Principal Support of Inclusive Educational Practices: A Multi-Case Study

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PRINCIPAL SUPPORT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES:
A MULTI-CASE STUDY

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Educational Leadership

by
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May 2020

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ABSTRACT

There are numerous pieces of legislation in the United States that mandate all students (e.g. English as a Second or Other Language/ESOL students, special education students, gifted students, and 504 Accommodation Plan students) are included in the general education classroom as much as is appropriate based on each student’s strengths and needs. Legislation such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Lau v. Nichols (1974), and the Every Student Succeeds Act and their impact on the equity for all students in general education classrooms are discussed. According to available research, principal and teacher training programs are not adequately preparing these personnel to create inclusive educational environments.

Using the appreciative inquiry framework, the aim of this study was to determine the perceived supports that two South Carolina high school principals provide to general education teachers in meeting the needs of all students within their classrooms. I conducted individual interviews with three general education teachers, an ESOL teacher, a special education teacher, a 504 coordinator, a gifted teacher, and the principal at each school site. I found that both principals engaged in many instructional leadership practices, but that these practices alone did not create an inclusive environment. Staff at the two high schools reported that principals provided support by creating a vision of inclusion, sharing resources, providing professional development opportunities related to
meeting the needs of various learners, and creating structures in the school that allowed for collaboration.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beautiful daughter, Madelynn. I should have finished all of this before you were born, but now that you’re here, I hope all of momma’s hard work shows you just how much you can accomplish if you set your mind to it. Your grandma always told me I could do anything I set my heart on and my head to, so I hope this will serve as proof for you that you can do the same. I strive to support you as much as your grandma supported me. I love you!
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my husband, Trey, and my mom, Penny, for always supporting me in any endeavor. Your love and support were instrumental in me completing this goal of mine. I cannot tell you both how much I appreciate you and your patience with me through this whole process.

Thank you also to my wonderful work family for always being willing to listen to me and give me the pats on the back when I needed them the most. Thank you to my cohort family for always being supportive and lending a commiserating ear when needed. The memories from our long nights together in class will never be forgotten.

Lastly, but not least, thank you to my committee members for always giving me different perspectives and pushing me to look at things with a different lens. And thank you to Dr. Klar, my advisor, for always being realistic in your expectations of me, even when mine were too high. Thank you also for never discounting or discouraging my thoughts or feelings and for knowing when to push me and when to give me time.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, researchers have analyzed national special education and general education policies and laws, as well as professional standards for teachers and administrators and their impact on student achievement. Principals are being required to follow provisions in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) in order to provide a culture accepting of and beneficial to students with differing needs and abilities while also providing all students with highly qualified teachers (Lynch, 2012). No matter the ability level of the student, instructional leaders are required to meet their needs in public schools. Throughout this chapter, I discuss the legal backgrounds mandating appropriate instruction for students with varying educational needs. I also describe the important role general education teachers and principals have in creating an inclusive educational environment. The purpose of this study was to determine how principals were perceived to support general education teachers in meeting the needs of all students.

While there are to laws requiring educational opportunities for students with disabilities and English language learners, there are several laws and regulations for providing appropriate educations for all students and learners. One such law is Public Law No. 114-95, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), which has built in accountability systems to improve academic outcomes for all students (Ekstrand, 2016). Questions about ESSA implementation are particularly important to inclusive education, which necessitates collaboration between general and special education teachers and
undoubtedly requires administrator support, which is a focus of ESSA (Ekstrand, 2016). Additionally, ESSA (2015) was designed to ensure that all schools and districts are responsible for the success of students considered English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL; Achieve & Unidos US, 2018). This act also requires principals to develop and implement school improvement activities, which calls for the creative use of staff and support (Ekstrand, 2016). The aforementioned aspects of ESSA align with aspects of inclusionary practices and also require a shift to more collaborative approaches in both teaching and learning (Kaikkonen, 2010).

The ESSA (2015) also mandates that the aforementioned activities be evidenced based as much as is possible for each area (Herman et al., 2017). Some research-based conditions which can impact student success that are influenced or led by principals include establishing a culture of high expectations and developing and creating a vision (Louis et al., 2010b). Improving leadership is a strategy that can be used to improve student learning and school performance (Young et al., 2017). More research related to principals will be discussed in Chapter Two.

**Students with Disabilities**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) is legislation in the United States of America that defines the procedural requirements of public school institutions from preschool to twelfth grade (P-12) in providing specialized educational programming and instruction for students with identified disabilities. The provisions of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) are the two provisions which affect principals and the use of
inclusive educational practices in P-12 schools the most. A FAPE is defined as special education and related services provided to any student aged three to 21 free of charge to the parent, at public expense, that aligns with the student’s Individualized Education Program (IDEA, 2004). An LRE refers to disabled students being educated with their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent that is appropriate based on the individual student’s needs (IDEA, 2004). The LRE and FAPE for children can vary depending on each student’s needs, with all to no educational services being provided within the general education classrooms (Office of Civil Rights, 2007).

In the fall of 2017, 63% of students six through 21 years old who were served under IDEA spent 80% or more of their time in general education classrooms (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019a). This is an increase from 47% in the fall of 2000 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019a). This is a major increase in students with identified disabilities being educated in the least restrictive environment across the United States of America, especially given that the number of public school students served in the 2017-2018 school year had increased to 7 million (14% of the population) from 6.4 million (13% of the population) in the 2011-2012 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019a).

**English as a Second or Other Language Students**

The ESSA has relevant mandates for English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) students. The ESSA requires states to create a statewide accountability system with five indicators (Achieve & Unidos US, 2018). One of the indicators is progress toward achieving English Language Proficiency (Achieve & Unidos US, 2018). Also of
importance is an ESSA requirement for all schools and districts to improve one characteristic for ESOL students in schools (Achieve & Unidos US, 2018; Ekstrand, 2016). Emphasis on ESOL students again becomes evident in another ESSA requirement, which also encompasses students with disabilities, mandating that these students’ scores be included in state assessment scores for schools (Ekstrand, 2016).

This mandatory inclusion of ESOL students is not new to the American educational system as previous legal mandates have required schools and principals to involve ESOL students. One such example is the United States Supreme Court case *Lau v. Nichols* (1974). In this case, the court ruled that based on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, students cannot be denied meaningful educational opportunities based on national origin, race, or color, if the institution receives federal monies. Most public school districts in the United States receive federal financial assistance, which necessitates that principals and school districts ensure students of all national origins, races, and ethnicities, which often includes students identified as ESOL learners, receive adequate educations.

Another United States Supreme Court case relevant to ESOL students is *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202 (1982). The ruling in this case stipulated that immigrant students have the same right to access a free public education as United States citizens. It also ruled that public schools were prohibited from denying these students a public education. With such laws and court rulings mandating students with diverse backgrounds be provided a free public education, administrators must find ways to meet their educational needs.

These issues are becoming more relevant in today’s educational systems in the United States with 76.6% (3.79 million) of ESOL public school students in the United
States speaking Spanish as their home language, which is 7.7% of ESOL student enrollment overall in fall 2016 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019b). The second, third, and fourth most common home languages were Arabic (129,400 students), Chinese (104,100), and Vietnamese (78,700 students) in the fall of 2016 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019b). English was the fifth most common language with 70,000 students speaking it (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019b). In South Carolina, ESOL students made up 5.7 percent of the student population in the fall of 2016. This number of students who must be provided access to a free public education is increasing and becoming more of a concern for public school administrators each year.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits any entity which receives federal money from discriminating against anyone with a disability. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 defines a person with a disability as a person “who (i) has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, (ii) has a record of such an impairment, or (iii) is regarded as having such an impairment” (§ 104.3 j). Section 504 (1973) requires that all students with disabilities be provided the same opportunities to participate as their non-disabled peers (Holler & Zirkel, 2008). The Office of Civil Rights only reports trend data on issues related to civil rights in special programs, therefore there are no published data to determine how many students in public schools in the United States have a Section 504 Accommodation Plan (Holler & Zirkel, 2008). Regardless of a lack of an official number of students in public schools with protections under Section 504, general education teachers are required to
provide instructional and environmental accommodations. Principals are key actors in ensuring general education teachers are following each student’s plan to ensure that each student has the opportunity to demonstrate success.

**Gifted & Talented Students**

As with the previous three student populations, there are laws and regulations that impact the educations of students identified as being gifted and talented. The ESSA likewise includes provisions for gifted and talented education (hereafter referred to as gifted). Proficiency levels for gifted students are now included in the state report card data in the new ESSA requirements (Ekstrand, 2016). Professional development (PD) funds are available for schools to pursue training in acceleration, enrichment, and other practices to improve instruction for gifted students. The ESSA also retains the Javits Program, which provides grants to help identify and serve underrepresented students in gifted programs. Underrepresented students include ESOL students, students with disabilities, minority students, and economically disadvantaged students (Ekstrand, 2016).

Like the other student populations described, gifted students have unique learning needs. Gifted students require instruction at their individual learning rates in order to retain information. This instruction can be extended beyond the student’s current grade and age expectations (Rogers, 2007). Instruction for gifted students typically requires individual instruction or instruction in a similar ability group (Rogers, 2007). Some instructional methods of differentiating instruction for gifted students include multilevel learning stations, tiered assignments, curriculum compacting, product choices, and
flexible grouping (Willard-Holt, 2003). Other ways to create the higher level individualized programming gifted students need are mentoring and acceleration (Willard-Holt, 2003). Long et al (2015) found that in secondary schools, principals often heavily depended on people within the school as a resource of knowledge for interacting with gifted students.

In addition to legislation mandating equality in education, there are standards that assert school administrators should have knowledge of instructional strategies to improve educational outcomes for all students (Lynch, 2012). Research by Al-Mahdy and Emam (2018), Leithwood et al. (2012), and Marzano et al. (2005), and many other scholars, has identified the principal as a leader with significant influence to improve student achievement and create supportive, inclusive schools. Although other standards such as the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards have been updated for principals and special education topics mandated through IDEA, Pazey and Cole (2012) noted that gaps are still evident in principal practice. New standards for educational leaders such as principals are now available called the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Despite the laws, regulations, and standards that require students with different abilities and disabilities, and students who speak other languages to be educated in general education classrooms in the United States, these students still experience a lack of access and exclusion from various programming (Theoharis, 2010).
Inclusive Educational Practice

There are many definitions and interpretations of inclusive educational practice and what it looks like in P-12 educational systems across the world. Oswald and de Villiers (2013) found that teachers in South Africa “were familiar with the notion of inclusive education but held divergent views on how to define it” (p. 8). Oswald and de Villiers (2013) posited that “giftedness is identified as one of the ‘exceptionalities’ that need addressing [with] curriculum differentiation” (p. 4) as is necessitated in inclusive education, though many teachers within the study did not consider giftedness in their definition of inclusive education. Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) noted in their research that:

- lack of clarity about definitions of inclusion has contributed to confusion about inclusive education and practice, as well as to debates about whether or not inclusion is an educationally sound practice for students who have been identified as having special or additional educational needs (p. 826).

Ryan (2006) took a more global view and asserted that inclusion should “consider the types of access people get to societal systems” (p. 15). Loreman et al. (2005) similarly posited that inclusion for education:

- means full inclusion of children with diverse abilities in all aspects of schooling that other children are able to access and enjoy. It involves regular schools and classrooms genuinely adapting and changing to meet the needs of all children, as well as celebrating and valuing differences (p. 2).
Booth et al. (2002) likewise agreed that inclusive practice in education encompasses increasing student participation in the curricula, culture, and community of the school and valuing all students and staff. Kivale and Forness (2000) further stated that the philosophy of inclusion “seeks to alter the education for all students” (p. 279). The Salamanca Statement states that “all schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions” (UNESCO, 1994, p. 6). Carter and Abawi (2018) and Polat (2011) also detailed that inclusive education meets the learning needs for all, irrespective of language, cognition, socio-economic status, behavioral issue, sexual orientation, race, disability, talent, ethnicity, or gender. In inclusive schools, all students are considered valued members of the school community and society (Fried & Jorgenson, 2000). Furthermore, inclusion is about removing factors that marginalize and exclude students and is a way of thinking about how to remove barriers to learning (Carter & Abawi, 2018).

**General Education Teachers**

With all of the documented need for inclusive educational practices to meet the needs of all students within general education classrooms, it begs the question of where and how general education teachers generate their understandings and knowledge of such practices. Carroll et al. (2003) found that general education teachers set the tone of the classroom and the success of inclusion depends upon the attitudes of teachers. General education teachers can promote inclusion when they show that they care about their students, demonstrate cultural solidarity, and maintain high expectations for all students (Ryan, 2006). Teachers in inclusive schools are excited about learning and enthusiastic in
their work with students (Fried & Jorgenson, 2000). Inclusion is most successful within a framework of collaboration and with teachers who demonstrate and understand effective learning and teaching practices (Loreman et al., 2005). When there is a supportive and collaborative school environment, teachers can also learn from each other (Loreman et al., 2005).

Despite all of the research support for inclusive practice within schools, there is little evidence to show whether or how principals support general education teachers in engaging in inclusive practice to meet the needs of all students, including those within special populations such as students in special education, gifted education, ESOL programs, and those with 504 Accommodation Plans. The support from principals is extremely important in the use of inclusive educational practices as Ahmed et al. (2012) found that teachers had more positive attitudes towards inclusion when they reported high levels of perceived support from the principal, though this study was conducted with students with disabilities only. Karabenick and Clemens Noda (2004) found that 30% of general education teachers believed ESOL students are viewed less favorably by building administrators and teachers, which can in turn impact the general education teacher’s instruction and interaction with these students.

Research is available that illustrates how important general education teacher attitude is in preservice and in-service training, with numerous studies pushing for more training and preparation to work with diverse learners. Regardless of similar recommendations in many studies, there is little to no research on how to support general
education teachers, even though there are more and more legal mandates requiring them to provide inclusive classrooms and instruction.

**Instructional Leadership**

As decades of research, including work by Leithwood et al. (2004) and others have shown, principals indirectly influence student achievement, but can directly influence teachers and staff. Studies have shown principals perceive the majority of their time is spent on instructional leadership tasks (Goldring et al., 2008). Principals who are instructional leaders aim to improve instructional practices and student learning for all by engaging in many practices within the school system (Louis et al., 2010b). Instructional leadership practices include supervision, planning and implementing teacher professional development, analyzing student data, and conducting observations of instruction in classrooms (Goldring et al., 2008).

In order to provide effective supervision, a principal should have a working knowledge of how to evaluate effective programs, determine staff qualifications and functions, resolve conflict, and provide effective leadership even though the administrator might delegate many of these duties (Burrello & Zadnik, 1986). Successful instructional leaders and leaders who have created inclusive schools have implemented many of the same practices. Among these practices are creating and setting a shared vision, strategically using staff members to create inclusive service delivery, creating a collaborative culture, providing ongoing professional learning opportunities for teachers, and engaging in data-based decision making (Blase & Blase, 2004; Furney et al., 2005; Theoharis & Causton, 2014).
It is important to understand how principals are perceived as instructional leaders by teachers and from the administrators’ perspective. In a nationally representative study, general education teachers reported that effective instructional leaders utilized six teacher development strategies, the following of which are important in supporting inclusive educational practices: support of collaboration efforts; encouragement and support in redesigning programs; development of coaching relationships among educators; and application of adult learning principles to staff development (Blase & Blase, 1999).

**Problem**

Despite all of the research support for inclusive practice within schools, there is little evidence to show whether or how principals are perceived to support general education teachers in engaging in inclusive practice to meet the needs of all students, including those within special populations such as students in special education, gifted education, ESOL programs, and those with 504 Accommodation Plans. There are many gaps within the research regarding how principals are providing support to general education teachers in engaging in inclusive educational practices. There is also a vast array of definitions of inclusion as described previously. The definition of inclusion for the purpose of this study is education that focuses on all learners, the strengths of students, collaboration, and teaching that is adaptive and supportive (August et al., 2012; Forlin et al., 2009; Kaikkonen, 2010). There are numerous laws that require principals and general education teachers to provide access to the educational environments that each student requires, but there is also a clear lack of principal and general education teacher training. There are some principals who are successful in creating an inclusive
educational environment where general education teachers are engaging in inclusive educational practices, but the majority of studies on this topic have focused only on one of the special populations groups and have primarily focused on elementary age students.

**Purpose Statement**

In this study, I investigate the ways in which, if any, two South Carolina high school principals were perceived to support general education teachers in engaging in inclusive educational practices for special population students (e.g. special education students, English as a Second or Other Language students, students with a 504 Accommodation Plan, gifted students) within the general education classroom using a social constructivist conceptual framework, Appreciative Inquiry. I also focused on the instructional leadership practices of the principal. I am also interested in gaining a better understanding of the principal’s view of the means by which South Carolina principals gain knowledge to guide them in leading general education teachers in using inclusive educational practices.

**Research Questions**

*Research Question 1:* In what ways are principals perceived to support general education teachers in creating an inclusive educational environment to meet the educational needs of all learners within the classroom?

*Research Question 1a:* What, if any, professional development opportunities on topics targeting inclusive instruction for special populations are provided to general education teachers by principals?
Research Question 2: Where do principals gain their knowledge of inclusive practice or how to support general education teachers in engaging in inclusive practice?

Delimitations

There are three main delimitations to this study. The first delimitation is the framework I used. The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) framework is one that is designed to investigate the positive things that are occurring in a setting and using stories to describe the realities within that setting (Cooperrider et al., 2008). AI was designed to be used in action research in the business world; it was not designed for educational change implementation. However, the steps of the framework will be modified to fit this study, so it will not be action research as the primary focus. The second D of the model will be the focus of this study, though the framework was designed to be completed as action research. Lyons et al. (2016) similarly studied inclusive education in elementary schools in Canada using only Discovery phase of the AI framework. Cooperider et al. (2008) have described in their discussions of the framework, their encouragement of modifications for use of the AI framework in other settings.

A second delimitation is the school site selections. I chose two high school cases; one was an exemplary school and the other was a sample of convenience. Despite this, both cases provided rich information about inclusive educational practices at the high school level, which is limited in research on this topic. Another delimitation is the group of participants I selected for interviews. In order to gain rich, detailed information about the environment of the school and the principal’s support within the building, the interview participants were limited to one special education teacher, one ESOL teacher, a
504 Coordinator, the principal, one gifted teacher, and 3 general education teachers. It was understood that the selected teachers’ responses may not be representative of the views of the entire staff population. Additionally, all staff selected for interviews were selected because they had been working in their current position under the same principal’s leadership for a minimum of one academic school year. These specific staff members were selected to give their unique perspectives of what was occurring well within the school environment and how the principal supported those things. Including a staff member of each of the special populations of interest provided an array of viewpoints regarding the supports for each population individually, as well as collectively.

**Framework & Research Design**

I aimed to understand the complex educational world in which I work to learn more about how teachers and principals perceive the administrative support given to general education teachers in engaging in inclusive educational practices (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Additionally, the social constructivist lens helped me to gain a better understanding of the social systems created within a school and the realities created within it (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Further, I utilized Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which is situated within social constructivism, in this study to “facilitate respectful inquiry into a selected topic to discover what strengths and capacities are already present” (Stratton-Berkessel, 2010, p. 3) in the school. Organizations, including schools “are living systems simultaneously influencing and being influenced by that which is around them (Neville, 2008, p. 102). This makes the framework particularly relevant to my study as the schools
I studied were living systems wherein the school environment or climate was influenced by the teachers and the principal, and the principal and teachers were influenced by the school climate or environment.

The aim of this study was to determine what good inclusive practices the school engages in and how the principal was perceived to support general education teachers in using them. Several of this study’s assumptions align with assumptions of AI, including the assumptions of “what we focus on becomes our reality” and “[t]he language we use creates our reality” (Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003, p. 10). The language use becomes particularly important in the framing of the interview questions, which is described in detail in Chapter 3.

The AI framework also values input from multiple stakeholders in order to create the story of the whole system, which in this case would be the school. Furthermore, a social model of the barriers to learning and participation for all students aligns with the AI view of positivity. This is evidenced in that the student’s difficulties are viewed as existing due to barriers created by policies, cultures, people, or socio-economic situations or any combination of these (Booth et al., 2002). Appreciative Inquiry brings together people from all levels and functions of an organization to learn from one another and with one another; to build relationships for going forward and expanding their collective wisdom. (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010, p. 54)

Though Appreciative Inquiry is predominantly used to aid an organization in the change process, it will be most helpful within the frame of this study to examine the first of the five Ds within the cycle of change. The AI 5-D cycle is adaptable to different
situations and cultures as needed (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). The first D is Discovery, which looks at the positives within the current environment (Cooperrider et al., 2008). In this phase, the focus is on the best of what is being done and what is being done to make it possible (Ludema et al., 2001). The second D is Dream, which looks at what changes people would like to see by gathering multiple stakeholders and asking positive questions to get them to illustrate what the organization could or should become (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Ludema et al., 2001). The third and fourth Ds of Design and Destiny are the plans, ideas, and implementation of changes to the system or organization (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

According to Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010), members of the organization should choose a topic they want to see improved or changed, but for this study I chose the topic based on what the school was perceived to already be doing well. By asking positive questions in interviews of various staff members, I was able to focus on the successful aspects of the principal’s leadership and its impact on the school environment (Ludema et al., 2001). The Discovery Phase of the 5-D Cycle also allowed me to develop themes of success or positive aspects of the principal’s support of inclusive educational practices (Cooperrider et al., 2008). In the Discovery phase, I learned how the school demonstrated success in providing an inclusive educational environment for all students, and how the principal was involved in or contributed to those successes.

**Limitations**

There were several limitations to this study. First, the AI framework was not designed for the educational realm, therefore modifications to the framework may have
hindered generalization of the results of this study. Although several studies have been conducted in higher education settings as well as in nursing, and some in P-12 schools, they have focused on other topics. Additionally, one of the two schools in this study was an exemplar of inclusive practices; therefore, there were inherently positive practices occurring within the school, so the results may not be representative of all public high schools in South Carolina. Furthermore, one of the principals had been in that role for 13 years, while the other principal had only been in the role for one and a half years. This may have impacted the overall response of the staff at each school as relationships and the impact of the principal may not have been as developed in the shorter amount of time. Another limitation is that the recommendation for this school came from one person within the school district. However, the recommendation was seconded by the district superintendent. Furthermore, the person making the recommendation was perceived to be an expert in the field of education as many of the directors of special education in South Carolina are often 504 Coordinators and often have to assist with gifted and talented programming. Though the second school was not initially selection, served as a useful case for comparing and contrasting as it was a high school with similar demographics. I conducted this study with only high schools, which limits generalizability to principals of elementary or middle schools. Finally, as an employee of the district in which Lewis High School is located, and having a working professional relationship with Mrs. Foster, the principal, there could be perceived bias in the data collection, analysis, and interpretation. As a result, I utilized several methods to ensure trustworthiness, as well as procedures to ensure standardization across cases.
**Significance**

The significance of this study is described based on many factors. First, I took an inclusive pedagogical approach that focused on everybody in the classroom (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Inclusion also reduces the barriers to participation and learning for all students by restructuring the policies, practices, and overall culture of the school (Booth et al., 2002). Inclusion also necessitates students be in a general education classroom with same age peers, as much as is appropriate, to allow those students access to the opportunities and services that other students receive and to receive appropriate instruction from the classroom teacher (Bailey, 2004). These are issues of importance to study at this time, given that the ESSA states that its provisions will likely cause parents to advocate more for general education environments to be more inclusive (Ekstrand, 2016).

