previous years a student study team and I felt it was important that we reach out to all students so that none of them are left without what they need to reach their potential and training the teachers on what an intervention team meeting was, giving them some professional development on strategies to use with children that are having difficulties in class, including those with special needs, reaching the grade level standards. Also, having **response to intervention**, different tiers in which I started a classroom rotation, including a small group of students half an hour each day – we call it universal access – I’ve never taught in middle school; I’m not sure how much this goes to middle school – universal access: thirty minutes a day in which the lower group is a smaller group working on whatever that group needs at that particular time and making sure that we’re having **professional learning communities meetings**. I have right now, on a weekly basis, in which teachers are looking at data to make sure that the children who are having difficulty have access to the curriculum at their level. That’s a continuing process and then we go to tier 2 in which they’re pulled out of class with an intervention specialist and then at that time if they’re still not progressing at the rate at which we feel is appropriate . . . and all along the way we’re having these **ITM meetings** to make sure we’re keeping in touch with the parents and the teacher . . . and then at that point if we feel it’s necessary for either using the **RtI model** to identify or using assessment to see if the child qualifies for special education and I feel my role in that

whole process is being the facilitator making sure that's going on, making sure the teachers and the staff, the parents are all educated in what's going on there.

MSA: I am a middle school administrator or assistant principal. My role is two parts. One, I take the lead of the other administrators in working with my special education teachers and the special education department. One of the things that I do is I review IEP plans, I sit in at almost all of the IEP meetings. I have meetings with the special education teachers and address concerns; also, I am the liaison with the district office with the special education department when they have concerns . . . try to be proactive in dealing with parent issues in regards to **students** receiving the best possible education. In regards to discipline, for instance, I make sure that I have behavior support plans of all my students and I have a notebook with my behavior support plans, so I know my individual students, who they are and what their issues are. If they reach five or six days of suspension, I immediately call my case carrier and a behavior support plan is written and I make sure that I'm on that meeting, too, and get the parents there. I attend the special education trainings that the county offers or the district offers to make sure that were giving them the best possible education and, you know, those relationships with the special education coordinators here to try and work out any little kinks or details.

In aspects to what she's talking about . . . I'm new to the school site . . . we have a student study team. It needs some refining and I established a committee to try to create some structure in the student study team, put in the **RtI model for intervention**. We're in the process of making a plan so that we can **communicate** to teachers what is the process and making sure that they understand there are instructional strategies that they can use to help those students who are having difficulties who are at risk because we want them to be successful in the **mainstream educational program** and unlike some teachers sometimes they immediately . . . always special ed., you need to test them . . . and it's not fair for the students. I want to train my student study team people . . . it's not about just having the set procedures. It's about the human quality, the human understanding, it's about a philosophy, understanding how your staff see **special education students**, how do they see the process. At some schools, for instance, teachers tell the parents, "oh, just write a letter and have them tested." Well, that's not a benefit to the teacher; that's not a benefit to the student; it's not a benefit to anyone if you don't work **together**.

So those are two area aspects that were doing. For instance, in my school, we had an increase in autistic students which is something that's happening across the nation and you have these parents that have these advocates or have these organizations and they're coming in under the impression that their kids can be **mainstreamed** and be as successful as anyone else and that they should be able to do everything. So, and then you have the teachers who are thinking, wait a minute, they're not like everyone else, so we arrange with the county and with our district office for someone to come in to do a training for our teachers. We're letting them know, hey, this is coming into our schools; we have to deal with it, we have to make them successful, we need to work *with* the parents, *with* the students . . . having that **communication**. So that has been working well. I think the key in this is the administrator and the teacher and being in contact with these parents of special education [students] because it could turn ugly very quickly.

EP: I saw that issue with the teachers, seeing it as “oh, go to special ed.” The **RtI model** and the **ITM** being put in place has helped that part of it because it’s not just having the **RtI model in place** and the **ITM**, it’s educating everyone at that time . . . that process is helping them to understand a lot more. I see my teachers coming to meetings more prepared and more knowledgeable when they speak with the parents because of all that we’ve been doing so I think that will definitely help.