Second, the aim of this study was not to facilitate change, as in the implementation phase or Destiny, but rather to understand the successes within the schools regarding inclusive instructional practices for special population students. Furthermore, AI can also be used to encourage or improve collaboration among stakeholders within an organization, which as mentioned previously is an important factor in inclusive educational practice (Carter, 2006). Becoming an inclusive school requires a change in thinking and conversation with frequent review and refinement of educational practices (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010).

Current laws pertaining to education in the United States of America with students with disabilities, students who come from diverse language backgrounds, and
students who are gifted all encourage and mandate that these students receive educations that meet their needs. Using the uniquely positive focus of the AI framework provided information about how the principal as the instructional leader provided support to the teachers in a school that was successfully engaging in inclusive educational practices.

**Organization of Chapters**

This dissertation includes five chapters. Chapter 1 provided a brief overview of the background of the study, the problem I studied along with the purpose statement, research questions, the research framework and design, and the significance of my study, and organization of the study. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on each of the special population student groups, inclusion, inclusive educational practices, barriers to inclusion, and the principal as an instructional leader and the types of support they provide. In Chapter 2, I also provide details about Appreciative Inquiry and the conceptual framework used in my study. In Chapter 3, I described the methodology of the study, described the case study site and participant selection, data collection and analysis procedures, limitations of the study, and my positionality. In Chapter 4, I presented the findings for each case separately. In Chapter 5, I concluded the study with a final summary of each case and a comparison of the two cases, and tie the findings to literature. Chapter 5 also includes a discussion of the implications of my findings and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) along with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973) all require that schools provide appropriate educations for all students including English as a Second or Other Language learners, students with special needs, and gifted students. In this study I chose to include special education students, English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) students, students with a Section 504 Accommodation Plan, and Gifted and Talented students in my definition of special population students. As the number of students in each population entering public schools increases, issues will likely continue to arise regarding how to properly meet their educational needs.

With so many legal mandates affecting students in public schools, the aim of this study was to determine what inclusive practices the school engages in and how the principal was perceived to support general education teachers in using them. The definition of inclusion for the purpose of this study is education that focuses on all learners, the strengths of students, collaboration, and teaching that is adaptive and supportive (August et al., 2012; Forlin et al., 2009; Kaikkonen, 2010). Teacher training programs have not prepared educators to meet all of the students’ needs within their classrooms, but students with varying levels of academic, cognitive, and language ability are entering their classrooms regardless. It is also important to learn what professional development opportunities are provided to general education teachers on how to provide
inclusive educational opportunities for these special populations of students.
Understanding where principals gain their knowledge of how to provide an inclusive educational environment to meet the needs of all students is another goal of this study.

Using the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) framework, I aimed to gain a better understanding of the realities of two high schools and investigate the positive things occurring within the environment that are making it inclusive. Obtaining the stories from the staff within the building regarding what is being done well provides a rich picture of how the principal is an essential actor in fostering an inclusive educational environment.

I begin this chapter with a review of the literature on each of the special population groups, inclusion and inclusive practices, and barriers to inclusion. I also discuss the principal’s role in creating an inclusive environment and as an instructional leader. I conclude the chapter with research on appreciative inquiry (AI) and my conceptual framework for the study.

Special Populations

ESOL Students

Serving ESOL students is becoming a more prevalent issue in the United States, but also in South Carolina especially, given that the number of students considered English learners has increased from just over 25,000 students in 2007 to approximately 45,000 students in the Fall of 2015 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). There are also other concerns that arise when it comes to instruction for these students due to the fact that in the Fall of 2015 it was reported that 14.7 percent of the total ESOL student population in the United States was also identified as having an educational
disability (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Furthermore, this population is important to target for differentiated and individualized instruction as ESOL students are more frequently placed in lower academic ability tracks and have higher dropout rates than their English language peers (Echevarria et al., 2006).

As discussed previously, ESSA has funding associated with various mandates to assist in providing professional development and to improve instruction for students. However, financial assistance to provide appropriate education to ESOL students is not the only concern administrators face day-to-day. The majority of ESOL students receive their instruction from general education teachers who have little to no training in language development or acquisition, which undoubtedly hinders these students’ access to the curricula (Echevarria et al., 2006). Another concern noted by Karabenick and Clemens Noda (2004) is that teachers were only moderately confident in their ability to adapt instruction to assist ESOL student learning. Not surprisingly, Karabenick and Clemens Noda further found that general education teachers with more favorable attitudes toward ESOL students were more likely to perceive that they were capable of providing these students quality instruction. Negative general education teacher attitudes and perceptions are issues that arise for other populations of students as well that will be discussed later in this chapter. Despite these attitudes and perceptions, there are schools in the United States which are meeting the needs of ESOL students and are creating positive climates for these students.

Suttmiller and Gonzalez (2006) implemented a Successful School Leadership Model for ELL students at an elementary school. The model is centered around the
ability of teachers to effectively work with students of various languages and cultures, ESOL curriculum, and instruction, and to know how the school fits in these contexts. Suttmiller and Gonzalez (2006) determined that the extent to which these aspects of the model were implemented by the principal had an impact on ESOL student academic success. The successful principal in this model was an integral participant, making curricular decisions such as selecting textbooks while keeping cultural factors in mind, as well as creating a professional learning community to ensure instructional practices met the needs of ESOL students.

Theoharis and O’Toole (2011) studied principal leadership and its impact on ESOL students in an inclusive elementary school setting in the United States. The authors found that principals who were successful at creating an inclusive school environment for ESOL students viewed the student’s first language as a resource. Although this study implemented a different definition of inclusion, as the study focused solely on ESOL students, their intention was to create a school community that valued different abilities and diversities and eliminated separate classrooms and services, much like the research available for students with IEPs.

Elfers and Stritiku (2014) also studied how principals can affect ESOL students in the general education classroom across elementary, middle, and high school levels. They found the most effective ways to support general education teachers in working with ESOL students were to: (a) focus on high quality instruction which includes providing professional development to teachers, (b) combine and streamline district- and school-level initiatives, (c) communicate the rationale for providing appropriate instruction to
ESOL students, (d) differentiate support systems at all levels, (e) use data to improve instruction and guide professional development, and (f) create opportunities for communication and collaboration (Elfers & Stritiku, 2014). Principals in this study also hired new teachers who had skills and knowledge to meet the needs of ESOL students in their schools. Principals also attempted to provide materials to general education teachers to help them instruct the ESOL students in their classrooms while also ensuring that the teachers are providing materials appropriately to those students. Professional learning communities were also created to support general education teachers in this endeavor and professional development occurred to train these teachers in new instructional programs and techniques to help them understand language acquisition and how to meet these students’ needs (Elfers & Stritiku, 2014).

The population of ESOL students is growing every school year and it is clear that principals can be key supporters in their educational progress. Principals can create school environments that are inclusive to meet the educational needs of all students. However, there are very few studies available currently that address how the principal can support the general education teacher in creating an inclusive educational environment.

**Special Education**

Public schools have been mandated to provide adequate educational opportunities to special education students since the inception of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was created in 1975; however it has only been a recent push in the last several decades for these students to be included in the general education classrooms as
much as possible. In 2017, 62% of all students with disabilities (SWDs) were served in general education classrooms for 80% or more of the school day (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019c). Nearly 70% of students with specific learning disabilities, 65% of students with another health impairment, and 47% of students with emotional disabilities spent 80% or more of their instructional day in the general education classroom (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019c).

Bai and Martin (2015) conducted a survey with 289 school principals in the United States to examine their knowledge and skills related to SWDs. Principals who had 6-10 years of experience indicated that they needed more training in program development and quality instruction for SWDs. Principals who had 11 or more years of experience indicated they needed more training in how to engage and use other supports available, such as families and communities. Bai and Martin (2015) also found that all administrators indicated a moderate need for training in all of the following areas: quality instruction and program development; mutual support; human development learning; collaboration; leadership skill; communication; appropriate education for students with disabilities; professional development and ethical practice; laws and policies; and educational curriculum and model. Roberts and Guerra (2017) surveyed principals in Texas on their special education knowledge and found that 100% of principals reported adequate levels of knowledge on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA). This is interesting when coupled with the fact that 41% of the same principals indicated a need for more special education law knowledge (Roberts & Guerra, 2017).
Hoppey and McLeskey (2010) conducted interviews with and observations of one elementary school principal to investigate how he supported staff in creating an inclusive educational environment for students with disabilities. The principal believed it was his job to create a supportive environment that encouraged teachers to do their best along with building and sustaining relationships within the school. He also displayed trust in teachers, treated staff fairly, and listened to their thoughts and concerns.

The ESSA also includes provisions requiring that children with disabilities be educated using the state’s academic standards, with the exception of students who have severe cognitive disabilities (Ekstrand, 2016). This provision in the ESSA is similar to the LRE provision of the IDEA in that each requires states, and indirectly districts, to encourage students with disabilities to be involved in and to make progress in general education classrooms and content standards (Ekstrand, 2016; IDEA, 2004). The ESSA also stipulates an expectation for all students in the general education curriculum to make progress (Ekstrand, 2016, p. 19). Additionally, accountability measures are outlined for each state to include evidence-based interventions to be implemented if students with disabilities perform significantly lower than their typical grade level counterparts on required assessments (Ekstrand, 2016).

With the high number of students receiving their instruction in general education classrooms, there are many ways their educational needs can be met. One service delivery method to meet these accountability measures for ensuring students with disabilities are educated within the general education classrooms, is co-teaching. Other methods include differentiation and universally designed learning, which will be
discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Co-teaching refers to a special education teacher and a general education teacher teaching together for all or a portion of the day in an inclusive classroom (Kames et al., 2013). Co-teaching’s success requires support from an administrator whom will be flexible with scheduling, provide resources, communicate expectations to everyone, and foster relationships. Other ways to create an inclusive environment for students with disabilities are to arrange the environment, choosing appropriate curricula and instructional strategies, developing staff, sharing the experience, and creating opportunities for growth (Delaney, 2001). Inclusion of students with disabilities is most successful when the principal views it as an extension of the school’s mission (Delaney, 2001). Therefore, it is important to continue to determine what other practices the principal engages in to create an inclusive educational environment for all students.

Section 504

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 also mandates that students in public agencies receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). A FAPE under Section 504 is similar to FAPE in the IDEA (2004) in that the student can receive instruction in general education, with or without the use of related services and aides, or receive special education services in a separate classroom for all or part of the school day (Office of Civil Rights, 2007). However, many parents have attempted to secure protection under Section 504 to obtain accommodations and prevent discrimination against their children (Holler & Zirkel, 2008). Students protected under Section 504 are required to receive their accommodations within their general education classrooms and
the school environment, as appropriate. There are frequently concerns as to how general education teachers are meeting these students’ educational needs, but there have been no studies to determine what types of support are necessary for general education teachers to meet these needs. This becomes a bigger concern when coupled with the ever-increasing number of students who are protected under Section 504.

In a national investigation, Holler and Zirkel (2008) surveyed school administrators to obtain an estimate of the number of students with 504 Accommodation Plans that were in each school building from elementary through high school. The Office of Civil Rights collects trend data on representation in special programs in the United States. However, there is no federal database that collects data on the number of students protected by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; therefore this national study is the only estimate available. The authors found that 22.2% of schools reported there were no students with 504 Accommodation plans. Additionally, of the total number of students in public schools within the study, only 1.2% of the population were identified as having a 504 Accommodation plan (Holler & Zirkel, 2008).

It is interesting to note that the reported conditions which enabled students to be eligible for a 504 Accommodation Plan were Attention Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder (80%), Diabetes (24.1%), Asthma (19%), and Dyslexia (19%; Holler & Zirkel, 2008). Other (45.7%) impairments were also reported, which could be multiple impairments or disability categories covered under the IDEA (Holler & Zirkel, 2008). Many of these students have needs which are required to be addressed within the general education setting as much as is appropriate. An important distinction to make with a Section 504
Accommodation Plan is that there is no funding source associated with it as there is with an IEP; therefore it is the school’s responsibility, and ultimately the principal’s responsibility, to ensure that the staff within the building have the appropriate resources to meet these students’ needs.

The principal’s role related to 504 students also becomes important as in some instances the principal is the building coordinator for 504 Accommodation Plans. In one state where surveys were sent to special education directors, Seese et al. (2007) found that 21% of the directors indicated that the duties for 504 students at the building level fell upon the school principal. Madaus and Shaw (2008) sent surveys to various professions in the school building including the school counselor, the principal, the school psychologist, the special education teacher, and general education teachers, and social workers, when appropriate to determine who was responsible for ensuring compliance for 504 Accommodation Plans. They found that 11% of responders indicated the principal was responsible, while another 9% indicated the assistant principal was responsible. Again, there is no national database to refer to in order to determine the number of districts where the principal is the sole coordinator of 504 Accommodation Plans for their building, but in some states that is the case.

**Inclusion**

Although the literature has included numerous definitions of inclusion, the definition of inclusion for the purpose of this study is education that focuses on all learners, the strengths of students, collaboration, and teaching that is adaptive and supportive (August et al., 2012; Forlin et al., 2009; Kaikkonen, 2010). Studies such as
Ahmmed et al., (2012), Forlin (2010), Hoppey and McLeskey (2010), and Theoharis and Causton (2014) have limited their studies on inclusive education to only address the needs of students with identified disabilities. Forlin (2010) has had a more recent change of his definition of inclusion to mean the support of all students rather than only students with disabilities as in prior studies, which is more aligned to my view in this study.

The key components of inclusion and what it looks like are wide and varied, but I aimed to pinpoint the specific practices and ways of thinking that are used to create an inclusive school environment. Cobb (2015) described the definition of inclusion for special education systems in North America in terms of axioms and postulates. Though the axioms and postulates described in the article are specific to special education, the axioms can easily be applied to inclusive education for all learners. The first axiom most aligned with the author’s definition, is equity, which means that all students have a right to equal educational opportunities (Cobb, 2015). Another important facet of inclusion that aligns with the authors definition of inclusion is the ethic of everybody, which means that all educators, including general education teachers, have the responsibility to enrich the learning of all students (Florian & Linklater, 2010).

Another axiom and postulate that aligned with my definition of inclusion are that all students receive varying levels of individualized support in the school environment. The focus should be on including the whole child and not on one solitary aspect of impairment for each student (Booth et al., 2002). Additionally, the more forms of support that are incorporated in the general education classroom, such as differentiation, can
create an appropriate least restrictive learning environment for each student (Cobb, 2015).

The use of universal design is another way to support all learners within the general education classroom. In universal design, instructional materials and activities are created in ways that make learning goals achievable by all individuals (Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2011). Universal design is achieved through curricula and activities that allow alternative means of learning for students with different levels of ability (Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2011). There are, however, many other instructional practices that general education teachers can engage in to create an inclusive school environment, but the aim of this study is not to determine which instructional practices are most beneficial, but rather to determine what the principal does to support the general education teacher in utilizing any practices.

**Creating an Inclusive Environment**

There are several inclusionary approaches that are important to discuss and focus on in this study that help foster an inclusive climate. School climate is the character and quality of school life created by the patterns of staff and students' experiences (National School Climate Center, n.d.). A school climate echoes the values, norms, goals, organizational structures, teaching and learning practices, and relationships between all stakeholders (National School Climate Center, n.d.). The principal and teachers are key agents in developing the school climate.

Jorgenson et al. (1999) found that in high schools, innovative scheduling, such as block scheduling, allowed teachers to have more opportunities for common planning
times and allowed for more effective grouping opportunities. Block scheduling also gives teachers more ability to build relationships with their students each semester, which helps create a positive climate (Jorgenson et al., 1999). Block scheduling also provides more instructional time in each subject area, which also allows more opportunities for reteaching or acceleration (Jorgenson et al., 1999).

Kaikkonen (2010) found the following practices to be key inclusionary approaches taken by schools/staff in teacher training programs: (a) focusing on group, classroom, and school organization; (b) assessing teaching and learning factors and the school’s learning culture; and (c) collaborative problem-solving activities with a focus on future development (Kaikkonen, 2010). Other inclusionary approaches are to give strategies to teachers to assist in their response to the needs of students; provide strategies that encourage a focus on learning for all; and provide strategies to create adaptive and supportive learning environments and classrooms (Kaikkonen, 2010). Training teachers to gather multiple sets of data and utilize the data to create targeted instructional plans is another way to support inclusion (Carter & Abawi, 2018). Teachers are required to do less individualization in their instruction when they design the activities to support all learners in the classroom (Booth et al., 2002).

August et al. (2012) developed four principles to outline the conditions required for general education classrooms to be effective inclusionary classrooms that align with the inclusionary approaches described by Kaikkonen (2010). These principles were designed to aide principals in evaluating teachers who work with ESOL students and students with disabilities in the northeastern United States, but can be applied to other
populations of learners. The first principle is for all students to receive equal access to the general education curriculum. The second principle is that effective inclusionary classrooms are supportive of and accept the challenges, strengths, and backgrounds of all learners (August et al., 2012). Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis (2009) asserted that attention to belonging and inclusion in general education are the first steps toward improving achievement for all students. Causton-Theoharis and Theoharis (2009) extend their understanding of inclusion to include two steps; the first step is inclusion occurring in the general education environment with attention being put on creating a sense of belonging, and the second step is for core curricula and teaching to be improved through differentiation and varied teaching techniques. It is clear that access to the educational environment is an important component of an inclusive educational setting.

The third principle described by August et al. (2012) is the use of teaching strategies that are evidence based and differentiated for each student, wherein the teacher engages in reflective and responsive practices to promote the improvement of all students. Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis (2009) similarly asserted that improving the core instruction is of great importance in order to enhance learning for all students with differentiation and teaching to multiple modalities also being of importance. Angelides et al. (2010) found that in inclusive schools in Cyprus, the lessons were accessible and responsive to the needs of all students. Inclusive pedagogy should focus on extending what is already available within the classroom environment and provide vast learning opportunities in order to reduce the tendency to label some learners as different and to allow all learners to participate (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Fisher et al. (1999)
found that in inclusive high schools, the curricula was based on high achievement standards for all students and was performance-oriented and thematic. Creating a classroom culture and expectation for the general education teacher to include instructional techniques that will address the wide range of learners within the classroom is essential.

The final principle described by August et al. (2014) is that effective inclusive classrooms are communities of collaboration, cooperation, and culturally appropriate communication. Educational leaders can support inclusion by supporting collaboration, establishing clear goals, and monitoring progress (Carter & Abawi, 2018). Collaboration with school support staff and specialty area teachers can be especially helpful for general education teachers (Carter & Abawi, 2018). Redesigning job descriptions is one way to encourage collaboration of general education teachers and specialty area teachers in that the new descriptions can create a shared sense of responsibility for teachers (Fisher et al., 1999). Collaboration becomes especially important in inclusive school environments as it has been shown to have positive effects on teaching and learning (Ryan, 2006). When administrators collaborated with others in their environment, they were able to create new solutions, and solve problems, which resulted in positive outcomes (Calebese et al., 2008). Principal collaboration and involvement are essential in creating an inclusive environment for the school building and there are various other practices the principal can engage in in order to create that environment.
Principals and Inclusion

There are many ways in which principals can support and foster an inclusive educational environment. Villa and Thousand (2017) asserted that principals must address five key variables in order to facilitate change toward creating an inclusive educational environment:

1. Build a vision of inclusive education
2. Develop teachers’ skills and confidence in being an inclusive educator
3. Create “meaningful incentives for people to take the risk of embarking on an inclusive schooling journey”
4. Reorganize and expand human and other resources for teaching diverse students
5. Engage in action planning with a focus on “strategies for motivating staff, students, and the community to become excited about the new big picture.” (p. 48)

Fisher et al. (1999) found that in high schools where principals were successful at creating an inclusive environment, decisions about inclusive education began with the administrator’s vision. Villa and Thousand (2017) stated that principals at inclusive schools stressed the importance of having and sharing a vision:

That all children are capable of learning; that all children have a right to an education alongside their peers, and; that the school system is responsible for attempting to address the unique needs of all children in the community.” (p. 49)
Leaders must also create a shared set of values with effective communication and trust in order to encourage and support the inclusion of everyone (Carter & Abawi, 2018). For inclusive practices to be successful, the principal must ensure that the classroom and school environments, as well as the curricular content and instructional strategies that are implemented all align with the foundational premises of inclusion and the vision of the school (Delaney, 2001). Capper et al. (2000) found that principals who are successful at creating inclusive schools also encourage the use of new teaching strategies.

Other ways in which principals can support inclusive education have been identified by Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis (2008). Although this study primarily focused on inclusion for students with disabilities in an elementary and middle school, the general practices can be used to support all students. One way to support all students in public schools is to examine the physical structure of the school to ensure that the classrooms and buildings are conducive to planning, supporting, and implementing inclusion (Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008). Creating a consistent building schedule which allows for common planning time for teachers as well as implementing procedures that foster a professional learning community were also identified by Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis (2008).

Principals are also vital in setting high expectations for the learning of all, setting the tone of a school’s approach to inclusion and equity, and in ensuring the shared responsibility of all student learning (Burrello & Zadnik, 1986; Capper et al., 2000; Ross & Berger, 2009). Poon-McBrayer and Wong (2013) found that principals believe that a close partnership with teachers along with a shared vision are important for inclusive
education to be successful. Capper et al. (2000) also found that at inclusive schools, the principals hired compatible staff in order to build the school community and strengthen the vision and core beliefs. Hiring staff who will embrace the principal’s vision of inclusion is also an important task for principals (Ryan, 2010).

Principals of successful inclusive schools make themselves visible, approachable, and accessible (Capper et al., 2000). These principals also try to understand what is going on in every classroom and every grade level (Capper et al., 2000). Principals of successful inclusive schools also provide support to the school staff (Capper et al., 2000). There were four types of support identified in the study: staff development; resources and materials; time and scheduling support; and general, ongoing support (Capper et al., 2000). Goor et al. (1997) also recommended that principals establish a common language, observe instruction and provide timely feedback, share resources and expertise, and demonstrate and discuss new instructional methods and materials through professional development forums such as in-service training and faculty meetings.

In a case study of an elementary principal who facilitated inclusive school practices in Australia, Carter and Abawi (2018) noted that the principal formed specific meeting structures to assist with capacity building. Participation in the meetings was expected and the purpose of every meeting was clearly described to team members (Carter & Abawi, 2018). The principal also led a leadership team, which created a school-wide pedagogical framework and school vision (Carter & Abawi, 2018).

A final practice to support all students was creating a school climate that is warm and welcoming for children and staff (Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008). In order to
ensure long-range success, schools and principals need to include the whole school community and make inclusion a routine and integral part of the school process (Carter & Abawi, 2018). Although inclusion for all is becoming a more researched topic in the United States, Forlin (2010) stated that future research “would benefit enormously from the investigation of a wider range of approaches that consider culture, ethnicity, diversity, and equity as foundational critical aspects for inclusion” (p. 652). One way to address this is to investigate principal training programs.

Principal training programs can impact a future principal’s view and implementation of inclusive educational practices. In a study of three experts who train educational leaders to be inclusive, all three described inclusion and social justice as being the foundation for creating schools that include students of various ability levels and embrace diversity (Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008). One expert stated that leaders should understand that although inclusive schools originally developed out of the special education field, inclusion is actually about “creating equity for all students” (Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008, p. 236). Another leader held the belief that a leader is not a leader if they do nothing about ending exclusion and separate programs (Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008). The same expert believed that leaders see inclusion as desirable, have a vision of inclusion, believe that is possible, and feel a sense of agency in order to be successful inclusive leaders (Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008).
Gaps in Inclusion Research

In addition to the many varied definitions of inclusion and inclusive education, there are gaps in the current research on the topic. Numerous studies on inclusion have been conducted in other countries such as Tanzania (Polat, 2011), Ireland (Shevlin et al., 2013), Scotland (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011), South Africa (Oswald & de Villiers, 2013), Finland and South Africa (Savolainen et al., 2012), Bangladesh (Ahmmed et al., 2012), Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia (Carter & Abawi, 2018; Loreman et al., 2005), and Canada (Lyons et al., 2016; Sharma et al., 2008). There are very few published studies which have been conducted on the topic of inclusion in public schools in the United States, and none that have specifically occurred in South Carolina.

Furthermore, Brotherson et al. (2012) studied inclusion in an early childhood educational setting for students with disabilities in Iowa. McLeskey and Waldron (2011) analyzed studies conducted in the United States regarding inclusion in elementary schools. The vast majority of the studies on inclusion have been conducted at the elementary or middle school level, very few have been conducted at the high school level.

Barriers to Inclusion

As with any educational initiative, there are barriers that administrators have to address in order to ensure success. Barriers to inclusion most frequently cited include teacher attitude and teacher training.

Teacher Attitude
Teacher attitude can be described as a teacher’s cognitive beliefs and knowledge, their feelings, and their predisposition to act toward a specific topic (Boer et al., 2010). A general education teacher’s attitude towards students who are in one of the special populations can greatly impact the classroom and each student. Numerous scholars, such as Berry (2010), Doyle (2002), and Sharma et al. (2008) have investigated general education teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion, but these studies have been limited to attitudes toward inclusion for students with identified disabilities with an Individualized Education Plan or have been conducted in other countries (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Savolainen et al., 2012).

Even with increasingly high numbers of ESOL students receiving their instruction in general education classrooms, Karabenick and Clemens Noda (2004) found that 70% of general education teachers stated ESOL students would be welcome in their classrooms. Brooks et al. (2010) found contradictory results of the ESOL teachers being viewed as bearing the primary responsibility for instruction of ESOL students in many schools. Another concern is that 66% percent of general education teachers thought ESOL students took up more of their time than other students (Karabenick & Clemens Noda, 2004). Conversely, 45% of general education teachers believed that the school programs made resources and materials for ESOL students available for use in general education classrooms (Karabenick & Clemens Noda, 2004). Interestingly, Karabenick and Clemens Noda also found that general education teachers with more positive attitudes toward ESOL students in general were less likely to view these students as requiring more resources than their English language only peers.
General education teachers also believed that having students with disabilities in their classrooms impeded the learning of other students (Berry, 2010). Further, Berry (2010) found that general education teachers did not believe “that instructional techniques effective with students with disabilities could be successfully used with general education students” (p. 90). A similar sentiment was noted in Ainscow’s (2015) study of inclusion in an urban high school in Portugal. Ainscow (2015) found when general education teachers held a deficiency belief regarding studies with different abilities and needs that the best pedagogical methods were ineffective.

Other studies, like the one conducted by Cook (2004), have attempted to link various factors such as socioeconomic status of the school and level of teaching experience to a general education teacher’s attitude towards inclusion. Berry (2010) found that pre-service general education teachers held positive beliefs about including students with disabilities, but they did not believe they had enough experience to meet their needs instructionally. Similarly, Kaikkonen (2010) found that general education teachers who report more self-confidence in their professional competence with inclusive educational practices exhibit more positive attitudes to inclusion. These issues are however, still a concern that have not been studied with currently practicing general education teachers whose teacher training programs did not have inclusive educational opportunities and instruction embedded within their programs.

Florian and Linklater (2010), however, found that although general education teachers might feel uncertain about how to respond to particular learning difficulties, and they may not feel confident in making modifications or adaptations, it does not
necessarily mean they as teachers are lacking in knowledge, skills, or teaching abilities. There is a clear disconnect in the research as to what is causing some general education teachers to be successful in embracing inclusive practice and what is hindering other teachers from doing so. As the definition of inclusion changes to a perspective of diversity from one of disability, teacher preparation also needs to change (Forlin, 2010). There is also an issue for general education teachers balancing individual student learning with the ever-increasing demands set in national and local curricula (Kaikkonen, 2010).

**Teacher Training**

Teacher training programs no doubt set the tone for the attitude future general education teachers will have upon entering the workforce, so it is imperative to investigate what is occurring during this time of training. Studies like those conducted by Carroll et al. (2003) have focused on pre-service training for new general education teachers. Other scholars, such as Boling (2007), have studied the evolution of a teacher candidate’s conceptions of inclusive teaching. Studies such as these are limited in their definition of inclusion and restrict it to the inclusion of students with disabilities. Oswald and de Villiers (2013) found that South African teachers did not believe they were “adequately trained to address the needs of all learners” (p. 8). Teachers reported they were trained to meet the needs of struggling students, but not the needs of gifted students (Oswald & de Villiers, 2013). Theoharis et al. (2016) posited that general education teachers need to have the skills and dispositions to collaborate with other adults as well to meet the needs of all the students in their classroom.
This lack of training presents a concern when coupled with the fact that on a national survey, only 52% of new general education teachers (those with five or fewer years of experience) reported that they felt well prepared to differentiate instruction in their first year of teaching (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d. 2). This underwhelming number of general education teachers reporting feeling prepared begs many questions about how they become prepared to engage in differentiating instruction on the job. Other authors, such as Lasky and Karge (2006), investigated principal involvement, beliefs, and knowledge of special education and indicated future research needs to focus on the types of support teachers and staff receive from administrators. Though this future research implication was specific to special education, it is clear that future research also needs to be expanded to include support for education for all student populations.

Kurniawati et al. (2014) conducted a meta-analysis of studies conducted on primary age general education teacher preparation programs to determine their effectiveness in preparing teachers to meet the needs of special education students within their classrooms. They found 30% of the studies had a focus on changing the teachers’ attitude toward inclusion, while another 30% focused on improving the teachers’ knowledge. Half of the studies were specific towards pre-service general education teachers, while the other half were focused on in-service teachers. The majority of the training programs were at least 20 hours in length, although the shortest program was only 200 minutes and the longest was 56 hours. Kurniawati et al. (2014) stated the majority of the studies included yielded positive effects on teachers, but long-term
carryover was not documented as only two of the studies had a follow-up component. This is evidence that not all teacher programs are created equal, but that various inclusion components aimed at improving teacher attitude and knowledge that are impeded within each program can be successful.

Teacher preparation programs are beginning to make improvements by adding courses on inclusive practices. Forlin et al. (2009) found that after a course on inclusive education, pre-service teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion and their views of people with disabilities became significantly more positive. Forlin and Chambers (2011) similarly found a strong link existed between pre-service general education teachers’ attitudes and concerns about inclusion, as well as their perceived levels of knowledge after they took a course on inclusive educational practice. They found teachers’ attitudes became more positive and their concerns decreased when their knowledge and confidence increased.

Carroll et al. (2003) found that general education teachers reported that a lack of resources coupled with inadequate teacher preparation caused an apparent inability to provide the best educational programs to children with special needs. Ahmmed et al. (2012) found when teachers perceived that they received more support in the school environment for inclusive teaching practices, they felt more positively about including students with disabilities in their classrooms.

A plethora of research is currently available that provides recommendations for improving teacher education programs. Englebrecht (2013) recommended that the following areas of competence for inclusion be included in all teacher education
programs: supporting all learners, working with others, and providing personal professional development. Supporting all learners refers to promoting the social-emotional, academic, and practical learning for all students in addition to effective teaching in classrooms with diverse learners (Englebrecht, 2013). Working with others emphasizes collaboration with parents, other educators, and families, and personal professional development refers to teachers being reflective practitioners and utilizing initial teacher education training to create continuing professional development plans (Englebrecht, 2013).

Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) found that general education teachers who have an inclusive pedagogy shift their perceptions of inclusive instruction to the learning of all children in the classroom by creating learning opportunities for every student. These teachers also made a rich learning community in the school environment and created a focus on what is to be taught and how it will be taught, as opposed to focusing on only what the student is learning. Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) also found teachers with an inclusive pedagogy reject deterministic beliefs about ability, believe that all students will learn and make progress, focus instruction on what students can do, support the learning of all by using various grouping strategies, and commit to ongoing professional development.

The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2012) developed a Profile of Inclusive Teachers in a three-year project which included members from 55 countries. The Profile included core values as well as standards for teacher evaluation and competencies for teachers to master, which can be used to create
professional development opportunities. The competencies defined are each comprised of skills and abilities; attitudes and beliefs; and knowledge and understanding. The four core values are valuing learner diversity, supporting all learners, working with others, and personal professional development (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012). Although the Profile was developed specifically for students with disabilities, several of the competences within it align with instructional leadership components such as having created a shared vision/understanding of inclusion, high expectations, collaboration with other educational professionals, and developing teachers through professional learning opportunities (Louis et al., 2010b; Navarro et al., 2016; Watkins & Donnelly, 2014).

**The Principal as an Instructional Leader**

Leithwood, et al. (2012) defined leadership as being about the direction, influence, and stability of leaders in making organizational improvements. An instructional leader would apply this definition with the goal of improving instructional practices and student learning (Louis et al., 2010a). There is a plethora of research studies investigating the link between leadership and student achievement with the vast majority of them noting indirect and often small effects (Louis et al., 2010a; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). This indirect contribution of leaders tends to result from leaders’ influence on teachers and staff or on the district environment and conditions (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004). Louis et al. (2010) summarized the instructional leadership practices that have been researched and been found to be impactful on student
achievement. The four overarching categories are setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program.

**Setting Directions**

Setting directions involves creating goals and visions for the school, setting the educational expectations, and communicating this information to all stakeholders (Leithwood et al., 2004; Louis et al., 2010). Setting directions encompasses developing high performance expectations, communicating the direction, creating a shared vision, and nurturing the acceptance of group goals. Instructional leaders need to have basic understandings of the instructional practices and curriculum content in order to create goals and visions which can be attainable (Louis et al., 2010).

Marzano et al. (2005) also found that the leader’s establishment of procedures and routines for the school environment has been found to significantly impact student achievement. This provides evidence that it’s not sufficient to simply state a goal, but leaders must also provide the means in which to reach the goal with guidelines and support (Marzano et al., 2005). Robinson et al.’s (2008) meta-analysis on instructional leadership makes a key illumination regarding goal setting and expectations: effective leaders align them with student outcomes. Louis et al. (2010) also found that all principals in their study stated that focusing the school on goals and expectations for student achievement was important, as did 66.7% teachers.

**Developing People**

Developing people involves providing teachers and others in the school environment with individual support and training in order to build capacity (Leithwood et
al., 2004; Louis et al., 2010b). This area also includes modeling suitable practices and values as well as providing intellectual stimulation (Louis et al., 2010b). Robinson et al. (2008) found that leaders in higher performing schools were more involved in coordinating, planning, and evaluating teaching practices.

Another of the foci Leithwood et al. (2004) identified as impacting student achievement is job-embedded professional development. The quality of professional development has the strongest impact on student achievement when looking at the relationship between principal leadership and instructional quality (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Effective instructional leaders also monitor and evaluate the professional development to not only determine the needs for specific types of professional development, but also to determine whether or not the activities provided were beneficial or impactful (Marzano et al., 2005). Robinson et al. (2008) found student outcomes were highly correlated with the level at which the teachers reported leaders to be active participants in professional development type activities. When administrators removed themselves from professional development activities, teachers removed themselves from the collaboration process (Carpenter, 2015). Principals and the vast majority of teachers reported that the principal keeping track of teacher professional development needs is important (Louis et al., 2010b).

**Redesigning the Organization**

The purpose of redesigning the organization is to support and sustain the performance of stakeholders by modifying and/or creating collaborative environments to strengthen the overall culture of the school (Leithwood et al., 2004; Louis et al., 2010b).
This often involves restructuring of the organization and building relationships (Louis et al., 2010b). This area of instructional leadership is an extremely crucial one as Louis et al. (2010b) state “organizational setting in which people work shapes much of what they do” (p 68). The most distinctive way district leaders can redesign the organization is by creating effective school climates and cultures.

The quality of instruction in the school is most significantly impacted by principals who can successfully develop strong school climates (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). It is further posited by researchers that teachers who tend to have a higher caliber of instructional environment believe that the climate of the school is good (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Additionally, elements of school climate accounted for some increases of student achievement indirectly via leader trustworthiness and behaviors (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). 78% of high school teachers reported that it was important for the principal to create opportunities and structures that allow teachers to collaborate (Louis et al., 2010). Collaboration can occur in many ways, but collaboration is much easier when a professional community exists.

The creation and fostering of professional communities is one way in which instructional leaders can improve student achievement. Not only has effective leadership been shown to strengthen professional community, but the professional community in itself has been shown to be a predictor of instructional practices significantly related to student learning (Louis et al., 2010a). Leithwood et al. (2012) note that a professional community is complex and involves reflective conversations, a common focus, a collective responsibility for learning, and shared values. Professional communities are
most effective when the administrators and teachers have a shared understanding that the goal of professional communities is student improvement and achievement (Carpenter, 2015). A school climate that fosters student effort exceeding that of the general education classroom can possibly account for the relationship between professional community and student achievement (Louis et al., 2010b).

**Managing the Instructional Program**

The fourth practice Louis et al. (2010a) include is managing the instructional program which involves allocating resources and support for instructional practice (Louis et al., 2010b). These authors also found that record keeping of teacher professional development needs and creating collaboration friendly environments are practices central in impacting student achievement. Monitoring school activity, ensuring there are enough staff to meet the needs of students, and buffering staff from distractions to their work are also essential practices principals must engage in to manage the instructional program (Louis et al., 2010b).

Moderate effects have been found on teachers’ work by the levels of perceived support from school administrators (Leithwood et al., 2004). Little research has been conducted regarding support at the high school level relative to the principal managing the instructional program. However, just under 35% of high school teachers reported that the principal monitoring their classroom work was important (Louis et al., 2010b). Furthermore, Louis et al. (2010b) found that middle and high school principals were cited more frequently than elementary school principals as inadequately supporting instructional practices of teachers.
Principal Support

Principal leadership undoubtedly influences teachers, which has been discussed briefly throughout this chapter thus far. Scholars have found there are moderate effects of the level of perceived support from school administrators on teachers’ work (Leithwood et al., 2004). Littrell et al. (1994) investigated the impact of principal support on the intent to stay, stress, job satisfaction, commitment, and health of both general education and special education teachers. Littrell et al. found that teachers rated themselves to be more satisfied with their work when their principals provided emotional and informational support. Park et al. (2019) found that teachers who received higher levels of principal support were more likely to participate in the professional learning communities and have higher feelings of collective responsibility for student learning. Boyd et al. (2011) analyzed teacher surveys and found administrator support was the most influential factor when they made decisions to leave or stay in the district. More recently, Liu et al. (2020) found that across 32 countries instructional leadership and distributed leadership has positive, although indirect, impacts on teacher job satisfaction.

Other studies, such as DiPaola and Walther-Thomas (2003) cited the administrator’s lack of knowledge and subsequent lack of support to special education teachers as being a major factor in special education teacher retention. DiPaola and Walther-Thomas (2003) noted “the shortage of well-prepared, competent school principals has the potential to exacerbate the current nationwide shortage of special educators” (p. 14). This is important in relation to Wakeman et al.’s (2006) finding that secondary principals who understand special education law and the needs of students
with disabilities also provide special education teachers with various resources. They also found that secondary principals who indicated higher levels of special education knowledge also reported being involved in more special education activities (Wakeman et al., 2006). In a national survey of special education teachers, Fowler et al. (2019) found that 36% of those survey indicated that principals who support the special education process is important to ensuring their success as teachers.

In another national study, teachers reported that principals who practiced effective instructional leadership created cultures of reflection, lifelong learning, collaboration, and inquiry (Blase & Blase, 2002). May and Supovitz (2011) found in their survey of 1,600 general education teachers across 51 schools that 10% of teachers reporting having no interactions with the principal on instructional leadership tasks including the principal observing in their classroom. This study also found that the amount of time a principal spends on instructional leadership tasks is predictive of increases in changes to instruction in the school. May and Supovitz (2011) further found that the teachers with the most interactions with the principal on instructional leadership tasks were found to have the most positive instructional changes. Several authors have focused on how building level administrators who are instructional leaders impact special education teachers’ instructional practices (Bays & Crockett, 2007; Cale et al., 2015; Frost & Kersten, 2011). However, none have studied this impact on general education teacher practices specific to other or all special populations including gifted, 504 Accommodation Plan, and ESOL students.
Given that administrator support has been found to be an important factor in the decision making process of teachers, it is imperative for research to delineate what types or forms of administrator support are deemed more beneficial to general education teachers specifically when it comes to teaching special population students within the general education classroom.

**Creating a Vision and Inclusive Culture**

Zollers et al. (1999) found three components that contributed to a school’s inclusive culture: a vision of school community, shared values, and inclusive leadership. Principals must discuss and display within their school environment the expectations for all staff to work and interact with students of all learning needs. In order for inclusion to be successful, principals must have a vision of inclusion and believe it is achievable (Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008). Capper et al. (2000) assert that it is not enough for principals to discuss their vision, but that principals must also make it explicit that all students are included in the vision. Capper et al. (2000) further posit that it is imperative that the principal’s vision be presented as something that is non-negotiable in order for it to be effective.

Goor et al. (1997) found that effective school administrators believe all children can learn, teachers can teach a wide range of students, and accept all children as part of their school community. These beliefs align well with the tenets of inclusive practice. Bays and Crockett (2007) stated that principal instructional leadership practice must involve creating a vision for effective instruction that includes students with disabilities, as well as creating norms of collaboration and trust, and providing support to teachers.
with monitoring of instruction. Additionally, the principal must lead by example and model the inclusion of all students throughout the school (Capper et al., 2000).

Blase and Blase (2004) found that successful instructional leaders believed that a key to successful teaching and learning was the use of collaborative networks. These networks were encouraged through inter- and intra-departmental meeting times, grade level meeting times, the principal modeling a teamwork philosophy, common planning times, and other informal collaborative opportunities available throughout the week (Blase & Blase, 2004). Blase and Blase (2002) found that effective principals provided time for collaborative work, modeled teamwork, and acknowledged that collaborative networks are essential for successful teaching and learning. Effective inclusive principals also provide extra assistance, materials, and people so that teachers can have in-service time. (Ryan, 2006). In inclusive educational settings, teachers have the opportunity to contribute to the implementation of inclusion (Zollers et al., 1999).

Goor et al. (1997) posited that effective leadership involves collaboration with students, teachers, and parents. Teaching and learning in the general education classroom can be supported through collaboration with colleagues in specialized disciplines (Florian & Linklater, 2010). The collaboration across disciplines can be impactful on the inclusive pedagogy and practice, though it has not been formally studied. Brooks et al. (2010) posited that general education teachers and school principals must also collaborate to support ESOL students. These opportunities may be perceived by teachers as a system of support to improve inclusive education practices, but no formal studies have been done to investigate this link. Principal use of instructional leadership strategies lead to increased
teacher reflection, sense of efficacy, creativity, instructional focus, motivation, and self-esteem (Blase & Blase, 2002).

The administrator’s vision is also essential in creating an inclusive environment and expectations as these also impact how teachers perceive their instruction for all students. Cobb’s (2015) meta-analysis also evidenced the importance of the principal creating and following a vision for inclusive practice throughout the building. The meta-analysis briefly describes various ways each study demonstrated qualitatively how the principal created and implemented the vision, but the studies are limited in their scope of special education only and are not generalizable to inclusion for all special populations. In this meta-analysis, 8 of the 19 studies described ways in which principals act as visionaries when supporting inclusive program delivery and 14 of the 19 studies described ways in which principals facilitate staff collaboration as they work to foster special education inclusion (Cobb, 2015). How principals create these environments and expectations and how students in special populations are included in this vision of the administrator are important to research especially now given the changes in population dynamics and the types of learners entering the school systems.

Regardless of the aforementioned federal laws and standards, and their subsequent impacts and implications, school principals continue to indicate that they have little understanding of state standards for students with disabilities or of how to design programs and curricula for students with disabilities (Frost & Kersten, 2011). Similarly, 30% of secondary principals surveyed reported having limited knowledge and familiarity with universally designed lessons (Wakeman et al., 2006). Universally designed lessons
provide multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement in each lesson to meet the learning needs of each student, not only those identified as having a disability (National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2014).

Bai and Martin (2015) conducted surveys of school principals and their perception of their own experience and knowledge of students with disabilities. Principals reported that they had a desire to gain more knowledge in order to be more effective in serving students with disabilities. The authors also found that all of the school principals reported that they need more professional development on how to serve students with disabilities (Bai & Martin, 2015). These views and feelings expressed by principals lead one to question what is occurring in training programs and through professional development.

According to New Leaders Inc. (2018), eight states planned to update their school leadership standards to create a clearer vision of the principal as an instructional leader. Many other states also included ways to use funding to provide school leaders who create environments that provide equitable access of effective leaders and teachers to high needs populations of students such as students of color (New Leaders Inc., 2018). With such inconsistency in state standards, more information needs to be obtained to gain a better understanding of where principals gain their knowledge of creating inclusive educational environments.

**Providing Professional Development Opportunities**

Cobb’s (2015) meta-analysis of studies on principal leadership relative to special education inclusion found that effective principals organized and budgeted for
professional development opportunities to improve inclusive practices. Blase and Blase (2004) found that successful instructional leaders frequently provide formal professional development (PD) opportunities to address instructional needs as well as to encourage and to provide information and means for teachers to attend professional development activities outside of the school environment. Principals who had co-teaching services in the school reported that professional development opportunities were the most frequently reported form of support to general education and special education teachers (Kamens et al., 2013).

Principals need to provide training to teachers and staff in order to not only build capacity to support all students in inclusive environments, but also to provide training on how to differentiate instruction, and how to collaborate with other educational professionals (Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis, 2009). One form of collaboration is attending common professional development opportunities for general education and special education teachers. These activities help foster an inclusive environment (Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis, 2009).

Professional development topics and opportunities should align with the principal’s overall vision for the school and the instruction. Effective instructional leaders also monitor and evaluate the PD to not only determine the needs for specific types of professional development, but also to determine whether or not the activities provided were beneficial or impactful (Marzano et al., 2005). In a study of special education inclusion, Brotherson et al. (2001) found that many elementary principals in Iowa believed that teachers needed time to engage in PD on inclusion and that principals
needed to assist in the growth and change of the teachers. Despite this belief, principals were unable to describe how to provide the type(s) of support needed for professional growth either long term or short term (Brotherson et al., 2001).

Blase and Blase (2002) found that effective principals valued communication that encouraged teachers’ reflection on their own learning and professional practice. Blase & Blase also found that effective principals provided PD opportunities that addressed emergent needs for teachers to enhance their own reflective behavior by encouraging and allowing teacher’s discretion in attending conferences and workshops.

Several of the previously mentioned studies were focused narrowly on inclusion for special education only and did not include inclusive practices for other special populations. There have been limited studies regarding PD opportunities to meet the needs of ESOL students. Despite this, professional development is important as many ESOL students receive the majority of their instruction from content-area teachers who have not had any formal training. In addition, less than 13% of general education teachers in the United States have received PD to help them in teaching these students (Echevarria et al., 2006; National Center for Education Statistics, 2002).

Not only are the topics of professional development and the opportunity to engage in professional development important, but the quality of professional development has also been found to have the strongest impact on student achievement when looking at the relationship between principal leadership and instructional quality (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Blase and Blase (2004) found that teachers reported positive increases in motivation, reflexivity, reflection, self-esteem, and a sense of support after
attending PD activities. In addition to the quality and topics of PD being important, so too is the method or mode of professional development. Professional development opportunities can be provided via numerous methods; therefore it is important to determine which opportunities suggested or provided by the principal are perceived to be more beneficial to general education teachers, especially those, if any, that are relevant to providing inclusive education opportunities for all students.