MSA: And another thing, I think teachers need to have an understanding that, which they sometimes forget, that children learn differently. We all talk about it but in practice, it’s totally different. Just because you put them in the front of the classroom and just because you give them a notebook and teach them Cornell notes . . . that doesn’t necessarily mean that that child will be successful. You have to change your approach to providing good input, good modeling, guided practice with kids coming in and so on. So that is something using the **RtI models** and the universal access . . . is very fantastic . . . it works tremendously. I’m an elementary school teacher, but I worked in the middle school for 6-8 years and elementary teachers have a bigger repertoire and are more open to using a variety of instructional strategies.

EP: But I’ve seen a big change just from starting that, the **response to intervention . . . having them understand the unique needs of all students** if they are going to go to **special education** or not. Every child has unique needs and we need to look at that and I see it a bit different coming from a school with an SDC program I was a lot more involved. I’m a lot more involved in the intervention piece at my site because we don’t have the SDC. At my last site, I was a lot more involved with the IEP . . . I go to every IEP . . . we don’t have as many because we don’t have the SDC, but I have to say that at the three years I was at the other site I was in the classroom at that SDC classroom on a daily basis talking to . . . we had actually four aides because we did have several children that were autistic and with the parents almost on a daily basis talking to them and having that **communication**. This year, there’s not that same need because the children aren’t as needy with their special ed.

G: Thank you. I think you’ve already answered this: “Does your role have particular relevance for special needs students?” I think that’s been covered.

2. What do you see as the ideal classroom learning environment for special needs students? What elements should be evident?

EP: Well, it depends on the student’s unique needs or weaknesses. It might be a child that has attention deficit may need something different from a child that’s autistic so the teacher needs . . . what needs to happen is whatever each child’s unique needs are the teachers need to be trained in how to reach those needs and in that then setting up the classroom environment that would best meet that child’s needs.

MSA: In regards to specific special education students, we need to look at the special day class and we need to look at the RSP class and in our school we use a collaboration

model for RSP. In the RSP model where there is collaboration, it is important that there is **communication** between the RSP teacher who is going in there and the regular education teacher. Often, IEPs are not shared with the regular education teacher, so you give them what is essential. One of the things that I have my teachers do is [fill out] an IEP at-a-glance [form] so the RSP teacher writes down what is the service that they are receiving that they need, and then, what are the instructional strategies that would strengthen those weak areas where the teacher understands how to better address those needs of those RSP students. In regard to special ed., my ideal is a classroom where California state standards are being taught and they're breaking them down to prepare them at the level that they need to be learning as a grade level. Sometimes in **special education classes** the teacher was teaching third grade level material and they're in seventh or eighth grade and so they need to increase their rigor. They need to be preparing them for the CST and the same standards and difficulty of challenges . . . maybe not 20 problems but maybe one-fourth but the rigor needs to be there and they need to scaffold and walk them through using visuals, kinesthetic learning, and auditory and teaching them learning strategies.

3. How do you work together with your school personnel to ensure the educational progress of special needs students on a regular basis?

EP: I'm very lucky to have an incredible staff from the clerk in the office to my RSP teacher which is a big part of my **intervention** team. We are working on being a community in which we assist all of the children so we have one child that has an aide with her three hours a day so everyone knows all of the children so I feel that that assists them in being the best that they can be from the clerk all the way to the special education teacher is involved in their learning. So, if all of the staff is understanding of the unique **needs** of all of the children then we can all support them and making sure that they're getting what they need, be it from a child that needs to come into my office right into the nurse's office every day because they have a medical need. We are all there to support that child and make sure that **communication** with the parent is happening and having that **communication** with administration, with the school staff, with the special education teacher and with the parent and making sure that it's a continuing process.

MSA: In my school, one of the things that I found is the most essential is establishing a relationship with my different staff members because we try to do the same thing as create a **community** where the kids are learning but the nitty-gritty is that relationship that you have with individual students . . . with staff members to help those individual students. For instance, I have an autistic student who just came in. The parent came in fighting for her rights and stuff. Well, I'm okay with the parent doing that but what is best for this child. He's autistic, he had some difficulty. I made sure that my security knew who he was, what his **needs** are, where he would be lost, where he would need help, how to guide him, what to do if he can't control him and I tell them you contact me on the radio, I'll get him . . . he'll follow my directions. So, all my security, they know my "Christian," know of my kids who have epilepsy, who have grand mal seizures and so on, they come to me and tell me, hey, this is what happened . . . we need someone to supervise him, I can't do it today, can you help me and I can arrange for someone else to

back him up, letting parents know that you genuinely care for all of the issues that arise or when they do arise, you have their support and you'll have their backing and their confidence. Like the law says, when the parents are not there, we are their parent. So, that's my philosophy and my belief . . . I am their parent. So, I will take care of them as if they were my own kid.