Professional development grants are also authorized in the ESSA to train educators in providing assessment and instructional accommodations for students with disabilities (Ekstrand, 2016). Other programs under Title II of the ESSA creates grant opportunities for principals to engage in professional development and engage in other learning activities, as well as to improve principal preparation, recruitment, placement, retention, and support (Herman et al., 2017).

**Lack of Principal Training**

Training is a required, necessary part of how a person learns the necessary skills and mindset to become an effective principal. Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis (2008) asserted that literature about leadership preparation in leading inclusive schools is limited even though the field of educational leadership has been developing more research in this area. Research on principals’ and university professors’ perspectives indicate that more opportunities for authentic learning are warranted and that curriculum preparation needs to be more strategic in meeting the needs of students (Johnson & James, 2019). Angelle and Bilton (2009) found that 53% of principals reported their administrator preparation program required no coursework in special education topics. This is a seemingly high
number given that 11.6% of public school students in the 2011-12 school year had an Individualized Education Plan (National Center of Education Statistics, n.d.). This is especially concerning given that Davis’s (1980) study of principal knowledge, training, and experiences of principals in Maine evidenced similar results in that 51.9% of principals reported not taking any courses in special education in their educational history despite 58% of principals indicating that such training is very important.

Davis (1980) also found that 86.6% of principals in Maine believed that their time spent on special education topics moderately, majorly, or extremely significantly increased as a result of legislation. Similarly, and more recently, McHatton et al. (2010) found that 63% of administrators reported their administrator preparation program required no course work in gifted education. No available studies could be found relative to administrator preparation programs requiring coursework for ESOL students despite the fact that in the United States these students comprised 9.5% of enrolled public school students in the 2015-16 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018).

A more recent study by Kamens et al. (2013) evidenced similar sentiments from principals in New Jersey. Principals reported that special education content was sporadic in graduate courses (Kamens et al., 2013). Principals also reported that there was little opportunity at the district or state level for training on special education topics (Kamens et al., 2013). Principals again reported that they wanted more training in special education topics, but they could not articulate which areas they wanted training in (Kamens et al., 2013). School leadership preparation also needs to work to create leaders who are advocates for students who are marginalized (Theoharis, 2010).
In a study of principal preparation course syllabi from 56 university programs across the United States, Hess and Kelly (2007) found that approximately 51% of instructional time on technical knowledge topics in what they described as elite programs was focus on law. Approximately 46% of technical knowledge time at large programs and 37% of time in typical programs were spent on law. It is unclear what types of laws were discussed specifically. They also found that only 12% of instructional weeks within the syllabi focused on norms and values. Additionally, they found that only 7.3% of the instructional weeks in elite programs discussed leadership and school culture. Only 4.1% and 6.6% of large and typical programs, respectively, covered leadership and school culture (Hess & Kelly, 2007).

Ryan (2006) stated that there is often little choice in training opportunities for administrators to gain more experience and knowledge in the area of inclusion other than informal learning opportunities. Professional development for school principals can occur through a variety of learning experiences including workshops, coaching, or mentoring opportunities (Herman et al. 2017). Training in and of itself is not the only way for principals to generate knowledge, but Ball and Green (2014) found that 39% of principals had no personal experience with individuals with disabilities, yet despite this, the more training the principal had, the more negative his/her attitude was towards inclusion for students with disabilities. Angelle and Bilton (2009) found that 51% of principals indicated they received information about special education from professional development activities. This number is somewhat encouraging in that it indicates that some principals are pursuing continued learning on such topics on their own.
McHatton et al. (2010), however, reported that 75% of principals in their study indicated that the majority of professional development they received related to special and gifted education was focused primarily on legal issues, which is only one facet of instructing and interacting with these special population students. Despite the higher rates of professional development in legal issues, principals still considered themselves less effective in legal issues than other areas (McHatton et al., 2010). Martin (2015) found that principals, regardless of years of experience or educational background, indicated they needed more training in special education topics.

**Higher Education Trainer Perspectives**

Expert higher education administrator trainers were adamant principal learning should be “personal and grounded in the local school situation (Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008; p. 239). Higher education administrators reported that they believed this because the process for students acquiring the knowledge and skills to be inclusive leaders requires more than in-class activities and assignments, and course readings (Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008). In order for workshops and conferences to be helpful to administrators, the opportunities must connect with the everyday experiences of the principal (Ryan, 2006). Ryan (2006) found that administrator preparation programs that make such connections are scarce. One of the frequent frustrations expressed regarding administrator preparation programs is that they have moved content away from a focus on classrooms and do not keep up with instructional theories and practices (Acker-Hocevar & Cruz-Jansen, 2008).
Levine (2005) conducted a national study of principal preparation programs through surveys of college deans, college faculty, alumni, and current school principals. Levine (2005) noted that 80 percent of principals reported that the programs they attended had the same core of courses which were: curriculum development, child and adolescent development, teaching and learning, research methods, educational psychology, school law, the school principalship, foundations of education, and instructional leadership. Of these classes, only 63% found them valuable and further indicated that the most relevant courses were child and adolescent psychology, instructional leadership, and school law (Levine, 2005). Furthermore, more than 40% of those surveyed reported that their preparation programs were poor to fair in preparing them to work with students from different socioeconomic backgrounds and to work in a diverse school environment.

These findings, along with Lynch’s (2012) finding that only eight states in the United States of America require special education training for principals in training create some questions about the specific types of and content covered in administrator training programs and the subsequent impact on their school leadership roles and capacities. Despite the large number of students with special needs, it is evident that administrator preparation programs are not providing adequate training for principals to successfully navigate working with and providing instructional leadership for students from special populations including special education, gifted education, and ESOL students. As a result, it is necessary to examine where they receive training and generate
knowledge about how to support general education teachers to meet the educational
needs of all students.

The need for training on any topics for special population students for
administrators and general education teachers becomes particularly relevant given 98% of
secondary principals stated they believed that the principal is responsible for all students
and 81% stated all students have access to instruction in the general education classroom
(Wakeman et al., 2006). Special population students should be included in the goals of
principals given 30% report encouraging academic excellence is the most important goal
to them as educators (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Similarly, Lasky and
Karge (2006) found 96% of principals believed mainstreaming students enabled students
with and without disabilities to improve educationally and socially. When a principal has
knowledge of such topics, provides additional resources, and is involved, it can be
extremely impactful on teacher retention and school culture. Other factors that impact
teacher retention decisions include supervision and evaluation (Cale et al., 2015).

Need for Stronger Supervision and Evaluation Skills

Principals have many job functions and responsibilities in their buildings, but two
important roles that greatly impact teachers are supervision and evaluation. Cale et al.
(2015) found that principals are not able to provide effective supervision or evaluation to
special education teachers due to the lack of knowledge and training in special student
population topics. This is interesting though, when combined with the fact that only 22%
of elementary school principals indicated that they perceived their role to be a provider of
administrative support to special education teachers (Frost & Kerstin, 2011).
Notwithstanding the need for additional training and the contradictory views principals appear to have, principals report spending more time and energy on special education legal, procedural, and compliance matters than on instructional matters, which is contradictory for principals who purport to be instructional leaders (Bays & Crockett, 2007). The mismatch in training, perceived roles, and beliefs creates questions about how principals are expressing their thoughts and perceived importance of instruction for all students within their buildings. There is no research available from the general education teacher perspective regarding principal time spent as being beneficial or supportive especially when it comes to inclusive practices.

**Appreciative Inquiry**

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a strengths-based framework, most often used in action research with ethnographic methods, based on social constructivist theory (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Ryan et al., 1999). The social constructivist lens will help me to gain a better understanding of the social systems and the realities created within the school (Cooperrider, et al., 2008). Use of the AI framework allows the participants to envision future outcomes through a positive lens and hone in on the successes within the environment (Calebrese et al., 2008).

AI is also based on grounded theory which aims to systematically analyze data and understand the social interactions to explain a process or idea (Lingard et al., 2008). In grounded theory, it is important that there is openness of the stakeholders to understand the organization (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). AI allows members of the entity to find the root cause(s) of the organization’s success and discover the positive
The original design of AI was based on the 4-D cycle and five basic principles described in Chapter 1, although the most recent updates to AI by Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (2010) added a fifth D, three more principles, and six freedoms. The additional D is for Define. Define is the first D in the remodeled cycle, which refers to defining the area in need of inquiry (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010).

AI is comprised of eight principles. The eight principles of AI are the constructionist principle, the simultaneity principle, the poetic principle, the anticipatory principle, the positive principle, the wholeness principle, the enactment principle, and the free choice principle (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). The constructionist principle refers to reality being socially developed through the conversations and language used. Meaning is created through the use of the conversations and the social interactions also create knowledge which can be used to foster change and growth. Stories allow the researcher to see the collaboration and relationships that are reflective of the principal’s practice (Calebrese et al., 2008). The social knowledge within the school is created by every person in each school and obtaining the perspective of many stakeholders is essential (Neville, 2008).

The simultaneity principle states that change and inquiry occur simultaneously. The poetic principle states that we choose what we study and subsequently learn. The anticipatory principle suggests that images can inspire and guide the actions toward future endeavors. The positive principle states that “positive questions lead to positive
changes” by intensifying the organization’s positive core (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010, p. 52). The wholeness principle posits that bringing all parties together in big forums builds collective capacity and encourages creativity. The enactment principle states that in order to make a change, a person must be the change (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). Lastly, the free choice principle states that when people have the freedom to determine what and how they contribute, they perform better (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010).

When the six freedoms or essential conditions are present in organizational change, Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010) assert that organizational power is unleashed. The six freedoms described by Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (2010) are:

1. Freedom to be known in relationship.
2. Freedom to be heard.
3. Freedom to dream in community.
4. Freedom to choose to contribute.
5. Freedom to act with support.
6. Freedom to be positive. (p. 270)

The first freedom allows people to know each other as individuals in relationships rather than just in their roles (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). The second freedom allows people to feel valued and be given a voice that another person listens to (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). The third freedom allows people within an organization the ability to safely share their dreams with others. The fourth freedom Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010) describe is one in which individuals get to choose which learning and work
opportunities they participate in within the organization. The freedom of acting with support means that individuals feel safe enough within the organization to take risks, learn, and be innovative when facing challenges. The sixth freedom Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010) discuss is the freedom to be positive, which allows people to be recognized and appreciated; have fun and be happy; and be proud of their work.

Due to the truncated nature of this AI research, the wholeness principle will not be directly addressed as I will not be gathering all of the parties together to hear each other’s differing views, although this will be encouraged at the conclusion of the study as the district may or may not decide to utilize the data from interviews to guide change implementation and engage all stakeholders. The enactment principle states that visions and images of the desired future are being implemented in the present-day. Lastly, the free choice principle states that when people are able to choose what they contribute they are more likely to thrive (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). This principle is partially addressed in the use of the various stakeholders being interviewed, but would likely be more useful to the school when making changes later.

The AI framework has not been widely studied in education as it began in the business world as a change facilitation framework for organizations. Theoharis & O’Toole (2011) used the AI framework to study a principal’s view of ESOL students using an asset-based orientation. The AI framework has also been utilized to study a Catholic high school in Pennsylvania (Ryan et al., 1999). The latter study was the first published study available that utilized AI in United States P-12 schools. Filleul and Rowland (2006) used AI to enhance learning in a Canadian school district. He (2013)
used AI as a reflection tool for ESOL teacher candidates in the United States. The most similar study to this one was conducted by Lyons et al. (2016) to investigate the knowledge, perspectives, and values to create an inclusive environment in Canadian elementary schools using an AI framework. This study’s use of inclusion was limited to students with identified disabilities. It is important to note other similarities of this study to mine: interviews and the use of only the Discovery phase.

Many more studies have been conducted using AI in higher education. A study by Kozik et al. (2009) applied the AI framework to improve inclusive practices in higher education institutions in the state of New York. Several other studies conducted to study leadership in educational institutions in Canada, both higher education and P-12 schools, using the AI framework are described by Carr-Stewart and Walker (2003). He (2013) utilized the AI framework to study the cultural competence of graduate level ESOL teacher candidates. Calebresse et al. (2008) used an AI framework to investigate ways to improve training programs for educational administration in Canada, the United States of America, Singapore, and the United Kingdom. Priest et al. (2013) used the AI framework to study organizational change of a leadership education program in a U.S. university. Allen and Innes (2012) studied initial teacher education programs in Australia using an AI framework. Regardless of lack of wide use of the AI framework in P-12 school systems in the United States, I felt that this framework was the best one to utilize to study the supports principals are perceived to provide general education teachers.
Conceptual Framework

As there is no one clear, standard definition for what inclusion is, it logically follows that there is no one standard way that inclusive education looks. As is described in previous sections, the principal is the leader within the building and the vision they create sets the tone for the overall school environment (Bays & Crockett, 2007). This vision is especially important given that many teachers are provided limited to no graduate training in inclusive practices, which creates a lack of confidence in teachers when students with varying needs are in their classrooms.

The professional development the principal provides can be helpful to improve general education teachers’ practice, but questions remain regarding how principals know what professional development is necessary. Furthermore, principal training programs do not provide principals with extensive content on inclusive educational practices. As a result, questions also remain regarding where they gain their knowledge of how to create inclusive environments and provide support to teachers. Finally, due to the lack of training for principals and teachers compounded by the lack of clarity on what inclusive practice is and looks like, research is needed to understand how principals support general education teachers in engaging in inclusive educational practices. As can be seen in Figure 2.1 the conceptual framework for this study situates all of the issues affecting a principal’s support of general education teacher practice within an AI lens.
Many of the definitions of inclusion are about education that focuses on all learners, the strengths of students, collaboration, and teaching that is adaptive and supportive (see August et al., 2012; Forlin et al., 2009; Kaikkonen, 2010). All of these words are affirmative ones that promote the optimism of educational outcomes for everyone. Therefore, this is the definition that will be used to define inclusion for this study. The aim of this study was to determine what good inclusive practices the general education teachers engage in and how the principal supports general education teachers in
using them. Numerous studies which have been conducted in educational settings using AI have employed meta-analyses, literature reviews, and surveys to answer similar research questions. The majority of the studies focused on the administrator’s perceptions and beliefs or the special education teacher’s perceptions or beliefs, while few focused on the impact of the administrator’s leadership on the general education teacher’s perceptions and practice. Likewise, most available research for inclusion and inclusive education has focused solely on including students with disabilities, specifically those with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). There are other learners, however, whose education can be improved through the use of inclusive educational practices including ESOL and gifted students.

Many definitions of inclusion state “all students,” yet studies have not historically investigated this perspective. Using AI helped me focus the study on the existing strengths and productive things occurring within the building relative to inclusive education (Stratton-Berkessel, 2010). The positive language used in the definitions of inclusion also aligns well with the importance of the use of language in creating the realities in the AI framework (Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003).
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN

There are numerous laws and regulations in the United States that mandate equitable educational opportunities for all students. Historically the focus on equal educational opportunities has focused on students with disabilities, but in more recent years the number of students with different learning needs have increased. English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) students, students with a Section 504 Accommodation Plan, and Gifted and Talented students, in addition to students with disabilities, all evidence different instructional and environmental needs. General education teachers have reported concerns about meeting the needs of these students in the general education classrooms as many of these teachers report little to no training in working with these students. Administrators also report little to no training in working with these students or in assisting teachers in meeting the students’ needs.

As the number of students in each population entering public schools continues to increase, issues will likely continue to arise regarding how to properly meet their educational needs. Many studies have been conducted to show how principals can provide supports to general education students and create inclusive educational environments, but the vast majority of these studies have focused on students with disabilities. In this chapter, I describe the purpose, research questions, delimitations methodology, methods, and data analysis employed in this study. Limitations, trustworthiness/credibility, and positionality are also discussed.
Purpose & Research Questions

Using Appreciative Inquiry (AI), I investigated how two South Carolina high school principals were perceived to support general education teachers in engaging in inclusive educational practices for special population students within the general education classroom. AI’s poetic principle guided the selection of the topic of my study. The definition of inclusion for the purpose of this study is education that focuses on all learners, the strengths of students, collaboration, and teaching that is adaptive and supportive (August et al., 2012; Forlin et al., 2009; Kaikkonen, 2010). I also investigated the types of professional development opportunities on topics targeting inclusive instruction for special populations provided to general education teachers by principals. Lastly, my aim was to better understand the principal’s view of the methods or means by which South Carolina principals gain knowledge to guide themselves in leading general education teachers in using inclusive educational practices.

Delimitations

As mentioned before, the AI framework was not designed for educational environment change implementation, but was selected to investigate the positive things occurring in the educational environment that are being employed to make it inclusive. The cases were selected as convenience samples, but were appropriate for comparisons as one is an exemplar school and both were similar to other high schools in the Southeastern region of the United States. Additionally, a selected sample of staff were interviewed, which may not be representative of the entire staff’s views and opinions regarding principal support. However, general education teachers were selected to provide their
point of view regarding supports from the principal and special population teachers were selected to corroborate that view as well as add more specific information regarding each population. The principal’s perspective is also essential to compare and contrast the views of each staff member within the school to determine what is working well.

Methodology

To investigate this topic, I employed a case study methodology to compare multiple cases of rural high school principals. Using a case study allowed me to obtain large amounts of information about the schools that are providing an inclusive education (Hammersley, 2011). A case study also allowed for open-ended exploration of each school in order to better understand the creation and implementation of the inclusive educational environment (Hammersley, 2011). Using multiple cases allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the creation of inclusive educational environments and different supports principals can provide general education teachers (Miles et al., 2014). As multiple cases were studied, I attempted to use comparable case selection and choose similar school sites and staff in the same roles from each school to interview (Miles et al., 2014). Quota selection was used in the selection of participants from each school as I identified staff in each of the special population areas as well as set an arbitrary number of general education teachers to include (Miles et al., 2014). All of these strategies in analytic findings “increase confidence on the grounds of representativeness” (Miles et al., 2014, p 32).

AI is positioned in grounded theory which allowed for this study to be iterative and for me to engage in purposeful sampling (Lingard et al., 2008). In this study, I hoped
to understand the complex educational world to learn more about how teachers and principals perceive the administrative support given to general education teachers in engaging in inclusive educational practices (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Further, AI, which is situated within social constructivism, was utilized in this study to “facilitate respectful inquiry into a selected topic to discover what strengths and capacities are already present” in the school (Stratton-Berkessel, 2010, p. 3). The social constructivist lens also helped me to gain a better understanding of the social systems created within a school and the realities created within it (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Using an implementation perspective provided more opportunities for the interviewees to respond to the items from the point of view of the professional impact of the principal on them and their practice (Bailey, 2004). Moreover, AI’s poetic principle allowed multiple methods of interpretation of the stories shared by stakeholders on any topic (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Fifolt & Lander, 2013). This view of the positive principle and AI’s strengths-based approach that allows for all stakeholders to be equal also aligns well with the instructional leadership theory principles (Fifolt & Lander, 2013). The aim of this study was to determine what good inclusive practices the school engages in and how the principal was perceived to support general education teachers in using them. This framework also provides me an overall lens for studying principals and inclusive practices by shaping the questions asked, the data collection, and data analysis (Cresswell, 2014).
Research Methods

I conducted interviews at each school site as interviews are the most common method of inquiry in AI (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). I also collected relevant documents from each school site. In the subsequent sections, I describe the process I undertook for site selection of the cases, selection of interview participants, data collection, and data analysis.

Case Study Site Selection

The Define stage of the AI framework was completed in the selection process of the case (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). I sent an email to special education directors from a consortium of districts within the western region of South Carolina requesting nominations of principals in their districts whom have created inclusive school environments. Appendix A contains the script sent to special education directors. After the initial email, I received a total of eight principals, which were submitted by four special education directors. I sent a second follow-up email to all directors two weeks after the initial email. I received no additional responses at that time. Next, I compiled and analyzed data for each school from South Carolina report cards from 2018 (the most recently available data) found on the ed.sc.gov website. I also accessed the 2018 Report Card Data for Researchers and the 2018 Report Card Data for Researchers –Additional Information documents to collect information regarding the tenure of the principal, the principal’s name, as well as basic demographic information about the school such as address, number of students, and number of teachers.
Three of the principals who were nominated did not meet the study’s inclusionary criteria of the principal having been tenured at the same school for more than one school year, therefore the three names were excluded from the next steps. The five remaining schools were located in three school districts. The superintendents from each of the three school districts were contacted to obtain permission for principals in their district to be included in the study and to determine their agreement that the principal is an exemplar in having created an inclusive environment. See Appendix B for the script that was used to contact each superintendent. Two superintendents responded and agreed for three principals to be included in the study. I contacted each principal individually and explained the study as well as the recommendation for each to be included in the study. Appendix C contains the script used to contact all of the principals. All three principals willingly agreed to participate in the study. However, after numerous attempts to follow-up with each of the principals to gain access to the school and appropriate teachers, two of the principals did not respond, and therefore another school, a sample of convenience was selected. Both cases were in the same region of the state and in close proximity to the researcher’s place of employment and place of residence. I gave the principal, school, and each interviewee a pseudonym for confidentiality, which will be used throughout the remainder of this paper.

The exemplar principal who responded is the principal at Edinburg High School (EHS). I deliberately selected this school as it was perceived as an exemplar in inclusive education in South Carolina based on reports from various employees from the school’s respective district office (Morse, 2011). The principal, Christopher Smith, has been in his
position at Edinburg High School (EHS) for six academic school years. At the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, there were approximately 1,500 students enrolled at EHS; 49% female and 51% male (South Carolina Department of Education, 2020). Black or African American students made up 38% of the student population, while 14% were Hispanic or Latino, 43% were White, two percent were two or more races, one percent were Asian, and less than one percent were Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (South Carolina Department of Education, 2020). Additionally, 61% of students at EHS live in poverty (South Carolina Department of Education, 2020). There were approximately 220 ESOL students, 50 students with a 504 Plan, 360 gifted students, and 175 students with an IEP.

There were approximately 75 teachers employed at EHS. The principal of EHS selected all participants for each category of staff required for the study based on who was willing to participate. Staff interviews for EHS were scheduled by the principal on one day during each of the respective staff members’ planning time. All interviews at EHS took place in the school’s library conference room, with the exception of Mr. Smith’s interview, which took place via telephone due to scheduling conflicts. Participant names, roles, and years of experience for each interviewee from EHS are listed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Edinburg High School Staff List
A sample of convenience was utilized to select another high school principal for inclusion in the study. The district superintendent was contacted to obtain permission to include Samantha Foster, principal of Lewis High School in the study. The scripts in Appendices B and C were utilized when making contact at Lewis High School. The superintendent and Mrs. Foster granted permission for the study to occur at Lewis High School. During the 2019-2020 school year at Lewis High School, there were approximately 1,500 students enrolled; approximately 48% were females and 52% were males (South Carolina Department of Education, 2020). Of these students, 27% were identified as Black or African American, 12.8% were Hispanic or Latino, 57% were White, 2% were two or more races, and less than 1% of students were Asian or Hawaiian (South Carolina Department of Education, 2020). Additionally, 63% of students at LHS live in poverty (South Carolina Department of Education). There were approximately 90 ESOL students, 175 gifted students, 220 students with an IEP, and approximately 50 students with a Section 504 Accommodation Plan. The principal of LHS recommended that the special services coordinator suggest general education teachers to be invited to participate in interviews. I randomly selected special population staff from the staff list

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Role/Title</th>
<th>Years at EHS</th>
<th>Years in Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christopher Smith</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike Cain</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Science Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Strait</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Chemistry Teacher</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley Palmer</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>English Teacher</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Nelson</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>GT/English Teacher</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nina Garcia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>ESOL Teacher</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy Brown</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Guidance Counselor</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
on the school website. Staff interviewed were those who were willing to participate and who responded to the initial contact email based on who met the criteria to participate for each instructional area (e.g. special education, gifted and talented, guidance counselor, etc.). Staff interviews for LHS were scheduled after the researcher contacted each one individually via email using the script included in Appendix D. Each staff member selected a time during their planning or another convenient time to participate in the interview. All interviews for LHS took place in each staff member’s classroom or office, with the exception of the guidance counselor’s interview which took place via telephone due to a last minute meeting she had to attend. Participant names, roles, and years of experience for each interviewee from LHS are listed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2

Lewis High School Staff List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Role/Title</th>
<th>Years at LHS</th>
<th>Years in Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Samantha Foster</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1.5 as principal 1.5 as principal</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally Donaldson</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Special Services Coordinator</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiffany Carson</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Special Education Teacher</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brittany Logan</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Chemistry Teacher</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Lewis</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Social Studies Teacher</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Lewis</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Social Studies Teacher</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beth Young</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>GT/Social Studies</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine Carter</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>English Teacher</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naomi Thompson</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>ESOL Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Gantt</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Guidance Counselor</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection

I utilized the Discover phase of the AI framework in the interview questions as the questions allowed interviewees to provide their insights into how inclusive practices were being implemented within the school. Use of interviews also integrates the AI framework to investigate the social knowledge of the staff within each building related to inclusive educational practices (Cooperrider et al., 2008). I used purposeful sampling in the selection of interview participants for each school site. I interviewed a special education teacher, an ESOL teacher, a gifted teacher, the building 504 Accommodation chair/representative, and three general education teachers. The only exclusionary criteria for these staff was that each person must have worked with the current principal for a minimum of one academic school year. This minimum requirement ensured that the interviewee had sufficient opportunity to experience the school environment and work with the current principal in order to more accurately describe their view of the principal’s supports. I obtained a variety of staff viewpoints, which provided information about the perceived types and levels of support for general education teachers from multiple perspectives, which also allowed for triangulation of data to find themes, patterns, and incongruences among perspectives (Maxwell, 2013). Gaining insights from multiple stakeholders within the school building also created a more robust core of dialogue from people with multiple perspectives (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

I conducted semi-structured interviews with each interviewee. This type of interview allowed the interviewees to generate their own narrative responses about their experiences, interactions, and perspectives while giving them specific prompts to guide
their thinking and responses (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Mason, 2011). In the semi-structured interviews, I used open-ended questions to gain insights about the interactions and situations, which create inclusive educational opportunities for special populations (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The semi-structured interviews were more ethnographic in nature due to the overall emphasis being on the interviewees’ perspectives and interpretations of the inclusive educational environment as it exists currently (Mason, 2011). Interviews are also the most common method utilized in the AI framework (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010).

I utilized AI’s principle of simultaneity to guide the ways in which the interview questions were worded to aid me in gaining a better understanding of what the principal is doing well with respect to supporting inclusive educational practices for special population students (Cooperrider et al., 2008). I worded interview questions using more affirmative vocabulary in order to get to the core of what is being done successfully (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Additionally, I worded the questions in the affirmative in order to stimulate the conversations on the topic in a positive manner and to focus the conversation on the future paths (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). The use of positive questions also demonstrates use of the positive principle.

I set the direction for the interview and the subsequent responses with the order and specificity of the questions in the interview guide (see Appendix E; Grieten et al., 2018). I used the Index for Inclusion to guide the development of interview questions in order to ensure I was asking all relevant questions about the inclusive aspects of the environment (Booth et al., 2008). Table 3.3 details the relationship between the questions
and the Index for Inclusion. Using an interview guide also allowed me to follow the
general themes I was investigating while giving freedom and flexibility to change the
order of questions or to dive deeper into some questions with each interviewee as needed
(Mason, 2011). Using a standard protocol ensured that each interviewee was asked the
same questions using the same vocabulary.

Interviews can provide historical information, which was utilized more
specifically in follow up prompts with LHS interviews after interviewees at EHS
frequently discussed prior administrators in their responses (Creswell, 2014). Interviews
for LHS were also conducted over a longer time period than EHS interviews, which were
all conducted in one day. The longer time period overall allowed for a more concurrent
data analysis process and for the process overall to be more iterative (Miles et al., 2014,
p. 70).

**Table 3.3**

*Interview Question Matrix*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index for Inclusion Indicator</th>
<th>AI 5-D Cycle Phase</th>
<th>Principal Interview Question</th>
<th>Staff Interview Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.1 Building Community</td>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>What kind of environment have you worked to create in your school?</td>
<td>Describe the environment you work in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.1 Building Community</td>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>What are your expectations for teachers within the school relative to inclusionary practice?</td>
<td>What are the expectations for providing instruction to all students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.1 Developing the School for All</td>
<td></td>
<td>a). Do you have policies in place that are reflective of these expectations?</td>
<td>What the expectations are for students with diverse backgrounds (i.e. language barriers, special needs, gifted, cultural diversity)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.1 Building Community</td>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>How do you utilize other staff members to support general education teacher instructional practices? If so, whom? e.g. instructional coaches,</td>
<td>How would you describe the relationships among staff and administrators?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.2. Mobilizing Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index for Inclusion Indicator</td>
<td>AI 5-D Cycle Phase</td>
<td>Principal Interview Question</td>
<td>Staff Interview Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.2 Establishing Inclusive Values</td>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>What do you think you/your school is doing well relative to inclusive practices in the general education classrooms?</td>
<td>What do you think your school/principal is doing well relative to inclusive practices in the general education classrooms?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Do you utilize meetings to support or improve instructional practices in your building? If so, how? e.g. PLC meetings, staff meetings, special population meetings like IEP, ESOL, 504</td>
<td>Does your principal utilize meetings to support or improve gen ed teacher instructional practices? If so, how? e.g. PLC meetings, staff meetings, special population meetings like IEP, ESOL, 504?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.2 Organizing Support for Diversity</td>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>Do you use formative/summative evaluation procedures to improve instructional practices of general education teachers? If so, how? a.) Do you look at lesson plans? If so, how/in what way? How frequently? b.) Do you use observation data? If so, how/in what way? How frequently?</td>
<td>Does/Has your administrator used formative/summative evaluation procedures to support or encourage you in improving instructional practice? If so, how? Does s/he look at lesson plans? If so, how/in what way? Does s/he observation data? If so, how/in what way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.1. Orchestrating Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td>What materials &amp; textbooks do you provide that help general education teachers improve and differentiate their instruction in the classroom?</td>
<td>What materials &amp; textbooks are (you) provided that help improve and differentiate instruction in the general education classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.2 Organizing Support for Diversity</td>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>What types of professional development opportunities do you provide to teachers that help them improve and differentiate instruction in the classroom?</td>
<td>What types of professional development opportunities are (you) provided that helps improve and differentiate instruction in the general education classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.1 Building Community</td>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>Describe the role of parents/caregivers in the educational activities of the school</td>
<td>Do you think/feel your principal utilizes you or other staff members to support or improve gen ed teacher’s instructional practices? If so, how? e.g. instructional coaches, guidance counselors, special education teachers, ESOL teachers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index for Inclusion Indicator</td>
<td>AI 5-D Cycle Phase</td>
<td>Principal Interview Question</td>
<td>Staff Interview Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>counselors, special education teachers, ESOL teachers?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, various meeting and school documents were requested from each principal to give another perspective of the principal’s implementation and discussion about topics relevant to special population students. Other documents from school-based professional development and in-service activities were also requested. No documents were received directly from either school’s principal. However, the mission and vision statements from each school were found on their respective school websites. Each of the statements for both schools were coded along with the interview transcripts.

**Data Analysis**

Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. School documents analyzed were each schools’ mission and vision statements. These were utilized to attempt to triangulate and corroborate the information about the inclusivity of the environment described in the interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Documents were analyzed for specific key words or phrases that indicated support of instructional practices relative to special populations, which also increased construct validity (Yin, 2009). The interviewing process and subsequent data collection was iterative in that data were coded several times to develop themes and refine them (Lingard et al., 2008).

**Coding.** The qualitative software program, QSR NVivo, was utilized to code interviewee responses and documents in order to develop themes across interviewees at each school site (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Miles et al., 2014). Using an iterative method was helpful in creating the themes and shared visions across interviewees, as well as...
comparisons across schools. Themes for each cycle of coding for EHS are shown in Table 3.4 and themes for LHS are shown in Table 3.5.

The first cycle of coding was used to create a broad level of themes for each case. My first cycle for both EHS and LHS was eclectic with some initial coding, values, in vivo, pattern, structural, and emotion coding (Saldaña, 2016). A second cycle of coding occurred to refine and reclassify the themes as well as reduce the number of themes and reorganize the relevant information into these themes (Miles et al., 2014). For all second cycle coding for both schools, I used pattern coding & axial in order to remove redundant codes and determine which codes were more and less important (Saldana, 2018).
### Table 3.4

**Coding Themes Per Cycle for Edinburg High School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Cycle Themes</th>
<th>Second Cycle Themes</th>
<th>Third Cycle Themes</th>
<th>Fourth Cycle Themes</th>
<th>Fifth Cycle Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative actions</td>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>Inclusive Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Principal as an advocate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns</td>
<td>Directed from principal</td>
<td>Instructional Practices</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation</td>
<td>Instructional Practices</td>
<td>Student focus</td>
<td>Student focus</td>
<td>Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>Related to principal-administrators</td>
<td>Values-emotions</td>
<td>Staff values-emotions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional practices</td>
<td>Directed from principal</td>
<td>Values-emotions</td>
<td>Teacher based</td>
<td>Principal’s vision &amp; provision of resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Teacher based</td>
<td>Teacher based</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Individual Student Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values-emotions</td>
<td>Teacher based</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gen ed classroom or teacher</td>
<td>Gen ed classroom or teacher</td>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside forces</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Outside services</td>
<td>High Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous admin</td>
<td>Principal based</td>
<td>Outside forces</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>Observations, Conferences, Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School wide</td>
<td>Principal based</td>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In-Service days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Concerns</td>
<td>Principal Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal knowledge</td>
<td>Expectation</td>
<td>Expectation</td>
<td>Specific to the administration</td>
<td>Concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>General education classroom and teacher</td>
<td>Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>General school related issues</td>
<td>Materials</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Inconsistencies</td>
<td>Inconsistencies</td>
<td>Outside forces</td>
<td>People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership Style</td>
<td>Leadership Style</td>
<td></td>
<td>Outside Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>Observations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One-on-one conferences</td>
<td>One-on-one conferences</td>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty Meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other duties</td>
<td>Other duties</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stands behind</td>
<td>Stands behind</td>
<td></td>
<td>In-Service Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Principal knowledge</td>
<td>Principal knowledge</td>
<td>Principal knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Cycle Themes</td>
<td>Second Cycle Themes</td>
<td>Third Cycle Themes</td>
<td>Fourth Cycle Themes</td>
<td>Fifth Cycle Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>Principal Associations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty meetings</td>
<td>Faculty meetings</td>
<td>Principal’s leadership style</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-service days</td>
<td>In-service days</td>
<td>Vision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside opportunities</td>
<td>Outside opportunities</td>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Observations &amp; feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>Other duties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside services</td>
<td>Outside services</td>
<td>Principal as an Advocate for Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People</td>
<td>People</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trainings</td>
<td>Trainings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5

**Coding Themes Per Cycle for Lewis High School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Cycle Themes</th>
<th>Second Cycle Themes</th>
<th>Third Cycle Themes</th>
<th>Fourth Cycle Themes</th>
<th>Fifth Cycle Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admin requirement</td>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>Climate</td>
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<td>Culture</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Culture</td>
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<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>Interactions with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher values-attitudes-emotions</td>
<td>Instructional practices</td>
<td>Principal's Direction from</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Teachers &amp; Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future things</td>
<td>Concerns</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>Resources</td>
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</tr>
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<td>PD</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Teacher values-emotions</td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous administrators</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>Teacher Values,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Principal specific</td>
<td>Teacher Values-Emotions</td>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>Attitudes &amp; emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Concerns</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal knowledge</td>
<td>Principal knowledge</td>
<td>Principal knowledge</td>
<td>Services for students</td>
<td>Instructional Practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Previous administrators</td>
<td>Principal knowledge</td>
<td>Perspectives regarding students</td>
<td>Principal Perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Principal view</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Principal characteristics</td>
<td>Regarding Students</td>
</tr>
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<td>First Cycle Themes</td>
<td>Second Cycle Themes</td>
<td>Third Cycle Themes</td>
<td>Fourth Cycle Themes</td>
<td>Fifth Cycle Themes</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student view</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Principal led/created</td>
<td>Principal Leadership</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>attributes-traits</td>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>initiatives</td>
<td>Initiatives-Activities</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Classroom</td>
<td>For students</td>
<td>Meetings &amp; Teams</td>
<td>Meetings-Teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For students</td>
<td>Initiatives-Activities</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Policy</td>
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<td>Policy</td>
<td>Leadership activities</td>
<td>Leadership activities</td>
<td>High Expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers &amp; Staff</td>
<td>Meetings-Teams</td>
<td>Other support to general</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>education teachers</td>
<td>Support to gen ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support to gen ed</td>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Direction from principal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher view</td>
<td>Support to gen ed</td>
<td>Support to Gen Ed Teachers</td>
<td>Feedback from principal</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Direction from Principal</td>
<td>Other staff</td>
<td>Redesigning School</td>
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<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Concerns</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>Resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Instructional</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>Professional</td>
<td>Professional</td>
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<td>Development</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Services</td>
<td>Services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Relationships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Concerns</td>
<td>Concerns</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>General</td>
<td>General</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instructional</td>
<td>Instructional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Principal Specific</td>
<td>Principal Specific</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Second cycle coding for EHS added lots of sub-codes to several areas and deleted two codes overall as the content within those code could fit under sub-codes of other areas. Another code area was deleted and the items under that code were moved to another overall code. Second cycle coding for LHS ended up with 8 overall themes with several codes having numerous sub-codes. The third round of coding was completed to aggregate data into fewer more precise themes. Member checks of transcripts were offered to all interviewees (Miles et al., 2014). Third cycle coding for EHS brought more refinement, so I had five overall theme codes with each one having several sub-codes underneath. The third cycle of coding for LHS ended with the theme of climate becoming more refined and more areas subsumed under it as well as removal of some other areas by reclassifying codes into existing/re-defined codes.

A fourth cycle for both cases resulted in moving of some major themes (PD to Resources for EHS; Support to Gen Ed to Principal & PD to Resources for LHS) to be under another theme and removed some sub-codes for both. The fourth cycle of coding occurred as inductive causal network displays were being created in NVivo as some of the themes did not fit in well with the framework as individual/separate nodes, but actually fit better as sub-categories for other already existing nodes. A fifth cycle for each case occurred to more appropriately align the major themes for each case. This final cycle allowed me to summarize the overall findings for each case.

**Inductive Network Displays.** The final coding themes for each case were then used to create an inductive causal network display. This display was created and refined as I continued to discover recurrent themes when coding data. The inductive causal
network displays for each school allowed me to engage in cross case analysis “to deepen understanding and explanation” (Miles et al., 2014, p 101). I created each display in NVivo using the concept map feature. I created each display separately after all coding was complete. I began with the most robust themes for each case and mapped them out using different shapes and colors. I created different shapes with different colors for the levels of codes and sub codes and began to think about the connections and relationships between the codes and sub codes based on the stories interviewees told. The white circles are level 4 headings in Chapter 4. The dark gray squares with rounded edges are level 5 headings. The light gray squares are sub codes that are discussed in detail under each of the level 5 headings. The figure depicts the connections and relationships between and among the aspects of the principal associations and the climate of EHS. The connections are noted by a single line between two concepts. The causal relationships are noted by a directional arrow from one concept to another. The bi-directional relationships are indicated by an arrow on each end of the line connecting two concepts.

As can be seen in Figure 3.1, the display for Edinburg High School shows the effects of the principal’s vision and provision of resources on inclusivity of the climate, as well as on resources available within the school. The principal’s vision and provision of resources includes high expectations, an individual student focus, and observations, conferences, and providing feedback. The display also shows the effect of the culture, relationships, and the principal as an advocate on the inclusivity of the environment. Professional development also had a symmetrical effect on the inclusivity of the school
environment. Lastly, the display shows an association between principal knowledge and the principal.

**Figure 3.1**

*Inductive Network Display for Edinburg High School.*

The inductive network display for Lewis High School is depicted in Figure 3.2. This display shows the unidirectional relationship of the principal’s leadership and the perceived inclusivity of the climate. The principal’s leadership had associative relationships with high expectations and principal led/created initiatives and activities. Principal led/created initiatives and activities were meeting and teams, as well as policy
and had a uni-directional relationship with the principal redesigning the school structure. The perceived inclusivity of the climate had bi-directional relationships with instructional practices, culture, and the principal’s perspective regarding students. The principal’s redesigning of the school structure had bi-directional relationships with services, relationships, and resources. Resources were further classified into the following groups: instructional, professional development, and other. Resources also had a bi-directional relationship with the perceived inclusivity of the climate. Principal knowledge had a uni-directional relationship with the principal’s leadership.

Figure 3.2

*Inductive Network Display for Lewis High School*
**Conceptually Clustered Matrix.** After each inductive network was created and I began to write up the results, I started to see differences between each school specific to what the principal was or was not doing. I then began to investigate the forms of support each school staff reported that the principal supported them relative to inclusive practices described in Chapter 2. This investigation resulted in the creation of a conceptually clustered matrix for each school. This type of matrix is used to pull major concepts or themes together in a summary view (Miles et al., 2014). Use of a conceptually clustered matrix for each case allowed me to make comparisons and contrasts within and between cases and look at the relationships between variables (Miles et al., 2014). I used the practices that are vital for a principal to engage in that created an inclusive educational environment (as discussed in Chapter 2) compared with the corresponding instructional leadership practices (also discussed in Chapter 2), which were then specifically discussed by interviewees in their responses. For brevity, the inclusive practices supported by the principal as described in the literature and their relevance to the instructional leadership practices are listed in Table 3.6.

**Table 3.6**

*Instructional Leadership Practices and Inclusive Practices*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Leadership Practice</th>
<th>Inclusive Education Practice Supported by the Principal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Directions</td>
<td>• Including the whole school community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Making inclusion a routine and integral part of the school process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Creating a shared set of values with effective communication and trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ensuring that all educational environments and instructional content &amp; strategies align with inclusion &amp; the school’s vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Leadership Practice</td>
<td>Inclusive Education Practice Supported by the Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Implementing procedures to foster a professional learning community</td>
<td>• Making inclusion a routine and integral part of the school process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Setting high expectations for the learning of all</td>
<td>• Ensuring that all educational environments and instructional content &amp; strategies align with inclusion &amp; the school’s vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Setting the tone for the school’s approach to inclusion and equity</td>
<td>• Ensuring the shared responsibility of all student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ensuring the shared responsibility of all student learning</td>
<td>• Sharing resources and expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Having a close partnership with teachers</td>
<td>• Demonstrating and discussing new instructional methods and materials through professional development (in-service &amp; faculty meetings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establishing a common language</td>
<td>• Creating a school climate that is warm and welcoming for children and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sharing resources and expertise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Forming specific meeting structures to build capacity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The principal leading a leadership team</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Creating a school climate that is warm and welcoming for children and staff</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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Developing People

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Developing People</th>
<th>Managing the Instructional Program</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Making inclusion a routine and integral part of the school process</td>
<td>• Making inclusion a routine and integral part of the school process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ensuring that all educational environments and instructional content &amp; strategies align with inclusion &amp; the school’s vision</td>
<td>• Ensuring that all educational environments and instructional content &amp; strategies align with inclusion &amp; the school’s vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ensuring the shared responsibility of all student learning</td>
<td>• Creating a consistent building schedule that allows for common planning time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sharing resources and expertise</td>
<td>• Ensuring the shared responsibility of all student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrating and discussing new instructional methods and materials through professional development (in-service &amp; faculty meetings)</td>
<td>• Observing instruction and provide timely feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Forming specific meeting structures to build capacity</td>
<td>• Sharing resources and expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creating a school climate that is warm and welcoming for children and staff</td>
<td>• Demonstrating and discussing new instructional methods and materials through professional development (in-service &amp; faculty meetings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Creating a school climate that is warm and welcoming for children and staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instructional Leadership Practice | Inclusive Education Practice Supported by the Principal
--- | ---
Redesigning the Organization | • Including the whole school community  
• Making inclusion a routine and integral part of the school process  
• Creating a shared set of values with effective communication and trust  
• Ensuring that all educational environments and instructional content & strategies align with inclusion & the school’s vision  
• Creating a consistent building schedule that allows for common planning time  
• Implementing procedures to foster a professional learning community  
• Examining the physical structure of the school  
• Ensuring the shared responsibility of all student learning  
• Sharing resources and expertise  
• Forming specific meeting structures to build capacity  
• Creating a school climate that is warm and welcoming for children and staff

It is important to note that some inclusive educational practices fit under multiple instructional leadership practices, as I did not view these concepts as being mutually exclusive as the effects of some practices can be far-reaching.

**Limitations**

Several limitations of this study arise with the adaptations made to the AI framework. In this study, the AI framework is being adapted to fit in the educational realm even though it was originally designed for the business world. The organizational structures of educational institutions are vastly different from business structures; therefore, gaining the involvement of a large number of stakeholders to implement change is more difficult. As such, the wholeness principle was not utilized as the participants were not brought together in a large forum (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). Additionally, the AI framework was designed to be used in the change process,
but in this study, it was not directly utilized to make changes to the school or personnel within the school. Another limitation of this study is the generalizability of the results because only two schools are involved in this study and the study heavily uses the individual and collective views of staff within each school, so it was difficult to expand the implications of this study to a wide range of schools (Hammersley, 2011).

Furthermore, only high schools were studied; therefore, the implications of this study would not be as easily applied to elementary schools or middle schools as the provision of instruction and structure of the schools are very different. One limitation that arises from conducting interviews is that “not all people are equally articulate and perceptive” (Cresswell, 2014, 191).

**Trustworthiness and Positionality Statement**

I utilized several strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of my findings. I attempted to triangulate the data collected from interviews with documents. However, this proved to be difficult as the principals of each school did not provide any documents for me to analyze, so I had only documents that were available on the school websites. As the use of the AI framework denotes, I attempted to provide a rich description of the interviewees’ accounts and use their words as much as was appropriate. Finally, I offered member checks to interviewees in an informal format. I received responses from four interviewees who indicated that they did not want to add or change anything.

I work in the school district where LHS is and have in the past worked at this school as a school psychologist. Although it is important to note that since Mrs. Foster became principal, I have spent very little time at LHS for work purposes. The fact that I
have also had a previous professional working relationship with the principal made it easier to access the site. Numerous interview participants were familiar with me, so I already had an established rapport with these interviewees. However, the three general education teachers and ESOL teacher have not interacted directly with me in the past.

My training as a school psychologist has given me the ability to be an objective and unbiased interviewer who has a “sense of empathetic engagement” (Miles et al., 2014, p 42). My training has also provided me with a background in counseling and effective listening techniques. An essential component of my training in counseling is the ability to be impartial. I believe my training as a school psychologist has given me the ability to interact with people in a way that makes them feel comfortable when interviewing. Working as a school psychologist has also provided me with a great deal of first-hand interaction and understanding of the inner workings of public schools. My employment has also afforded me the ability to work with a wide variety of school staff and with general education students, students with disabilities, ESOL students, and students with a 504 Accommodation Plan. This experience has given me a unique perspective in understanding how the needs of different students are met in public schools.