4. What message do you communicate to your staff about how special needs students should be treated?

EP: It shouldn't be anything that's . . . that you're divulging anything private or anything that's personal about the child but to the point where you're going to make sure that that child is being taken care of and their **needs** are being met. I know that even when I was a teacher – I taught **special education** – the children that would go out on the playground that were mine in my classroom. I would make sure that whoever was going to be at yard duty with those children knew what their **needs** were, especially the autistic children because one little thing could set them off. So, I would have to . . . like a mini training or just talking to the teachers about this is what's going to happen or if you do this, this is how . . . this is when you need to come get me in the classroom so that they knew the children and that did work and actually the teachers became bonded with the kids because then they got to know them a little bit better and that they would look out for them, so . . . and **communicating** with the staff about the children that have unique needs. The PLCs, the Rtl, and the ITM help immensely with **communicating** with all of the staff members what the unique needs are of every child, even if it's the clerk that's scheduling the meeting . . . a lot of times, I have to go to the clerk and say, "well, in this meeting, this person, this person, and this person has to attend and this is why." Then they have a little bit of knowledge of that child as well . . . and then they know a little bit more how to handle what's going on with that child for that day.

MSA: And when you look at having been an elementary school administrator and being an elementary teacher and being at secondary, there is a difference in your staff – very different – and as an administrator, you have to be aware of how open they are to help. The elementary school level, teachers and staff members are more open. I think even classified people are more open to support the **special education students** and sometimes special education teachers . . . you have to get teachers to buy in. In my school, for instance, you have an MH class. I always talk to the teacher and he would purposely have the kids go have breakfast at the same time that the regular education kids would be having and we **communicated** to the kids, you know, we need to help these kids and we had regular education students who would walk the MH kids to the cafeteria and if they were even having some trouble misbehaving, the kids would not make fun of them . . . they were always careful, so it's how the leader needs to do the walk, not only do the talk, you've got to do the walking, you *have* to model it, and sometimes you have to verbally say, look, this kid, this student, is just like any of you and has the same rights and you need to not mess with him just like we do with someone else.

5. What are your views on equity and inequity in regards to special needs students?

EP: You are role-modeling how all children should be treated. We should all be **treated fairly**. Now, okay, there may be a child that has some behavioral issues that has a behavior support plan and things may be a little bit different or a child is autistic . . . we need to work with them a little bit differently. However, we should all be treated with respect; we should all be treated fairly. We should all be given the same ground to work from and we need to as administrators and teachers to make sure that's provided for them

MSA: One of the things that I always try to listen to in IEPs . . . I read the IEPs and I look at the assessments . . . **I like to see the student work and I see, okay, if it's a special day class student, at what point can we start mainstreaming them into the regular education class, so they are learning to be with the mainstream.** In junior high, it's extremely important because in the high schools . . . their special day class is not in one classroom . . . they're going to be moving from classroom to classroom and they're going to have to know how to move from one classroom to the next, so one of the things in eighth grade, I talk to my team about, you know what, I need you to look at what academic areas or what subject areas can we **mainstream** this child so that they could learn how to relate to everyone else and feel comfortable in the environment. Sometimes, it works very well and they feel more comfortable and they want a second class; sometimes, it might not work and we pull them back and we call an IEP and hold an addendum. I think that it's very important as an administrator and ask the people on your team need to realize that the goal is to teach the child skills to be successful in their classroom and by way move them to a **mainstream** because in society we don't have a special education society.

G: The idea is that they have access.

MSA: They have access to it as much as possible and [teach] them to be successful with what access you give them.

6. How do you work and communicate with your various stakeholders in the school community (parents, teachers, school board members, district officials, etc.) in regard to the educational needs of special needs students?

EP: We talked a lot about dealing with the parents and the teachers.