In this chapter, I discussed the delimitations, methodology, and research methods employed for this study. I provided details about the case site selection procedures and the participant selection procedures as well as interview protocol development and data collection. I also described the process I underwent in coding and analyzing the data
collected. I concluded this chapter with limitations of this study, trustworthiness, and my positionality.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

Special population students such as English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL), Gifted and Talented (GT), special education students, and students who have a 504 Accommodation Plan all require varying supports to be successful in the general education classroom. Research has indicated that general education teachers lack training in meeting the needs of these students in isolation and that principals can provide support to the general education teachers to meet these needs. The purpose of this study was to find the ways in which principals were perceived to support general education teachers in creating an inclusive educational environment to meet the educational needs of all learners within the classroom, as well as what, if any, professional development opportunities on topics targeting inclusive instruction for special populations are provided to general education teachers by principals.

I conducted a multi-case study grounded in Appreciative Inquiry (AI). The AI framework and principles guided the language used in interview questions and how the data were analyzed as I concentrated on interviewee responses about what the principal is successful doing relative to inclusive education and what is being focused on in the school environment. I inductively coded interview transcripts and various school documents. The AI framework also encourages the focus on the interviewees’ experiences and making sense of stories they tell of what is happening in the environment; therefore, I use quotations from various interviewees, which best paint the picture of their respective schools (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010).
Using the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) framework, I attempted to tell the story of each school leaders’ efforts to support general education teachers with a positive lens. Every staff member’s response to each interview question provided a piece of the picture regarding the inclusivity of the school environment. One common criticism that is stated when the AI framework is employed is that it may neglect discussion of problems in the environment. However, participants in each school were very clear in articulating concerns and issues they observed within their respective school environments and these concerns were included in the findings.

In this chapter, I provide details and create the picture of the inclusive educational environment of each school separately and answer each research question for each case individually. Each school case is discussed separately in order to best highlight the things that were going well in each school specific to the inclusive educational practices. Although, AI’s framework is designed to highlight and focus on the positives of the environment and of the principal’s support, there were concerns noted at both schools that are a part of the realities within each school that I would be remiss not to include. These concerns will be discussed separately at the end of each case.

I also included definitions of school climate and culture, which are often confused or are seen as interchangeable in some research. I used these definitions to guide the organization of themes and understanding the bigger picture of the inclusivity of the environment at each school.

Definitions:
• A school climate is the character and quality of school life that encompasses the values, norms, goals, organizational structures, teaching and learning practices, and relationships between all stakeholders (National School Climate Center, n.d.).

• School culture refers to the shared values, assumptions, and beliefs of the teachers and other staff and how they work together (ASCD, 2020).

Edinburg High School

Research Questions 1 & 1a

Overall, there were two overarching themes which show how the principal supports the general education teachers in providing an inclusive educational environment to meet the educational needs of all learners: the principal’s vision and provision of resources, and the principal created an inclusive environment, as can be seen in the inductive network for Edinburg High School (EHS) in Figure 3.1. Professional development is also depicted as a separate overall theme as it directly answers question 1a.

Principal’s Vision and Provision of Resources. Mr. Smith’s vision consisted of high expectations and an individual student focus. Mr. Smith engaged in observations and conferences, and provided feedback to teachers to support general education teachers in reaching his vision. Furthermore, Mr. Smith provided various resources to his staff in order to meet the vision at EHS.

Mr. Smith’s vision included the topics he has expressed to teachers as being important foci within the school environment, specifically the general education
classrooms, and his expectations for education at Edinburg High School. Other parts of Mr. Smith’s vision include the use of technology by students and the integration of technology in the classrooms as well as addressing student social emotional welfare through initiatives like Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). He expected teachers to “be a guide on the side” and assist students in all areas of life, not just academics, as much as they can.

Mr. Smith attempted to enact his vision through hiring practices at EHS. Ms. Palmer indicated that administrators were attempting to change the culture of the school by “hiring teachers that have high expectations.” This was supported by a statement from Mr. Cain, the science teacher, that Mr. Smith was known to reportedly hire teachers that “will go above and beyond for the students” and that Mr. Smith “looks for people who relate well to the students.” Mr. Smith’s actions were also supported by the Chemistry teacher, Mr. Strait, who said, “I think they're hiring teachers that have high expectations.” Lastly, Mr. Smith engaged in various future planning activities in an effort to make his vision come to fruition. Future planning actions included Mr. Smith sending out a survey towards the end of the school year to get feedback from staff regarding what they would like to see in the next school year as far as support, resources, and professional development. Several teachers also discussed the school’s potential to move to a year round schedule. Although it would not be Mr. Smith’s decision ultimately, he and the staff indicated that he has voiced his opinion and has encouraged all school staff to voice their opinions as well.
Mr. Smith’s vision was clearly focused on the success of all students. He was reportedly “a big champion of making sure every student is addressed as far as...educational needs within the classroom.” He also tried to engage in other activities to aid in reaching his vision. This vision was widely accepted and understood by staff at EHS.

**High Expectations.** Mr. Smith reportedly had high expectations for student learning and for student and teacher accountability in that learning process, which were discussed by all interviewees. Mr. Smith stated:

> Every kid deserves a right to have a good education and if they’re going to go different routes to get there and the teachers need to understand that the cookie cutter approach doesn’t work, that, you know, it may take a lot more for one kid than it does another.

> Mr. Smith’s high expectations were further addressed via his motto of *No Excuses*, which was mentioned by several interviewees as well as being included in Mr. Smith’s email signature as a hashtag. Ms. Palmer, the English teacher summed it up best when she said:

> I think his biggest things are the no excuses motto that we have in that there’s no excuse for any students. You know, no matter what level you’re at, no matter what you’re doing, there’s no excuse for you in the classroom as a student. You know, you can put your best effort forward, you can do the work, you know, no matter what.
The Science teacher, Mr. Cain, echoed this sentiment in his statement, “Whatever it takes, his motto is no excuses and you know, I think a lot of us try to absolutely live by that. No excuses, whatever it takes.” Mr. Smith summarized this expectation as well:

I think it's just really important to that all of the teachers know that every kid matters. You know? Yeah. This kid might not be in an AP physics class or they may not be in your, you know, honors calculus class or, or whatever, or biology 2 honors class. But that doesn't mean that, you know, we don't need to spend just as much, if not more time on that kid helping them be successful. And I think our folks understand that. I mean, it's really important to work with every child and do everything you can to help that child be successful because they may not go to college. I'm completely aware that not all students, you know, go to college. They're not all made for college, but we can do everything we can while we have them to help them be successful after high school. Whether that means joining the workforce, going to a two-year school, four year school, joining the military, something and help them be productive once they leave high school. That's really our main goal.

Another expectation for teachers in reaching Mr. Smith’s vision mentioned by several interviewees was that general education teachers are expected to follow student accommodation plans and implement them appropriately within their classrooms. Mr. Smith feels strongly about general education teachers providing accommodations to special populations students and stated the importance of this in “giving them every opportunity that every other kid has.” Mr. Strait liked this expectation because he felt that
“if a principal doesn’t come to you and expects you to know these things, I think teachers would sometimes look and be swept under the table.”

Mr. Smith clearly set his expectations for teachers and students with the understanding and acceptance that everyone’s path is different but that every student was still held to a high expectation of success. His expectations for teachers and staff appeared to be recognized and accepted by all staff. His high expectations were helpful in creating an inclusive environment at EHS.

**Individual Student Focus.** Mrs. Garcia, Mr. Cain, Mr. Nelson, Mr. Strait, and Mr. Smith reviewed various instructional practices that occur in classrooms at EHS. Mrs. Garcia, the ESOL teacher, discussed the importance of knowing the different talents, skills, behaviors, languages, and learning styles of each student in order to provide the best educational opportunities to each. Additionally, she discussed the use of technology with her ESOL students and how various technologies have helped them integrate and be successful in the school environment. Mr. Strait also discussed the use of technology in his Chemistry class to meet the needs of diverse learners as an alternative method to textbooks.

Mr. Nelson, the GT teacher, discussed the use of movement, scaffolding, and differentiation in instruction specifically in his classroom. He felt his use of these techniques in the general education classroom:

Cuts down on boredom and it's still challenging enough or the students up here, but at the same time, we're not leaving behind our students here [gesture] or in the middle that sometimes get overlooked as well. That middle section of students,
often times they're forgotten because they're so busy concentrating maybe on the top and the bottom. So that's important as well. Um, I like to do a lot with, with, with tiered learning.

Mr. Smith reinforced each of the teachers’ reports regarding how they meet their students’ needs instructionally by saying:

We do a lot of individualized instruction because no two kids are the same. And when you're dealing with accommodations, it's important that you are meeting those accommodations no matter what the class is. Uh, accommodations are in place for a reason and it's to help those students learn just like the counterparts that maybe do not have those, those accommodations. So I think as a school we do a really good job with that.

A variety of instructional techniques were reportedly utilized in classrooms at EHS, which were all welcomed by Mr. Smith. It was clear that Mr. Smith provided his teachers with independence to instruct on their own terms while also being supportive when necessary. It was also evident that the teachers at EHS worked to individualize their instruction to meet the needs of students in the general education classrooms.

Ms. Palmer, Mrs. Garcia, Mr. Nelson, and Mr. Cain further portrayed a student focus within the school environment and in the general education classrooms. Mr. Nelson discussed the availability of student groups on campus and their importance as they teach inclusivity, tolerance, and respect “of all people.” The school and teachers also focused on the social emotional needs of students through PBIS and being “a guide on the side” according to Ms. Palmer, the English teacher. Mrs. Garcia talked about the importance of
developing a trusting relationship with students and being accepting of them while also encouraging them all to “be proud of where [they] came from.” Mr. Nelson followed with a description of encouraging his students, which is best illustrated in his words:

I always instill in my students... if you give me 100% in life... are you giving me effort? Are you trying to be productive? And it's same thing in my classroom, you know, that's like I give him a paper. I said, look, this is not acceptable. You're not going to not turn this in. And uh, and so the reward is, you know, you're gonna make it through and that you're going to find the way to be successful. Success for, for different people. It's different levels, different insights usually. So, you know, I tell them you've got to reach for here. You may get here [gesture], but you need to reach... because that's how you ... improve.

Mr. Strait likewise held his students accountable when they did not turn in assignments; he will give them another copy of the assignment and put it on their desk and give them until the next day to turn it in. Mr. Cain was an advocate for them and encouraged them to ask what for what they wanted or needed and share their thoughts or concerns with administration. Mr. Cain offered to go with the students to talk to administrators and felt that many other teachers would do the same for the students.

The instruction occurring within each classroom was largely up to each individual teacher. However, Mr. Smith was found to be supportive of a variety of instructional practices and techniques. Mr. Smith also supported teachers in having an instructional focus through his use of observations, conferences, and provision of feedback.
Observations of Teachers, Conferences, & Providing Feedback. All of the interviewee’s explicitly discussed the principal or his designees conducting observations in the general education classrooms. The responses generally consisted of short statements from each interviewee indicating that Mr. Smith has been in their classroom or has been known to go into classrooms to conduct observations. Other responses discussed the four assistant principals being the ones who conducted observations. Several responses indicated more about the content of what administrators were looking for, such as looking at lesson plans to ensure that accommodations are documented within the lesson plan and are being implemented throughout the lesson. All interviewees reported feelings of positivity towards observations in the interviews. Ms. Palmer noted that the feeling of the observations has changed in the school since Mr. Smith has been principal. She again summarized it best when she said:

In the past it’s been kind of a negative as far as like, “Oh, they’re coming to observe us, oh my gosh.” But, um, it’s not so scary anymore. It’s like, yeah. Um, but it’s not so much like they’re coming to make sure we’re doing our job. It’s more like, “Eh, okay,” now we get a little reward or now we get a little like pat on the shoulder kind of thing. So that emotion behind it has changed over time and it’s because of Mr. Smith. It’s because of him and some of the administrators here. Um, so that’s changed. But um, and that, that’s part of his, his plan and that’s part of what he’s done here. Um, and how he makes us feel about how we do our jobs.
Several of the interviewees also explicitly discussed the feedback general education teachers have received after observations were conducted. The guidance counselor, Mrs. Brown, noted that feedback is often written on a piece of paper which the administrator gives the teacher before leaving the classroom. She also stated that the feedback is typically related to something the teacher could have done differently to meet the needs of a particular student or population of students. Mr. Strait supported this sentiment and stated that feedback frequently referenced something in the lesson plan that was or was not observed. Although neither of these interviewees indicated feedback was perceived as being negative, Mr. Nelson, the GT teacher, stated that feedback is “encouraging even if it’s a negative statement and I don’t wanna say negative, but even if it’s like, I wonder how that would work next time or whatever. So yeah, I would say very supportive.”

Mr. Smith was the only interviewee to explicitly discuss one-on-one instructional conferences with general education teachers; other interviewees talked about conferences with teachers to discuss the classroom observations specifically. Mr. Smith reported that administrators conduct quarterly conferences with teachers to discuss their Student Learning Objectives (SLO). He further clarified that these conferences were to discuss the progress each teacher and group of students were making and talked about differentiation occurring and implementation of accommodations. Mr. Smith also utilized these conferences to reiterate his expectations for student learning.

Overall, Mr. Smith engages in observations of teachers and provides feedback in ways that general education teachers perceive to be beneficial. These activities are
instructional leadership practices, but are also potentially indicative of inclusive practices. It was unclear what feedback or observations specifically consisted of in order to confidently assert he addressed inclusive practices.

**Resources.** All interviewees cited a vast array of resources available at EHS. The majority of resources discussed were described as being supported by Mr. Smith. The resources discussed were categorized into four categories: materials, outside services, people, and professional development.

Materials such as standard state adopted textbooks, textbooks translated into other languages, and various forms of technology were supplied to teachers. Technology referenced specifically were an online reading intervention system and the state documentation system (ENRICH) for special populations students including Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), 504 Accommodation Plans, and ESOL Accommodation Plans. Mrs. Brown also mentioned use of a translation phone service that is available to staff for meetings and parent contacts, as well as a feature on the school’s website that allows everything to be translated into Spanish. Materials to support the anti-bullying and PBIS initiatives within the school were also provided to staff and were widely available to students. Several teachers also indicated that Mr. Smith would be willing to provide any other materials required if a teacher or staff member asked for it.

People were an essential resource, which nearly all of the interviewees mentioned. The staff in other departments (e.g. special education and ESOL), as well as each department as a whole, were cited as a resource to general education teachers. Their
collaboration, team teaching, and presentations at faculty meetings were specifically referenced. Guidance Counselors were also cited as a resource to general education teachers specifically when it came to accommodations. Outside translators are also reportedly available for use when necessary, but bilingual students were frequently a resource when quick, non-confidential translations are needed. The librarian and the school’s technology coach were also named as resources.

A plethora of resources were provided to staff at EHS. Resources to improve inclusive practices and instruction were discussed. Professional development was an additional resource to staff in reaching Mr. Smith’s vision.

**Mr. Smith Provided & Encouraged Professional Development.** Everyone interviewed mentioned one or more of the forms of professional development provided to general education teachers that were viewed as favorable: faculty meetings, in-service days, and other opportunities. Special Population departments frequently presented at faculty meetings to discuss various topics including accommodations, working with special populations teachers, and how to address a variety of learning needs. Others mentioned professional development provided by outside experts conducting training on things like AVID and PBIS, although Mr. Smith reported that he preferred the school-based professionals presenting “because [it] just means a lot coming from your teachers and the people they work with every day. A lot of times that means more than someone from the outside.”

In-Service days were provided on six school days each year in the district created schedule. These days were often used for teachers to work in departments or professional
learning communities (PLCs), while other days have been used for special population staff to present on specific teaching and learning strategies and instructional approaches. Other days have been devoted to presentations from district office staff on a variety of topics. Other opportunities for professional development have occurred through conferences with an administrator, instructional courses with technology specialists, and out-of-district trainings. General education teacher attendance at out of district trainings have reportedly been initiated by the principal and the teachers of their own accord.

Although not all of the resources described were explicitly provided by Mr. Smith, many interviewees spoke of Mr. Smith’s encouragement and assistance in obtaining resources that were requested. Resources were not just textbooks and pencils, but things that the staff appeared to value, such as time to collaborate, technology, and training. It was evident that Mr. Smith was willing to provide any staff member at EHS with any resources necessary to better meet the needs of students.

Mr. Smith Created an Inclusive Environment. Three of the teachers reported that the overall climate of the school was a secure, safe, caring, supportive environment. Ms. Palmer reported that when she or other teachers see an administrator coming down the hallway, the administrator smiles and there’s “a good, positive vibe there.” Several teachers reported that administrators and Mr. Smith specifically have an “open door policy” which is a good aspect of the culture. Themes of the inclusive climate found
across interviewee responses at EHS were culture, the principal as an advocate, and relationships.

**Culture.** Teachers overwhelmingly felt supported by Mr. Smith and the other administrators. Teachers also reported good relationships with students and with other staff members, even those who were not in their departments. Mr. Cain summarized the culture of EHS best when he said:

I really think 99% of the people, the faculty and staff here will do anything they can to make sure students learn. It doesn't matter what they come into our classroom with…special gifts or the disability, it does not matter. I think 99% of us will go way above and beyond the call of duty, do whatever we can to make sure they learn.

One example of going above and beyond the call of duty is in Ms. Palmer’s discussion about being “a guide on the side” with current students and with former students outside of the school setting. She described a former student as having anxiety and how she tried to help her make it through the class, even though the student ended up dropping out of an AP course, which according to Ms. Palmer occurs frequently. Ms. Palmer stated:

And a lot of times I find myself kind of counseling more than teaching and just, ‘Hey, do you want to go outside and talk or do you need to talk to someone?’ Or ‘Hey, that's not necessarily the way to approach this situation.’ Or ‘Hey, what's going on with you and your family or what's going on with you and this person? ‘Or ‘You guys are having some kind of disagreement here. Let's go outside and
talk about it kind of thing.’ And I mean, yeah I teach but I counsel and I kind of pull kids together or pull them apart or whatever.

A plethora of adjectives were used by staff to describe their values and emotions as well as the values of Mr. Smith and how he has evoked emotion. Many stated that the environment was positive, that they were happy to be working at EHS with Mr. Smith, and that there are good relationships among staff and between staff and administrators. Teachers overall felt valued and felt like they could trust Mr. Smith.

Collaboration in this section was specifically focused on collaboration between the staff within the school environment and did not include collaboration with students. Mrs. Brown, Mr. Nelson, Mr. Strait, and Mr. Smith provided examples of collaboration that occurs at EHS. Collaboration between the ESOL Department and general education teachers was reportedly prosperous as some co-teaching opportunities were created between these teachers. Mr. Smith approved of these activities, but did not explicitly require this collaboration and noted that administration made it easier in the schedule for the two teachers to plan together as they had requested.

Collaboration between the Special Education Department and general education teachers was also mentioned in several interviews. Co-teaching in this form was also highlighted and reported to be helpful. Mr. Smith explicitly discussed these prior two forms of inclusion for students as being beneficial forms of collaboration as the teachers have all worked “closely together” and the teachers “thrive together.” Communication between departments had also reportedly been good for collaborative efforts. Collaboration with the computer tech coach in the building to improve or learn how to
utilize various technology in the classroom was also reported. Collaboration with Mrs. Jones, the librarian, was mentioned by two general education teachers as she has come into the classroom and taught students various skills.

The overall culture at EHS was described as inclusive. Many staff did more than teach curricular content, they were supportive advocates for all students. Mr. Smith expected and fostered this interaction with staff.

**The Principal as an Advocate for Teachers.** All three general education teachers, the GT teacher, and the ESOL teacher provided examples of how Mr. Smith was an advocate for his staff and supported them. One specific example of support from Mr. Cain was that Mr. Smith has an open door policy and Mr. Smith has never said he is too busy or has something else he must do instead. Mr. Strait also discussed Mr. Smith’s support or approval in Mr. Strait taking a day off from instruction in his classroom each semester to give students the opportunity to catch up or get further assistance.

Another example of Mr. Smith being an advocate for his staff comes from Mr. Strait related to discipline issues. He stated that when he makes a referral “there’s no doubt” that Mr. Smith would deal with it according to the policy. Ms. Palmer agreed that Mr. Smith has stood behind her or other teachers when it has come to issues arising either professionally or personally. She further indicated that Mr. Smith frequently makes a statement in staff meetings at the start of the school year portraying to staff that “as long as you do your job, he will have your back.”

Several teachers discussed Mr. Smith’s support in the form of resources, which was discussed previously in this chapter. The teachers stated that Mr. Smith has “never
told me no” when asking for an instructional resource and that he would support anything
that will help meet the students’ needs in the classroom. One teacher discussed support to
the librarian and that the librarian requested exercise bikes with tables to allow students
the ability to engage in motor movement while learning.

Mr. Smith being an advocate for his staff was more than just him trusting his staff
and vice versa. Mr. Smith’s advocation was an important aspect of the creation of the
inclusive climate. His advocation also fostered good relationships at EHS. **Relationships.**
The types of relationships discussed in interviews typically centered around the
relationships between staff and administrators, although some interviewees discussed the
relationships among staff, and between staff and students. All of the interviewees
portrayed all of these relationships at EHS to be positive overall. Mr. Smith ultimately
described the relationships among staff as propitious in general but expressed
reservations about relationships:

Because we've got such a large campus, we're kind of spread out. I found out
something that I don't really like a lot, but we try to do more and more together
too so everyone can get to know each other. But I found out that, you know, some
teachers on one side of the campus, they don't have any idea who's on the other
side of the campus and vice versa… They don't get out and branch out and talk to
people. But that's something we do encourage. We try to get, get people working
together, whether there, it may just be math and social studies. You know, most of
our special education teachers, they know everybody because they work so
closely with everybody else. And I think overall our faculty rapport with each
other is really good. I would like for it to be better. I think probably all principals could say that and I would like for it to be better, especially in a school this size.

Mrs. Garcia and several other teachers also conversed about the importance of building relationships and trust with students. Building a relationship with students was deemed important in getting the students to buy in to the learning and to engage in the tasks presented to them. Building relationships with students was also essential in getting students to turn in assignments and in getting the students to ask teachers for help.

Relationships between staff, students, and administrators were described with enthusiasm and cheerful tones. Several teachers portrayed Mr. Smith as being essential in changing the feelings of relationships at EHS. Administrators are not viewed as scary or lording over teachers, but are viewed as friendly and helpful.

**Research Question 2**

Principal knowledge is depicted to have a bi-directional relationship with the principal’s vision and provision of resources as can be seen in Figure 3.1. When asked where he gained his knowledge that has helped him to create an inclusive educational environment, Mr. Smith first discussed listening skills. He stated that he listens to his general education teachers and “the things they say that they need to be successful.” He listens and tries to provide what they need especially when it comes to training or help from other departments such as ESOL. Mr. Smith felt “it's important to involve everybody.” He further stated that he learned a great deal about how to support teachers from his experience being a teacher. He specified:
You know, you know, as a teacher what helps you and what, what benefits you and talking to that special ed teacher and, and talking to the ESOL teacher and tryin to get ideas from them and things like that. So that I can say honestly that I've definitely learned more from the people around me than I probably did in any classroom. Um, taking any classes. I think it's just really important to listen to the people that you work with and get ideas from them.

He viewed listening to teachers as an opportunity to enhance to the learning of general education teachers because through his 24 years in education he has found relevance in professional development he has attended. Particularly, he indicated “anytime you attend those things, you try to pull things out that you think will be really beneficial for your school.” He also indicated that he learned a great deal more about how to support teachers in his administrative degree program than he did in his undergraduate training program. More focus was given during his administrative degree program on how to handle special education in particular, but at the time of his program the ESOL population was very small so no emphasis was put on this population. Mr. Smith also talked about being a lifelong learner:

I'm constantly learning. There's still a lot more than I need to learn, I'm sure. And I, and I always keep that mindset. I know, I don't know everything. Um, I think anytime you feel that way and you feel like you can keep growing, you still have a chance to be even more successful, you know, so. I don't ever want to feel like, Oh I know everything now. I'm done.
Mr. Smith’s knowledge of how to support general education teachers in creating an inclusive environment came from a combination of his experience as a general education teacher, training in his administrative degree, learning on the job as an administrator, and on-going professional development opportunities.

**Concerns at EHS**

Overall, concerns were noted by Mrs. Brown, Ms. Palmer, Mr. Strait, and Mr. Smith. Concerns noted were either specific to the administration, general education classroom and teacher, general school related issues, and outside forces. A lack of continuity between the principal and assistant principals along with the school being too big for Mr. Smith to be directly involved in many instructional tasks were cited as administrator specific concerns. Concerns relative to the general education classroom and teacher were the struggles with accommodating and instructing students with all different needs. Mr. Smith specifically noted that he was concerned that some teachers keep to themselves and their departments and do not interact with others in the school as much as he would like. This was related to another general concern that several staff described, which centered around the size of the school. One person references the size in relation to the number of administrators, citing “never enough eyes.” Mr. Smith also discussed the size and layout of the campus as being a barrier to collaboration and interaction when teachers are on opposite ends of campus. Other general concerns were high teacher turnover at times, gifted students being “left out” while the focus is on the other special population students, and the “push” to send students to college.
As with any educational institution, several people reported various concerns they have at Edinburg High School; however, very few of the concerns reported were directly related to Mr. Smith. Many of the concerns discussed did not appear to be hindering the everyday activities at EHS or the climate in the school. The small pockets of concerns described are important for Mr. Smith to monitor and address as the school continues to work towards creating an inclusive environment.

**Lewis High School**

**Research Questions 1 & 1a**

Overall, there were two overarching themes that show how the principal supported the general education teacher providing an inclusive educational environment to meet the educational needs of all learners: The Principal’s Leadership and Redesigning the School Structure. The inductive network for Lewis High School (LHS) is displayed in Figure 3.2. The inductive network shows the relationships and connections between the principal and her leadership and the attempts to redesign the school structure. The display also shows the relationships and connections between Mrs. Foster’s high expectations, her initiatives and activities, and the perceived inclusivity of the climate of LHS as well as services, relationships, and resources.

**The Principal’s Leadership.** Conversations around Mrs. Foster and what she has done at LHS during her principalship were coded into several themes including the perceived inclusivity of the climate. Mrs. Foster created or led several initiatives and activities at LHS. She was also described to have high expectations.
All interviewees described characteristics of Mrs. Foster and her leadership style in some manner. Many, including Mrs. Foster, described her as being a “rule follower,” direct, straight forward, and transparent. Others said “she says what she means” and she’s “open and honest.” Three respondees indicated that she has “an old school mentality” and one person stated that she is a “disciplinarian.” Two of the staff who stated that she has an “old school mentality” said it with disapproval in the sense that Mrs. Foster looks “toward the teacher first before the student as to where the problem is.” One interviewee told a story that paints a picture of that mentality:

We, you know, we recognize people. We started in the workroom, student council helping with it. Um, like a shout-out board. So just for teachers, like whoever go in there, if you helped me like grade papers or whatever, then I might leave you a little shout out up there. And then after, the end of the week, my student council will go, just deliver it…because it could be anybody in school and you might not come down here. Well now I will say that the rest of school got mad and then they wanted to do it. So now they do it up there. But I mean she was not open about it. It was ‘can we just share document and put what way everybody's done,’ you know, and it's like, ‘why are y'all always doing stuff down there.’

One respondent described Mrs. Foster’s mentality as old school and suggested that Mrs. Foster believes instruction should follow the same routine of “you work, you learn.”

Mrs. Thompson, the ESOL teacher, believes Mrs. Foster is approachable “once you get to know her,” but “at first was a little intimidating.” She also stated Mrs. Foster
listens to what she has to say. Mrs. Carter described similar feelings and thoughts she had when Mrs. Foster became principal at LHS:

When she first got here, people who didn't know her or who were new to our school, she was intimidating and she's scary and some people, it took them a little bit to understand that she's all about the kids and that as long as you're, as long as you are too, you're good with her.

Mrs. Foster and Mrs. Carson, the special education teacher, both indicated that Mrs. Foster is a communicator. Each described the weekly “Sunday night email” Mrs. Foster sends to staff. The email details the events happening at LHS that week, reminders for teachers and staff, when Mrs. Foster or other administrators will be unavailable, and updates from the district office as needed. Mrs. Foster believes communication “settles the nerves” of the staff. Mrs. Carson liked the weekly email, while another teacher believed it was too much communication.

Other staff spoke of Mrs. Foster being “knowledgeable” especially when it came to special education and educational laws. Mr. Lewis, the social studies teacher, spoke of her knowledge of the general education classroom by stating “She's been doing this for so long. She can walk in my room next week and say within the first five minutes class, you're planning this out or you're winging it.” Mrs. Carter, the English teacher, also stated that Mrs. Foster is “actively learning new techniques and things that we need to be doing.” Mr. Lewis also described Mrs. Foster’s leadership in terms of trying to hire teachers “with more of the same beliefs as everybody else” in order to “get the staff unified.”
The three general education teachers, the ESOL teacher, and Mrs. Foster described various leadership activities Mrs. Foster engaged in. Mrs. Foster followed the procedures for formal evaluations, which required classroom observations and feedback. The general education teachers mentioned that although Mrs. Foster has not been their evaluator, they have knowledge of what she does in that role, and that she has at one time observed most of their classrooms. Mrs. Logan, the chemistry teacher, further added that even though Mrs. Foster has not observed her classroom, she sends instructional coaches or other staff to check in on other teachers. Mrs. Foster described her observation process for teachers:

So this year I had to try to figure a way that I could go into Muri Howle's class without her thinking, ‘Oh my God, somebody told her I'm not doing good, the principal is here or I'm in trouble.’ So what I did is I took popsicle sticks and put everybody's name on a popsicle stick and I've grouped those popsicle sticks by building, because in this building you can waste so much time going from place to place if you’re really working on observation. So what I, what I do is I pull from the… I don't do any the first week of school and see on our second semester, it's the first week of school. Everybody gets new students. What I don't ever want to do is go in and into a person's classroom that's trying to establish themselves on the first week of school. So while I walk around and peek in the windows and wave at the children, I don't go sit down in a room….But what I do is I've divided those popsicle sticks by building, building 1, building 7, and I'll pull a stick from each building and try to get to those classes, um throughout the day.
Mrs. Foster’s presence in classrooms was further corroborated by the special population coordinator stating that Mrs. Foster is in the classrooms and expects the other administrators to be in the classroom. She further added that Mrs. Foster provided feedback to the teacher individually after investigating more into the content and make-up of the class as well as referring to the teacher’s SLO and accommodation plans of students in the room. Mrs. Logan and Mrs. Carter supported that these conversations happen with all administrators in their interviews.

Mrs. Foster was described as engaging in the instructional leadership activities of conducting observations and providing feedback. It was unclear if these activities were viewed as helpful to teachers. Mrs. Foster was also reported to utilize other staff to support these efforts.

Descriptions of Mrs. Foster and her leadership characteristics and style were that she is a communicator, has an old school mentality, and that she is experienced as an educator. These characteristics along with Mrs. Foster’s perspectives regarding students and her interactions with teachers have undoubtedly shaped the climate of the school. Mrs. Foster’s direction and instructional expectations as well as initiatives and teams, have also likely shaped the climate of the school, which is described in the following section.

**Principal Led/Created Initiatives and Activities.** Five out of the nine interviewees discussed the various initiatives and activities that Mrs. Foster has started since becoming principal at LHS nearly two years ago. Mrs. Foster mentioned creating building teams to address safety concerns at LHS; teams were in the process of starting as the interview
occurred. The guidance counselor, Mrs. Gantt; Mrs. Logan; and the special services coordinator, Mrs. Donaldson, all briefly mentioned the building teams, but only Mrs. Logan described the teams in any detail. However, what she described did not mention safety. She stated:

So she wants things to work on, more of a building modality to where this particular pod...our own department, we are our own school almost so that the teachers are running the school along with administration, not just administrators telling.

Mrs. Foster also discussed her creation of “grade level teams and career readiness teams, which will be a lot like those department chairs.” She stated that she hoped those teams could start before the school year ended. Grade level teams were also mentioned by Mrs. Gantt and Mrs. Donaldson, but again no details of the purpose or function of the teams were provided.

Other meetings Mrs. Foster described were “admin meetings” which took place every Friday. Attendees in these weekly meetings were the four assistant principals, the special services coordinator, department chairs, the instructional coaches, the athletic director, and the school resource officers. Her description of the purpose of “admin meetings” was to first discuss instruction and allow collaboration “on what we think needs to happen in the classrooms.” The team also discussed the different ways that information was disseminated each week. Mrs. Foster further explained her rationale for creating all of these various teams:
Power is not power if it doesn't come from the ground up and neither is collaborative culture. If you start a collaborative culture from the top down, it doesn't work. But if you start it from the roots and let it grow up, it works. So that's kind of what we're after moving out teams and, and making it happen from the ground up.

One interviewee did not seem to share this understanding or viewpoint and indicated that the “feeling on that” was the staff just “meet to meet” even though she believed Mrs. Fosters’ intention was to “give more control over to the teachers.” However, she stated that it didn’t end up feeling that way and “usually, you really don't have any control. The administration still, that admin team is the one that's gonna decide everything and all the teachers know that.”

Three interviewees discussed the policies that were in existence before Mrs. Foster became principal, but one had been a big push for her, which is everyone wearing the proper identification (ID). This policy was not just for students, but for staff and visitors as well. Every student and staff member was required to wear their student ID badge with their picture on it while in the school building during the day. Visitors received a printed sticker with their name and picture. Mrs. Foster cited the importance of the IDs as a safety issue. Mrs. Gantt stated that the administrators are working hard on enforcing the policies on IDs and tardies. Mr. Lewis, a Social Studies teacher, discussed wearing IDs and other policy foci as being important career skills:

You know, we're going to emphasize tardies, we're gonna emphasize IDs. We're going to emphasize, you know, respect to your superior. We want to emphasize
the small things. Anything, dress code. Now you're working towards your career goals there. But those small things also at times take care of the bigger things. So they're stopped before they ever get really big.

All of the activities led or created by Mrs. Foster are likely a part of her vision for the school, but none of the interviewees conveyed this connection in their discussions. It also appeared that the intention of many of these activities was to improve the climate and culture of the school. Despite this, the majority of the feelings relayed by staff revealed that they did not fully understand this intention.

**High Expectations.** Mrs. Foster was described as having high expectations for student success and behavior as well as for teacher and staff work productivity. Mrs. Gantt stated “She wants the students to learn and she wants them to be successful, but they got to walk the chalk line you know, to do that, they got to get on the bus as you might say.” Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Donaldson, and Mrs. Thompson agreed with Mrs. Gantt’s sentiment that Mrs. Foster also holds students accountable and treats them equally. They were similar in their statements that Mrs. Foster expects students to “do what they’re supposed to do” and it’s the same expectation for all students. However, one staff member asserted that she doesn’t believe Mrs. Foster addresses the needs of gifted students and focuses “only” on special education students because of Mrs. Foster’s background. Despite this dissention, Mrs. Carter declared:

[Mrs. Foster] doesn't treat some students differently than other students. She's, if you get your hat on, if it's her kid or if it's my kid or if it's just a kid, you know, she's going to treat them exactly the same. I like that. You know…she has the kids
that she was principal for that came with her from Holly Grove, but if they're not
doing right, she's gonna get them just like she did anybody else.

Ensuring students are college and career ready was a big focus of Mrs. Foster
when it came to her view of students at LHS. according to Mr. Lewis and Mrs.
Donaldson. “Providing an educational program that allows students to be college and
career ready” is also in the school’s mission and vision statement. Mr. Lewis described
Mrs. Foster’s view on preparing students to be college and career ready:

She's implemented some internship type things. She is a proponent, where I've
had administrators in the past that weren't, she's a proponent for early dismissal,
go to work. Which I think is great. She's a proponent of if they get everything
done in three years. Let's graduate, get them out in three. 'Cause now they ain't
gonna come back and get in trouble. They can go to college, they can go to the
job, you know, whatever. So she is very, very focused on the career aspect and I
think she's wanting to move more to that open and up broader aspects. That's a
positive.

Although there were some differing opinions about the special population groups
Mrs. Foster was supportive of, it was clear that she held students accountable for their
actions. She also relayed to teachers the importance for students to be prepared for life
after high school, whatever that may look like for each student. Mrs. Foster was also
consistent in her expectations of students.

One expectation that was stated by numerous staff members was for teachers to
know their students and for them to “teach what [they] got.” This was explained as a
universal expectation no matter if the student had a plan that was required or their ability level. Mrs. Logan narrated:

She's all about inclusive learning environments and finding different modalities of learning for every child regardless if they have a disability or not. She very much hits on the necessity of reaching those children because she had a lot of background working with Mrs. Donaldson and her group. as long as you're doing what you can to engage as many students as possible, she's, she's a big advocate for that.

Academic instruction was also noted as a priority of Mrs. Foster's as “she's very big on time on task in the classrooms,” teachers are expected every day to teach “from bell to bell,” and instruction should be occurring “every minute, can't miss a second of class.” Some of these responses were made with genuine appreciation while others were stated with skepticism and distaste. Three teachers articulated that instruction within their classroom is more or less up to them and they are “left alone” as long as Mrs. Foster “can tell that you're prepared and that you're teaching in the classroom and doing what you're supposed to do” when she comes into the classroom. Mrs. Logan shared a story illustrating this:

[Mrs. Foster] wants teachers to be teaching. She said, you know, in your room you're the queen or the king of your classroom and whatever you can do to get those kids engaged, then that's what we're going to do. And so she's very supportive of that and in different, I mean, in the hall yesterday, um, my first block we needed to do some hands on experiences cause speed most times the
students only equate that to a car. And so all right, well let's understand what speed and acceleration truly is outside of the vehicle… And I really needed them to be able to drop a ball from different heights. Well, it's cold, so you can't go outside. Um, so we were out in the halls and using the wall as a, um, distance. Yeah. And she came out there, she was looking around and she said, ‘Are they all with you?’ I said, ‘Yeah,…we’re learning physics. We are getting some hands on.’ And she said, ‘That's awesome. That's great.’ So you know, we were out in the hall, we're messy. We looked crazy on camera and that's why she came out. But, but we were learning and the kids were learning how to calculate speed and how to calculate the force of gravity pulling all the ball. And it wasn't neat and in a row and it wasn't out of a textbook. And so she's very much for whatever we can do to make those kids learn. And for some of those ELs and those hands on IEP and 504 kids and made a big difference when we went that route rather than a PowerPoint.

Mrs. Carter, stated “[Mrs. Foster] wants us to be professional. She expects that…and she wants us to teach the children by the way, that we dress, behave, talk, walk, everything.” She further stated that Mrs. Foster “doesn't expect anything from us that she does not do herself.”

Mrs. Carter also described Mrs. Foster’s expectations for teachers to know their students and how to help them, hold them accountable, and to respect them. Mrs. Foster attempted to provide support to co-teacher staff by creating common planning time in the master schedule. Co-teaching for ESOL students was mentioned by Mrs. Thompson, the
ESOL teacher. She agreed that Mrs. Foster encourages it and would be supportive of this collaboration in future instances if warranted.

Other feelings noted by teachers were that the expectation to “meet the students where they are” has been more stressed by Mrs. Foster than prior administrators, but that this has been beneficial to students. Part of meeting the students’ individual needs was discussed in terms of teacher’s providing and documenting the provision of accommodations for students who had them. There were mixed feelings expressed regarding this. The special services coordinator expressed the sentiment of Mrs. Foster’s push for the importance of documentation for the school and students’ safety and protection. The GT teacher stated:

We're pushed [to]… make sure we're reaching the accommodations, meeting the accommodations for those kids with IEPs. And we always hear about ESOL… you know, make sure you got documented and you're doing those accommodations. But those are the two main ones. That is the focus and I think the other kids get sort of left out. But I also don't think that everybody realizes what gifted and talented means either because they always, it's the smartest kids and it's not, you know.

Mrs. Logan viewed the process of documenting accommodations somewhat more sanguinely in her explanation:

As long as you've got the evidence and the documentation, there's definitely support there. I've had several cases, not with IEP children, but with children who are, you know, not doing well and you know, it's an employee's fault… and when
I was able to provide multiple forms of documentation of what I've been doing, and I had it timestamped, Remind, Google classroom, all of these things that have actual dates and times to back me up. I had 100% and, you know, it's easy to do the right thing and have documentation that you've done the right thing.

All interviewees except, Mrs. Young, the GT teacher, described various principal interactions with general education teachers. The overall consensus was that Mrs. Foster holds high expectations for teachers. Mrs. Foster has expectations for the teachers to: use their instructional time to the maximum extent; to keep high expectations for their students; to follow board policies and legal requirements; collaborate; and to instruct the students where they are at to the best of the teacher’s ability.

**Perceived Inclusivity of the Climate.** The vast majority of the staff interviewed discussed aspects of the school’s climate including the culture, instructional practices, and the principal’s perspective regarding students. The culture encompassed the acceptance of students of differing abilities, the collaboration and communication among teachers, and the expectation for things to be documented appropriately. Mrs. Foster stated that “the culture when I started was a them versus us culture” and her goal of creating a “collaborative culture” has been discussed in previous sections. Others mentioned changes seen since Mrs. Foster began her principalship specific to discipline. One teacher verbalized that the school “has done a complete 180 in discipline since she's gotten here,” which the guidance counselor seconded:

I feel like we've come a long way as far as like the number of fights, the number of disturbances within school, I think that has improved greatly under her tenure. I
mean, we were having fights a lot. I mean a lot—a lot and that we had one fight last week and I was like, ‘Oh my gosh’, it's just like the first fight I've seen in a month and I'm not always out there, but I usually know when one's been happening. It happens. So I think that has improved greatly.

Mrs. Gantt discussed the co-teaching classes for “self-contained students” and described the general education students as being “very kind” to and “a little more considerate of” those students. Mr. Lewis talked about students of differing abilities receiving instruction in the general education classroom and how supportive teachers have been to students. His perception of the culture is best said in his own words:

Honesty a lot of our kids, you can't even really tell if they are mainstream, if they even receive special services other than your ESOL. But I mean I have kids, honors kids, CP kids, it doesn't matter. I've had 504s, IEPs, all of them. And for the mainstream classroom they're just like everybody else. I think that's something else that Mrs. Foster and Mrs. Donaldson and everybody, I've even classroom teachers keep pushing on to everybody is, it's okay. You know, don't worry about that person, you know, pull out, pushing in, all this other stuff and kids have just gotten where they just roll with it which is really cool in their aspect, especially for those gen ed kids….For the most part, the admin just looks at inclusion of all kids. As all kids learn, it doesn't matter if they're special services or honors or whatever. It's just a mainstream classroom and that's what they tried to push. It's mainstream.

Some of the teachers expressed an optimistic view of interactions between staff in that general education teachers feel comfortable enough to ask questions in IEP meetings.
It was also noted in several interviews that teachers are “real good at working together” whether it be special education or ESOL teacher interactions with general education teachers. The special services coordinator reported no concerns with getting general education teacher input or participation and that general education teachers frequently ask for assistance when needed as they felt comfortable with her and still viewed her as “one of them.”

One teacher spoke of the culture regarding school events changing from a previous view of something fun and enjoyable to being something students have to attend. The teacher indicated that “half of [the students] don't even want to go to the pep rally and they don't want to…they won't come to an event, which I think is all trickled down.” She continued on to say “I just feel the atmosphere is way down. Morale is way down.” Another teacher expressed a similar view stating “there's a lot of people in this building that are not on board with the direction that our admin is going. They're not on board with the implementation. They're not on board with the overall view.” However, this teacher indicated that ‘admin lets it be known too, that it's okay if you don't like it, let's talk about it.’

All teachers and the special services coordinator discussed positive, neutral, and negative values and emotions they have had since Mrs. Foster has been principal. Several staff members described the changes in their and other teachers’ values and attitudes under Mrs. Foster’s tenure. Some staff members described changes in reference to previous administrators as well.
Mrs. Carter valued feedback from administrators because she believed that she needed to find ways to make herself a better teacher in order to best teach her students, not just about English, but also to be “responsible and, and capable.” Mrs. Carter felt that administrators conducting classroom observations were valuable with the perspective of “if you are not doing something, then you want to do something better. And if you are doing well, it's nice to have somebody tell you you're doing your job.”

Mrs. Foster reportedly allowed teachers time to work in their classrooms on PD days when there were no pressing topics to be discussed or trainings to be held. Several teachers greatly appreciated this “little bit of time to, to just work and get things done and make sure we're on top of everything” over sitting in an irrelevant training “twiddling [their] thumbs.” Ms. Carson felt Mrs. Foster was supportive when she was approached for approval in the co-teaching arrangement for the agricultural science course. Mrs. Logan also indicated that she has “always felt supported” and appreciated when Mrs. Foster “trusted” her when Mrs. Logan requested to extend a training she did on her own time to her department because she felt it would benefit all students in those courses.

Ms. Carson felt the co-teaching opportunities for the more severely disabled special education students “is great. I think it's not only for the regular ed kids, but for our kids. They get to see each other's viewpoints.” Mr. Lewis held the believe that “60 to 70% of [LHS’s] student population [will] never go to college” and he “would much rather teach them the life skills and the career skills” needed to be successful after high school. He valued that Mrs. Foster held a similar viewpoint and asserted Mrs. Foster is “doing a really good job of trying to push” college and career ready” and was doing well.
at “trying to relay that to everybody.” Mr. Lewis also valued Mrs. Foster’s enforcement of IDs and tardies and the relevance to career skills.

Mrs. Thompson stated “I have lots of friends. I love my job, I love my school… I can't really answer for everybody, but I love Mrs. Foster.” Another teacher conveyed a similar sentiment regarding Mrs. Foster in that she liked that Mrs. Foster was direct. The teacher stated that she would “rather work for someone like that, but somebody who pretends to be nice and then isn't.” Mrs. Thompson stated that she feels “very supported and valued” at LHS, which was a different feeling than the one she described at her previous schools. She reportedly was moved from school to school each year despite requests to stay at particular schools and did not feel valued.

Mrs. Logan felt that reminders about providing accommodations and who teachers can go to for guidance from Mrs. Foster or other administrators were “really helpful” and had “a huge effect.” She expressed her appreciation for the reminders because teachers often “get bogged down and so much that we tend to forget that we need to do all of these other little things that are… very important little things” that can improve the learning of students.

Mrs. Foster was proud of the success and changes that have occurred at LHS this year since she created the special services coordinator administrative position, which Mrs. Donaldson occupies. Mrs. Donaldson described the benefits of her position as the special services coordinator:

The gen ed teachers come, you know, we've had more support and more participation in that…The newer teachers I think are a little bit more receptive
because they're not, um, they haven't been the system that long and they're not as jaded, you know, so it's more what do I need to do? Um, but on the flip side of that, I think now that there's one central person for them to go to, they ask more questions, the older teachers ask more questions.

Ms. Carson did not feel that the focal walls and navigation boards were beneficial to her or her students as she teaches students with more severe needs. Her feelings are portrayed in her response on the topic:

I mean, it's done. I'd do it because, I mean, I'll talk to the kids about, okay, today we're going to be going over a conflict. What does conflict mean? You know, but they don't really know to look there. Yeah. And half of them can't read it. So I mean, it's more for the administrator I think.