MSA: One of the things is having that relationship in the IEP and making them feel comfortable. I am very rigid into, look make sure you **communicate** the parent rights. You don't have this in the elementary . . . at the elementary, the parents have received those parent rights a million times. I tell my teachers you *need* to go over them and **explain them.** The parents need to feel very comfortable with saying them and understanding them. They need to be able to understand . . . the entire procedure and

process. One of the things is having that relationship with everyone on the team and knowing what the responsibilities are and how they carry out their role. As an administrator, I work with the district office, I look at my program and what I see in my department chair, what are their strengths and what are their weaknesses. I'll address it with the coordinator at the district office and I share with them this is one of the things . . . what can we do to help. She has come in and spoken to our special education department. The other thing is that I've made relationships with the SELPA coordinator . . . a wealth of knowledge and skill and I make sure that I tell her, whenever you come on campus, no matter what it is, drop by and say hello, even if for two minutes as we're walking by, give me a heads up. Give me an update on what you're doing with the kid. That relationship, that feeling that this is their school makes them feel like they're part of the team when were all working together to help our student and that benefits. So, establishing the relationship and establishing two-way **communication** so that we can provide the best education.

EP: And what was really helpful in the past . . . I had some children that were placed in the severely and emotionally disturbed class in the last couple of years and working with the parent with making that connection with the SELPA office so that they could go to the parent trainings. Also, I had the preschool SDC at my campus last year. That was a huge **community** effort with the school, with the teacher, making sure that the parents knew what was out there that could assist them so that they could get the most from what was available to them and the teacher and myself were that avenue to make sure the parent knew exactly what was available to them because sometimes they don't know where to go. You know, a lot of times the parents come back and say "Thank you so much." That totally steers them in a totally different direction than they thought they would ever go and now they have knowledge, now they're being educated, now they're involved in another **community** in which they're getting support.

MSA: And I think in the IEP teams . . . not so much as relevant as you, but in junior high, we have to sort of do an **assessment** of the parent seeing where they are at. Do they have realistic expectations based on the learning disability of their child? Some parents are in total denial that, for instance, an autistic kid might not be able to be successful career-wise and they're saying I want my kid to go to college and get a career and he's autistic and can barely function in the classroom. But there are some parents who are aware and you can push them to have more realistic expectations that we need to work on life skills so that they can be successful.

7. What are your views on inclusion (mainstreaming of students with special needs in regular education classes) and is this being implemented for special needs students?

EP: I believe that it depends on the needs of the child. I know that when . . . I taught RSP for many years and just as I have it set up at my school right now . . . some of the children are in the classroom with the teacher or the instructional assistant going into the classroom assisting the child in the classroom some of the children are pulled out in small, concept, standard-based groups with an ongoing **assessment**, doing the same thing

that we would do in the grade-level PLC. The teacher is doing that ongoing **assessment** and the groupings are based upon that data, so the child may this week be in class with the English language arts teacher but the next concept may be pulled out because that's their area of weakness and they're going to need a small group with a different instructional strategy so it's not just the child but maybe the concept as well that drives . . . is it **inclusion** in the classroom or a pull-out for assistance in a small group and we do the same thing for children that are not in special ed.

MSA: And, for instance, at my school we have two programs – the RSP and the special day class. In the RSP classroom, the kids are in regular education classrooms and the RSP teacher comes in or the instructional aide comes in. We try to group as many RSP students meeting the guidelines per law of RSP students in a class. Those teachers have been selected because of their skill and their openness to work with RSP students. They modify their lessons to give them access to the content standard. So I think it's working, the **collaboration**, and one of the things we're trying to do we want not only for the RSP teacher to go in and support the individual students. We want that teacher to be teaching, co-teaching, together. That is an extremely important thing, that the RSP teacher can be seen . . . “Oh, she's just helping *those* kids.” . . . No, no, no . . . the RSP teacher is helping *all* of the students in the classroom. It's training the teacher and having that **communication** with the teacher and letting everyone know that as an administrator this is our philosophy, this is our belief that it's not “those kids,” it's all of them. In the special day class, one of the things, like I said earlier, we want to see what are the strengths of the child so that we can **mainstream** one or two subjects, not just P.E. For instance, all of the students in the special day class they have second grade period, so then the teachers know and then, that way, we can have more aides in that, so you have to work with you master schedule.

EP: And when I was working with the SDC classes, making sure that when looking at the IEP with the SDC teacher, where is there an area *other* than P.E. . . . is a strength for this child that they could be placed or **mainstreamed** into a regular education class, and so just working with that teacher and looking at the data, looking at the IEP, figuring out where they could be successful in a regular education program.

MSA: And one of the things as an educator, as an administrator, you have to know curriculum, you have to know instruction because some teachers will say I can't do anything for him and you have to ask him, hey, what are you doing in the classroom and from listening to him you can say well, you know what, you can modify your instruction, you can modify the assignments and not only are you helping this **special education student**, you're helping the others . . . provide access.

8. In your role as a school leader, how important is it, in your opinion, to closely examine and shape curriculum and assessment in regards to the educational needs of special needs students?

EP: Making sure that as an administrator, you know the curriculum of all the grade levels. For myself, it's K-5, knowing the curriculum, knowing what the standards are,

meeting with the teachers and their **PLCs**, finding out what they feel their essential standards are and then the **pre- and post-tests** for each of those essential standards and then assisting the teachers in making sure that the children that are having difficulties . . . where are the **special needs students** in that spectrum of that standard? What do we need to do for that child to make sure that they're successful with the standard you're working on.

MSA: And when you have RSP students and even special day class, we're talking about a learning disability. That means it's an auditory process, it's a visual process. So, if a teacher understands that disability, they can modify their instructional strategies, they can use the overhead, the "elmo," underline words, give the kids a copy of the work, have them circle, have them underline, have them choose key words, reading aloud, using pair-share, because the more of those regular education instructional strategies are going to give a **special education student** with a learning disability more access to that content. So, those teachers that use a multitude of instructional strategies are not only providing more access of the content standards and the instructional material to the regular education students, but they're also giving it to the special education students.

9. What partnerships have you made with various outside agencies to support student achievement and growth for special needs students?

EP: We talked about the SELPA and then if we're going to talk about behavior or therapy, like the MESA clinic or the surrounding agencies in which would support four therapy types. I did have a student in the past that had anger issues and I did work closely with him not only to help the child with the anger issues that he was having but also helping the parent with how to deal with those issues.

MSA: And at the junior high and even at the high schools, one of the things that we are fortunate we have counselors, so the school counselors are a resource that we can use to be involved in the IEPs where there is sometimes just talking to the kid or referring them to outside agencies for anger management, parenting classes, and so on. But I think our biggest resources are district office, the SELPA, once you have that connection, with, I think, attending trainings that SELPA offers is very valuable.

EP: And any time you're working with an outside agency, making sure that you talk to the district office before you do anything . . . just making sure you have that **communication** with district special education, whoever that may be, for that particular need or specialty talking with them and making sure, this is the issue that I have, these are some resources – what do you think. I know that with one child we had some special needs and they assisted us with the IEPs, getting a particular outside agency to come in and work with the child and the instructional assistants.

MSA: And in our district, we have coordinators that are assigned to our specific school. We are able to have special relationships with them and work with them and they help us work with the parent.

10. How do you balance your role as an educational leader while, at the same time, investigate issues that pertain to meeting the academic needs of special needs students?

EP: A big part of my job is, it's almost doing research . . . I find myself looking at the child's background . . . a lot of times I have to call other schools, I have to find documents. Parents come in with questions – they don't even know what's going and pulling out papers, going through documents, doing a little bit of background work into the child and also researching what would be best to meet the academic needs of that particular child, looking at the IEPs, looking at what's gone on in the past, what is it that we can do differently, pulling in whatever special education teachers, sometimes even pulling in teachers from years past, what's worked with the child, what hasn't worked with the child and having a meeting with the group of professionals to make sure that were doing all that we can.

MSA: And the same thing goes with me . . . the balancing act. A key is knowing your team, knowing what skills, what knowledge they have, what support they can provide. I know that I can go to my school psychologist and she can be helpful. I know that I can also use my SELPA representative and also can use my coordinator. It's absolutely essential that you have the IEP plan, you have the CUM. I have access to the IEP Web, so I go in there and I can go look at previous IEPs, I can look at current IEPs, addendums, and read them . . . so that really does help. And our district sends us reports of when IEPs are due and then we can see which ones are late and we can get on teachers who are behind. It's a lot of work . . . I mean, those timelines . . .

EP: I have an awesome special education teacher, I have two awesome instructional assistants. I talk to my RSP teacher, no lie, every single day, probably three times a day about what's going on. It's a continuous process – what are we doing tomorrow, what are we doing next week . . . It's just an ongoing **communication**. We talk about what our plans are for meeting the needs of all the students.

MSA: You have to be as an administrator . . . very keen and alert when you're in an IEP meeting and you're listening to your teachers – what will they say . . . You have to know your teacher, you have to know how they're teaching in the classroom – are they making **accommodations** or are they demanding that the special education is going to be a regular education and learn like anyone else. The other thing is you realize, wait a minute, you're not making accommodations for this one child, how are you making **accommodations** for those who are regular education students and who have academic skills at the average level and are very bright?

EP: And I really think that using the **professional learning communities** it's huge and that **communication**. I think **communication** is a key, not just one on one with teachers but with that grade level and then working together and I think that's really helped the teachers to understand the needs of all students, special education or children that are

having difficulties, reaching the grade level standards. It's made them a little more aware.

MSA: You can tell that you have a passion for it, it's in your philosophy, it is your beliefs and that you are going to represent and you are going to support and you are going to back up **special education students** and parents. When teachers see that, they know they're going to have to work toward that same end. Otherwise, "well, I can get away with not doing that."

EP: My teachers knew that when I came to the sight that my background was special education.

MSA: My teachers, I had to tell them, "I read your IEPs." I've had people say "oh, you're the first administrator that reads the IEPs." Yes, and I will read them all, so if I find something, I'm going to ask you about it, so we correct it, so now everyone goes over their IEPs . . . We need to do what's best for students and what's best for the parent and what's best for the district. Our job is to protect all three of them.

EP: Being in **compliance** as well. My special education teacher and I talk a lot about the legal issues and making sure that we are in **compliance**, not just with what is right, but what is legally correct . . . Just doing right by the students by making sure you're in **compliance**.

G: Those are all the questions that I have. Thank you for your answers. Is there anything else that you would like to add? Thank you very much.

APPENDIX G

Interview #3 – High School Assistant Principal

HSAP – High School Assistant Principal

Introduction

G: All right. This is my third interview on transformative leadership and special needs students. Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. We are interested in your knowledge of transformative leadership principles and their relationship to supporting students with special needs. Transformative leadership is a concept that addresses the impact of inequality and discrimination in schools and prompts school leaders to help students achieve despite these barriers. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to choose what information you want to reveal. You may decline to answer questions or items at any time. Please be advised that all information will be treated as confidential and will not be discussed or shared with anyone who is not involved in the study. Your name(s) will not be on the survey you have previously taken or during the interview. Audio taping will be used in the interview and will be kept safe in an undisclosed location. All identifying material will be purged when quotes or case examples are used in the presentation or publication of study results.

I'm interested in knowing all of your thoughts in response to the questions that are posed. Also, if other thoughts occur to you outside the strict focus of the questions, please feel free to voice those thoughts. The questions are posed as a basis to prompt your thoughts about leadership and special education students; anything you can add that would inform this focus would be great for you to discuss.

Questions

1. a) What are your major roles as a school administrator at your particular site?

HSAP: I'm the assistant principal. I've been assigned to look over the special education department and be the liaison between the administrator of our site with the district or the county or state for special education. My role is to overlook all of those programs . . . make sure we communicate the proper policies and procedures of special education needs for our children at [this] high school.

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- b) Does your role have particular relevance for special needs students?

HSAP: Yes, my role with special needs is probably my priority . . . I just make sure that all of the teachers are following up on their IEPs, they're testing, everybody is in compliance with the special needs, the services for the students, and providing any support I can for teachers for their students at the district or state level, more even at the state level.

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2. What do you see as the ideal classroom learning environment for special needs students? What elements should be evident?

HSAP: Usually, when I go into the classroom I want to make sure the students are getting the proper services whether it's the speech therapist, an instructional aide, workability worker, making sure they're just not being a teacher's assistant, they're actually in there walking around

the room, checking for understanding, working with students, providing services that are requested for an IEP, taking any initiative doing more beyond their job description to make sure that the students get their proper education, making sure that the teacher is also checking for understanding, have proper lesson plans that are geared to **special education students**, that they're deconstructing the standards and word vocabulary for **special education students'** understanding.

3. How do you work together with your school personnel to ensure the educational progress of special needs students on a regular basis?

HSAP: This year we took it upon ourselves that we would make it a priority [to improve] API scores . . . that we are going to reach. We're having collaboration meetings once a month with special education teachers and resources from the district and myself. Each month, one week is dedicated for the special education department, one week is dedicated for the administrators from the site or the district to go over changes in policies and procedures. A third week is RSP and SDC teachers going to the content area department meetings to find out what's going on in math, science, reading, so that they can provide services. The fourth week of the month is some type of training whether its training on the web, a training on lesson planning, ... we just provide some type of training and change up the meetings so that they are not stagnant. **We all work together** from every aspect to help the teachers.

4. What message do you communicate to your staff about how special needs students should be treated?

HSAP: Well, obviously the special education department should already know what's going on. We make sure in the regular education classes, at our evaluation meetings or at our staff meetings we ask the teachers to . . . there's two groups that we ask the teachers to identify, if they can identify their EL group or can they identify their **special education** group and in both groups we ask them how do they identify their group . . . are they **special ed.**, are they MH, are they SDC, are they RSP. Just like in EL, what level they're in. We ask them to put in on their seating charts when they are calling, when they're checking for understanding and see, oh yeah, maybe I should go slower, maybe I should go ask them a word they can understand, or maybe I can have the instructional aide assist this student. It helps also with the sub or anybody who comes into the classroom, that's taking over the class and they can identify the student in the classroom.

5. What are your views on equity and inequity in regards to special needs students?

HSAP: Can you clarify that?

G: Essentially, in terms of whether or not special needs students have access to the curriculum, that they are receiving services in their areas of disability, that they are accepted on campus.

HSAP: I think they are getting all of the services that can be provided, probably more so . . . I personally have an adapted PE credential, so I kind of have an idea what entails some of the **special education needs**, so I use some of that experience with them. **But they have access to all books, transportation, materials, access to buildings, calculators and educational materials.** They also have . . . they are able to be in classrooms with regular education teachers if they can . . . if their disability allows them to. We're very proactive in making sure that **equity** is insured.

6. **How do you work and communicate with your various stakeholders in the school community (parents, teachers, school board members, district officials, etc.) in regard to the educational needs of special needs students?**

HSAP: We have back to school night, we have board meetings, we have department meetings, we have school site council meetings, we have an ELAC council meeting, we also have **students with disabilities** who are also second language learners as well and we provide some type of notification of information of what's going on in departments in those meetings as well. We also have the IEP meetings, SST meetings. Also, on our website, we have teachers posting their classes, what their classes entail, what their class is about, what the MH and ED classes are about, so we try to promote . . . we get the word out that **special education** in what we're doing at our school and to the parents.

7. **What are your views on inclusion (mainstreaming of students with special needs in regular education classes) and is this being implemented for special needs students?**

HSAP: I'm totally for **inclusion**, again, if their disability allows them and lets them in there and makes them feel and give them the motivation that they can do . . . be as equal as regular education students. Right now on campus we have our . . . we try as much as possible with all of our classes, obviously RSP is the closest of **inclusion**. They have the full six classes and they rotate with regular education teachers. The thing with them is that they have an RSP teacher and an aide to go with them at times. The SDC are more together but we do try to get them a class or two outside the classroom so that they can have some experience and in our ED as well. Our ED classes are just like the SDC. They're in a class but with their elective we put them in elective classes whether art or whether they're with a regular education teacher or P.E. P.E. has about 400 students so they're getting a lot of social networking there, auto mechanics or whatever they can with the disability. A lot of times they like the hands-on so they like to be in the elective classes and sometimes they excel well in hands-on, creative, kinesthetic-type classes. Same with MH. Outside the class they go to art class and then we also have them help out certain classified personnel in the school whether it's office work they can help file, or they can work in the cafeteria, just get life-learning experiences outside of the classroom.

- G:** As far as the students who are in the regular classes, how are they doing academically, do you know?

HSAP: I think for the most part they're doing okay, but most of the special education are pretty much credit deficient . . . We're noticing that the behavior, some of the disabilities we call behavior, and sometimes teachers . . . and that's why we all work with the teachers to have patience or find **intervention** instead of just sending them out of the class and try to suspend them and do **interventions**, call a counselor, call parents and set up a meeting to see how we can . . . and make sure they have medication, make sure they have counselors outside, are there **interventions** in the classroom. For the most part, they are slightly behind in credits but they do real well.

8. **In your role as a school leader, how important is it, in your opinion, to closely examine and shape curriculum and assessment in regards to the educational needs of special needs students?**

HSAP: Like I said, this is my first year looking over **special education** and me and the principal, we know that's a high need, especially with our scores are showing in the area that we really need

to improve, where we want to improve. It's an area that's always overlooked, it's an area that falls by the wayside, not given a lot of respect from other colleagues, and so it's very important to make sure the students are getting the needs, not only the students but the teachers and the resources to provide them with the needs, so we make it a point that as an administrator at every meeting with special education so we can make sure their questions are asked and make sure that their needs are being answered, but we're cleaning up our IEPs, making sure that the IEPs are turned into the administrator three days prior to an IEP, making sure we review it as well. This way, the IEP is more or less an edit portion - we have all our goals and logistics down, so when we leave for an IEP, we can sit down with the parent and make sure we look over what needs to be done, we also bring in services . . . if it's behavior, we'll even bring in the security officer or the school resource officer in to talk about behavioral and discipline issues and also bring in other services to the IEP. So we really reconstruct an IEP and make sure that it doesn't last an hour or an hour and a half and we make sure that the regular education teacher is involved, the counselor is involved, school psychologist, if possible, and definitely the administrator and more structure as before.

9. What partnerships have you made with various outside agencies to support student achievement and growth for special needs students?

HSAP: To be honest, we haven't done much of that. We kind of been focusing on making sure that . . . were just trying to focus on getting our teaching, our meetings and our IEPs right and we have a lot of in house to focus on right now so we can gears towards required API scores and once we accomplish that, we'll be looking into other areas, other goals, and that's one of the goals we wanted to try and achieve for is forming outside partnerships and things like that, so, honestly, we kind of been focusing on our teaching, on our lesson planning, on our cleaning up IEPs, making sure that we're in **compliance** and making sure that the students are getting services. I think were at the first year we are doing very well. Hopefully, next year we can start building on getting outside agencies, not just district but companies and things like that to help our program

10. How do you balance your role as an educational leader while, at the same time, investigate issues that pertain to meeting the academic needs of special needs students?

HSAP: It's good to be overlooking special education. Even the regular classroom is the same teaching model that we use in special education . . . so, when I go into the regular education class or a **special education class**, it's the same mindset. I just use the frame of what I use in special education on the regular education teacher because a lot of times special education curriculum is just a little more basic, so when I go into the classroom, I look for vocabulary, I look for a word wall, I look for deconstructing the standards, so the balance is always the same. I treat the students in special education the same as the regular education students. I just try to treat them all the same and just go with that

G: Is there anything that you would like to add?

HSAP: I really enjoy doing **special education**. Like I said, I have an adapted physical education degree. The district is starting to provide us with a lot of support now. We had a meeting last week . . . they brought in a lawyer to go over IEPs so we can learn how to do them . . . it really helped out my teachers. So I think the district is starting support us in a lot of aspects with special education. We're really trying to clean up the IEPs. Last year, we had a lot of missed deadlines and things like that, so like I said this is my first year overlooking **special education** and I make sure that there are no missed deadlines, making sure that IEPs are written well, not cut

and paste, instructing teachers to turn them in to the administrators three days in advance to review it, make sure it's proper. Right now, we're focusing on our site, we haven't gone outside yet, so we'll see what happens.

G: And do you feel, at least, with the trainings that you've gotten even though this is your first year overseeing special education services that you're better versed than you were?

HSAP: I knew some of the concepts about it, but I haven't had adapted PE in about ten years, so everything's changed - policy, rules, even the IEP has changed since then, and so it's nice to get back and be motivated in doing this again and helping other teachers to change some of the habits that the teachers have created but they're all on board. Actually, they're helping me out, so that motivates me to continue to work hard. Like I said, we just finished doing a lot of IEPs and got some kids that we picked for the CMA, the CAHSEEs and the testing coming up, so we'll see what happens.

G: All right. Well, thank you for your time.

APPENDIX H

Color Codes for Interview Transcripts

1. **Intervention Team Meetings (ITM)/Intervention** – yellow
2. **Response to Intervention (RtI)** – light blue
3. **Communication** -red
4. **Professional Learning Communities** - purple
5. **Special Education Class/Special Education Students/Special Needs Students** - gray
6. **Equity/Accommodations** – dark purple
7. **Mainstreaming/Inclusion** - green
8. **Community** – dark blue
9. **Compliance** – brown