Another teacher reported concerns with other teachers at LHS when it came to instruction for ESOL students, which was illustrated when she said:

The mindset to some, especially the ESOL group is because, you know, if they fail, they're going to have to fill out you know they got to keep up with all the paperwork. Well, it's like, ‘Well, they're never going to fail. I don't care if they know their name, they're going to pass my class.’ So I don't even know how you can justify even, I mean, I don't even know how you go around or figuring out if they're lying or you know, like, cause. I don't agree with that because poor little child is struggling.

Mrs. Gantt spoke of the changes when Mrs. Foster became principal:
It's been an adjustment because the previous administrator we had year before last was his leadership style was laissez Faire. You know, it was, um, knee jerk. A lot of times it was, um, less structured. So when Mrs. Foster came, it immediately went to structure, which is, that's just her way. And you know, every leader is different. So it's been… I don't know that the transition was smooth…so there's some teachers who've not, not adjusted well.

Mr. Lewis expressed that the school is “moving back towards the better.” Another teacher described an opposing view of the environment in that it was “so strict that the kids are just like miserable because, and teachers are too, a lot of people leaving.” The teacher further added, “I've thought about it, I've been in this place 20 years and I'm about to up to my chin.”

The English teacher held a similar feeling regarding the transition to Mrs. Foster by stating:

I think that Mrs. Foster has been tough, but that's what we needed. I mean, it was, the zoo is probably not a nice thing to say, but I mean the kids could go where they wanted to go, do what they wanted to do. Um, just, it was just kind of a free for all. And, and that was not good for the teachers or for the students because there has to be limits for everybody.

Another staff member disliked Mrs. Foster’s directness and stated that Mrs. Foster doesn’t “think before she speaks” and it has impaired morale and the teacher “hate[d] [go]ing to work.” When asked about the environment at LHS, another interviewee conveyed:
I think people are tense. I think that, um, there's a lot of added duties, a lot of added paperwork, that [teachers are] not quite sure how to handle. Um, [Mrs. Foster], she's really big on safety. So she wants you to be on a building team, a safe, you know, a grade level team, you know, safety committee. Um, so people are not really, you know, it's like you're adding more to us instead of taking away.

The special education teacher reportedly felt that Mrs. Foster’s support of special education students’ educational opportunities “would be a one-on-one type, but not across the board.” She also reportedly felt like there was little “follow through” from administration because there were “so many hands in the pot.” Ms. Carson viewed this as being very important for students to see appropriate “follow through” in order for them to learn.

Mrs. Foster and Mrs. Thompson described interactions with special populations staff indicating that Mrs. Foster listened to these staff when they had concerns or requested things. Mrs. Thompson said:

Mrs. Foster, she kind of listens to what the teacher say, especially about this.

Well, just because it's our area of expertise. And if I think something's what's best for the kids, she values my opinion and pretty much listens and try to do things.

Mrs. Foster supported this notion by stating “I usually almost always take a special education teacher’s recommendation and make it happen. I mean it would be very rare for me not to take a recommendation from a special ed teacher and make it happen.”

Mrs. Foster also discussed her collaborative culture and how she handles concerns with teachers in the building:
I really am working on the collaborative culture now. Do they get upset about some things I require them to do? Yes, they do. When you make people work they complain. Um, but you know, usually when I hear that is it is and when I go to them and I'll say, okay, what is the problem?

The collaborative culture was not discussed in detail as being a focus of Mrs. Foster by any of the teachers, but collaboration was met with Mrs. Foster’s approval. The expectations set by Mrs. Foster could have been a part of her overall vision for the school, but it was not presented clearly as such in the interviews. The culture of the school had clearly changed under Mrs. Foster’s leadership, as many interviewees discussed the feel of the school under different administrators. There were mixed feelings reported from staff regarding how well changes since Mrs. Foster became principal were working. There were also mixed feelings reported regarding how the changes had impacted various aspects of the school culture.

All participants mentioned instructional practices prescribed by Mrs. Foster at Lewis High School. The bulk of the responses were of staff describing Mrs. Foster’s expectations and requirements for instruction. A few teachers described instructional practices within their general education classrooms apart from Mrs. Foster’s expectations and requirements.

Mrs. Logan additionally described her use of guided notes as an instructional practice she has found to be successful for students with different learning needs. She provided various students with an outline of her PowerPoints and as the class went through the PowerPoint, the “kind of fill in… underneath that topic to help with their
organization.” The PowerPoints were also posted to the Google Classroom so students had the opportunity to access the information if they missed something.

Mr. Lewis also described Mrs. Foster’s approach to instruction as helpful in that she has tried to provide examples of different ways for general education teachers to assess student learning. She recommended debates and other techniques to get away from purely paper and pencil tests. Mrs. Donaldson also offered an example of a way Mrs. Foster attempts to provide support to teachers. She stated that Mrs. Foster looks at how teachers label their assignments in the gradebook and requires them to be explicit “so that parents can understand exactly what was being assessed.” Mrs. Foster also “encourages the teachers to put something in there…for the parent to see … that they got their accommodation.”

Mrs. Foster believed “good instruction is good instruction” and said her motto “and they know it, is that the magic happens in the moment and you gotta make those class periods magic.” Mrs. Foster discussed several requirements she made for teachers to follow in order to improve instruction. She required teachers to “communicate [their] expectations” every day via a “focal wall.” The focal wall in each classroom was usually on the wall where the promethean or active panel board is. According to Ms. Carson (the only teacher to mention a focal wall), the focal wall allowed administrators, when they went into the classroom, to see what the class was doing in that subject area that day. Included on the focal wall was the daily agenda or “navigation board” and a bulletin board that displayed school news. Mrs. Foster required teachers to break down each class period into smaller timeframes “because students so often learn when they know what the
chunk is they're learning in.” Also on the navigation board was the instructional standard for the day “written in real standard language” because students are “going to have to fill out insurance forms someday. They're written in real standard insurance language. So I want them to be able to understand how to read this.” The objective for the day which detailed “what they’re supposed to be able to do at the end of all of it” is also on the navigation board. Another requirement added by Mrs. Foster was a syllabus for each course. She required that the teachers “take the school calendar and to actually put the dates on” their syllabus to give the teachers and students a guide on the pace of instruction for the semester.

These required instructional practices were not discussed by many teachers. However, many of the teachers reported that Mrs. Foster had high expectations for teachers to meet their students at their current ability level. She also expected them to be utilizing the instructional time available to the maximum extent possible.

Teachers at LHS expressed appreciation for various aspects of Mrs. Foster’s approach and changes she has made since becoming principal. Some staff reported that some initiatives Mrs. Foster put in place were not helpful and that some of the special population groups got treated differently than others. Most teachers were supportive of Mrs. Foster’s push to improve safety. The attitudes and values of teachers are undoubtedly crucial in creating an inclusive environment, so the mixed feelings described at LHS are likely attributing the differing views and tones of the school’s culture.

**Redesigning the School Structure.** Mrs. Foster described her attempts to redesign various aspects of the school structure in order to create a “collaborative
Some things she was noted as doing were allowing and encouraging various instructional service options to meet the needs of students and restructuring some of the school schedules to allow for more staff collaboration. She was further described as providing and approving various resources to staff.

**Services.** Various levels of service across special populations were recounted across numerous interviews. Co-teaching in several subject areas such as math and English Language Arts is available to meet the needs of special education students and ESOL students. The majority of interviewees discussed one variation of co-teaching or another. Mrs. Gantt described the benefits of co-teaching for both populations:

I do see how the inclusion works. Um, well they do tend, those who are non-English-speaking do tend to do better at first with additional help, more than just inclusion. But as they start learning the language, then inclusion works well for them…We're doing more and more with the inclusion and at the high school level especially I see that the inclusion is very beneficial because they're not, um, they have somebody right with them where when they're having a problem to try to correct it at that point, um, that helps, you know, having somebody they are more hands on. Um, with math and with English where we're doing the inclusion, it works really well.

Other co-teaching opportunities were conveyed for special education students with more severe disabilities including physical education, agricultural science, and engineering classes. The latter opportunities were only spoken about by the special services coordinator. Dual enrollment, honors classes, and AP courses at LHS were cited as
service options available to meet the needs of GT students and sometimes students with 504 Accommodation Plans. The GT teacher disagreed with this being the way that GT students should be served and stated “We don’t serve that community.”

Although not all interviewees mentioned the different service options at LHS, there were a variety of options available at LHS. Some of the options were available prior to Mrs. Foster becoming principal, but since then some new options have been created and discussed. Mrs. Foster’s openness to new options may be helpful in moving the school to a more inclusive climate.

Mrs. Gantt discussed Mrs. Foster’s support of the co-teaching model for special education and indicated that Mrs. Foster “is a proponent” for students having that method of service delivery. Mrs. Gantt also believed Mrs. Foster was supportive of students in the “self-contained” special education classrooms and wants to ensure those students are safe and are learning along with everyone else. The special education teacher and the special populations administrator talked about how the “self-contained” classrooms also have opportunities to attend co-teaching classes in agricultural science and physical education. and Mrs. Foster’s support of the students having those opportunities. Mrs. Gantt further described Mrs. Foster’s support of a student club to address issues of suicide at LHS and their organization of a walk to end suicide. Mrs. Gantt stated Mrs. Foster:

        Doesn't really like assemblies and walks and things like that….So it kind of shocked me that she was willing to let them do these things. So I think that says
something right there. She realizes the need and you know, is allowing those things to happen… I mean she wants the best for the students.

Although all service changes were not directly under Mrs. Foster’s control, she appeared to be supportive of the changes. She was supportive and gave her approval to recommendations of additions or changes from teachers at LHS. Many of the services and changes discussed ultimately were created in order to provide more inclusive opportunities to students at LHS, which Mrs. Foster endorsed.

**Relationships.** Relationships between staff and administrator and staff relationships with other staff were all described as being dependent on the people involved in many cases. At times, these relationships were described to be good, relationships, while others were nonexistent or tenuous. There were also reportedly “cliques” among staff, as well as between staff and administrators.

Relationships between staff and administrators were described as “awful” by one person, while another person believed the quality of the relationship was dependent upon the administrator in question. One interviewee qualified that the staff and administrator relationships were “better than it has been.” Another interviewee indicated that staff relationships with Mrs. Foster were better than they were with two of the assistant principals, but the relationships with Mr. Daniels, another assistant principal, were overwhelmingly upbeat by those who specifically brought up his name. One person asserted:

[Mr. Daniels] definitely has the best relationship with the teachers. The teachers depend on him and he's really very readily available for them and with questions
and he has answers. If he didn't know the answer, he'll find the answer for them. And he's not quite as judgmental, I guess you could say as some of the other assistant principals. And his relationship, it's like a different feeling/tone in that building[s]… that he's in charge of. He's one of the best I've ever seen. He's wonderful. So it's kinda hard to beat that. But he's always positive, never negative and very supportive, which means everything to teachers.

Mrs. Foster perceived her relationship with many teachers was as she was a support that they would email with questions or concerns. She stated “I feel like they do not have a problem at all comin' to me,” but that she heavily encourages them to also discuss things with respective department chair or discuss with Mrs. Donaldson if it is related to a special population student. When it came to Mrs. Donaldson, Mrs. Foster believed that “it's easy to walk up” to Mrs. Donaldson when she’s on duty. Mrs. Foster further posited that she “believe[s] that that has been instrumental in changing the way teachers feel in a positive way. They feel like they can talk to her.”

Relationships among staff were described as being “pretty good” and “close knit” by one interviewee. The ESOL Teacher indicated that the teachers she has worked with “have been very supportive and willing” to work together to meet the best interests of students. All general education teachers also mentioned “supportive” relationships with special population teachers and instructional coaches.

The ability for teachers to go to other administrators or staff to receive support was a support that Mrs. Foster provided. Mrs. Foster encouraged general education teachers to reach out to special population teachers in her efforts to create a collaborative
culture. It was interesting that the majority of the teachers did not discuss the nature of any direct relationships with Mrs. Foster.

**Resources.** Resources available at Lewis High School were categorized into three areas: instructional, professional development, and other. Instructional resources ranged from technology to support from other staff within the building. Computer programs to assist teachers in differentiating and providing personalized learning opportunities to students were described, such as Study Island and MicroBurst. An accommodations lab is available at LHS to assist when students require accommodations that the general education teacher is not able to completely address, such as extended time.

Support from other staff included the school having a Spanish speaking assistant in the ESOL department. The assistant supports students in the general education classroom when the ESOL teacher is unable to assist and works with the general education teacher and student in that classroom. Mrs. Foster also indicated that various instructional resources that were requested by teachers went through department chairs who had “a lot of leeway in instruction and curriculum.” Mrs. Donaldson and special population teachers, as well as instructional coaches were likewise listed as instructional resources. Other resources included translators who were also reportedly available in the school when needed. Special education staff at the district office were also cited as a resource. Mrs. Foster reported the position held by Mrs. Donaldson and Mrs. Donaldson’s knowledge and expertise as being a resource to everyone at LHS.

Professional development (PD) activities were shared by seven out of the nine interviewees at LHS. Weekly Tuesday afternoon faculty meetings and district PD days
were used to provide training on various instructional topics or for departments or grade levels to meet. Special education staff, ESOL staff, and instructional coaches often presented at these PDs in addition to outside trainers for select content when necessary. The ESOL teacher did not feel these PD opportunities were beneficial to her as her department was combined with the special education department and often the topics were not relevant to her. Mrs. Young, the GT teacher held an opinion on the opposite end of the spectrum and stated that she didn’t think the staff did “enough training” and felt like more training was necessary for teachers. Mrs. Foster and several staff reported that Mrs. Foster was amenable to requests from staff for PD on specific topics of interest as well as to teacher initiated PD engagement outside of school, and reportedly solicits feedback from teachers regarding PD topics to cover throughout the school year.

Although interviewees did not explicitly state that Mrs. Foster gave them resources, they felt as though Mrs. Foster would be willing to provide resources if requested. Mrs. Foster’s system of teams and department chairs may have impacted the staff’s view on going directly to Mrs. Foster. This would not be surprising as one of the intentions of department chairs was for teachers to have a person to go to to request resources instead of having one person in the building being overloaded with requests from everyone in the school.

**Research Question 2**

Mrs. Foster attributed her knowledge and understating of how to support general education teachers in creating an inclusive educational environment to a combination of things. She was unable to articulate or pinpoint one “single thing” that assisted in her
learning in this area. She attributes her knowledge and understanding to a combination of her experience of being a Social Studies teacher for 20 years and her experience as an assistant principal who observed special education teachers.

**Concerns at LHS**

Many of the concerns reported throughout the interviews were general concerns related to staffing at Lewis High School. One person cited that there were not enough special education teachers to provide co-teaching opportunities at all levels, although that was not attributed to a lack of anything from the principal as Mrs. Foster was perceived to be supportive of the co-teaching courses. Mrs. Foster stated that there were not enough staff in the guidance department, while another person indicated there was a high turnover rate at LHS, which was concerning. Other staffing concerns were due to the campus buildings being spread out, which caused teachers to not interact with other teachers in other departments frequently. Additionally, assistant principals were perceived to be “a little more judgmental and jump to conclusions,” which caused “a little problem” with teachers and students. A final concern related to staffing was that some first year teachers were not trained in the co-teaching model, but were assigned co-teaching classes. One person said:

I think sometimes though we take for granted that new teachers know what to do and I don't think they work with them enough. And that leads to, "Oh, I can't do this." Like I know a new teacher, they put all in one, it's the inclusion class. We have the inclusion class or the co-teaching and stuff like that. But I mean, they put
a whole group in there and she was just freaking, I didn't know what to do, but I
don't think they, we don't do enough training. I think we need to do more training.

Other general concerns were that certain teachers did not follow the paperwork
procedures appropriately, GT students got left out of the focus of teachers and
administrators, along with student motivation and a lack of parent involvement,
specifically with the ESOL populations. Two interviewees expressed concerns about the
safety, well-being, and appropriateness of “self-contained” students attending many
general education classrooms and lunch activities in the main common area with the rest
of the student population. The interviewees explained that all 1600 students had the same
lunch period and that although they did not want to separate these students, they did not
feel it was in the students’ best interests to be in that environment with all of the noise
and number of people. Concerns for them attending general education classrooms were
due to the students not being able to complete their work and the potential for bullying.

Instructional concerns mentioned by staff members were centered around the
difficulties general education teachers have stated or have been observed to have when it
comes to meeting the needs of all students in their classrooms. Mrs. Carter described the
difficulty best when she said “It can still be difficult to figure out how to work with my
lowest students, and my students are having the most trouble, and still try to help the high
flyers to be challenged.” Three teachers cited meeting the needs of ESOL student as
specific struggles they have had or observed. The biggest struggle with this population
was noted to be the language barrier as many times students have attended LHS with no
English vocabulary or understanding. Other issues specific to ESOL students include the
facts that there are often no other students in the class that can help support them, there are often big groups of these students in general education classrooms, and most general education teachers speak very little Spanish, if any. The Guidance Counselor summed up these concerns in her statement:

> It's frustrating to the child, the teacher, everybody involved if they know absolutely no English because if the teacher doesn't speak the language they speak, they can't even get across simple directions to the child. And it's very frustrating and as much to the child as it is to the teacher, but it's very hard, especially at the high school level where we're supposed to be teaching them algebra and we can't even give them the instructions. That's very frustrating for all involved.

Concerns specific to the principal or administrators were described by four staff members at LHS. Too many meetings, added duties, and added paperwork were discussed. The structure of things Mrs. Foster has put in place, “looking towards the teacher first before the student as the where the problem lies,” and too many emails were also revealed as primary concerns for staff. Issues always being seen as “black or white” with “no gray area” from Mrs. Foster’s perspective were noted to be of concern specific to special education students and topics. A lack of consistency with discipline was also cited as a concern specific to special education as one person put it “I don't think the discipline, consequences match sometimes with the behavior that's exhibited.” A lack of follow through on Mrs. Foster’s part was also described by two interviewees. Finally, the concentration on GT students and meeting their needs was nonexistent in accounts from
one teacher especially compared to how much other student populations were emphasized by Mrs. Foster.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I detailed the realities and the positive aspects of each school in an attempt to answer two of my research questions: *Question 1: In what ways are principals perceived to support general education teachers in creating an inclusive educational environment to meet the educational needs of all learners within the classroom?*

*Question 1a: What, if any, professional development opportunities on topics targeting inclusive instruction for special populations are provided to general education teachers by principals?* Allowing time for collaboration and common planning as well as fostering productive, trusting relationships between staff and faculty were things the principal did to support staff at EHS. Other things that Mr. Smith did that were viewed as supportive were to “stand behind” the teachers and providing them freedom and flexibility to do what is best for their students. Both principals reportedly held high expectations for general education teachers when it comes to student learning. Another form of support that covered a wide variety of topics across both schools was providing resources to general education teachers. Resources included access to other staff members, materials and technology, and professional development. Faculty meetings and in-service days where special population teachers present on relevant topics to assist general education teachers in meeting the needs of special population students were highlighted as beneficial types of professional development across both schools. Outside professional development opportunities were also described by staff at EHS.
I also summarized responses from each school principal in an attempt to answer Research Question 2, which was: Where do principals gain their knowledge of inclusive practice or how to support general education teachers in engaging in inclusive practice?

It appears that much of the learning on how to be a supportive principal is learned through on the job experience. Mr. Smith indicated that a great deal of what he has learned has come from listening to his staff and continuing to be open to learning new things, but also stated that his administrative degree program helped prepare him as well. Mrs. Foster further indicated that her time working closely with the special education department when she was an assistant principal at LHS also helped her gain a plethora of knowledge.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative, multi-case case study was to find the ways in which a high school principal is perceived to support general education teachers in creating an inclusive educational environment to meet the needs of all students. It was also intended to examine what professional development opportunities were given to general education teachers to support them in creating an inclusive educational environment. Lastly, a goal of this study was to gain a better understanding of where principals believe they learned the skills and knowledge necessary to provide such supports and create an inclusive educational environment. My interest was not to determine if the school did or did not have an inclusive educational environment, but rather to determine what principals do to help create an inclusive environment. These two cases differed significantly in their approaches to leadership and in their level of inclusivity of the environment. Using the instructional leadership framework described in Chapter 2, I discuss the findings and relate them to the literature reviewed.

The positive core map of each school is evidenced in Table 5.1, which highlights each school leader’s instructional leadership practices. The remainder of this chapter is framed to discuss the results for Research Questions 1 and 1a within the instructional leadership lens, followed by an integration of AI principles and freedoms, with a brief summary of how the principals learned to support general education teachers, implications, and a final conclusion.
### Table 5.1

**Instructional Leadership Practices used by School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Leadership Practice</th>
<th>Leadership Practices at EHS</th>
<th>Leadership Practices at LHS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting Directions</td>
<td>• Created a shared vision of inclusion &amp; individualization</td>
<td>• Created a vision with an emphasis on safety, &amp; providing students skills they need to be successful after graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Set high expectations of staff</td>
<td>• Set instructional expectations for all teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Set high expectations of student learning &amp; success</td>
<td>• Set other expectations for teachers (e.g. professionalism, documentation, collaboration, following board policy and law, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communicated a known motto “No Excuses”</td>
<td>• Communicated with staff weekly via the “Sunday night email”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Set expectations for teachers to follow accommodation plans</td>
<td>• Set high expectations for students to do what was expected of them</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Asked teachers to “be a guide on the side”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Created a vision with an emphasis on safety, &amp; providing students skills they need to be successful after graduation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing People</td>
<td>• Conducted observations and provided feedback</td>
<td>• Sends teachers to specialty area personnel (e.g. special education department or instructional coaches, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Held one-on-one conferences with teachers</td>
<td>• Sends specialty area personnel to assist general education teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Advocated for teachers</td>
<td>• Provided opportunities for general education teachers to learn from and access special population teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Open door policy</td>
<td>• Approves teacher initiated or requested professional development engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provides professional development opportunities (e.g. in-service days, faculty meetings, and conference attendance)</td>
<td>• Conducted observations and provided feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Distributes and delegates some tasks to assistant principals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provided opportunities for special population teachers to work with and support general education teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Monitors and evaluates professional development opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provides professional development opportunities (e.g. in-service days, faculty meetings, and conference attendance)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructional Leadership Practice</td>
<td>Leadership Practices at EHS</td>
<td>Leadership Practices at LHS</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing the Instructional Programming</td>
<td>- Conducted observations and provided feedback</td>
<td>- Hiring teachers with similar beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support and sustain the performance of stakeholders</td>
<td>- Hiring teachers that will fit the climate</td>
<td>- Set requirements for specific instructional practices (e.g. focal wall and syllabi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Modify and/or create collaborative environments</td>
<td>- Allows teachers freedom within their classrooms</td>
<td>- Set expectations for instruction to occur “bell to bell”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strengthen the overall culture of the school</td>
<td>- Provides instructional resources including textbooks, technology, and translators</td>
<td>- Trusted that teachers know their content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Restructure the organization</td>
<td>- Allowed/encouraged special population teachers to lead professional development</td>
<td>- Provided instructional resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Building relationships</td>
<td>activities with general education teachers</td>
<td>- Allowed/encouraged special population teachers to lead professional development activities with general education teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop an effect school climate and culture.</td>
<td>- With a shared understanding that the goal is student improvement of achievement</td>
<td>- Distributed leadership to department chairs to monitor instruction and be a liaison between teachers and administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create and foster professional communities</td>
<td>- Built a collaborative culture with favorable relationships between faculty &amp; staff and among staff</td>
<td>- Working on creating a collaborative culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Allocate resources and support for instructional practice</td>
<td>- Created common planning times in the schedule</td>
<td>- Favorable relationships among most staff and with some administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Record keeping of teacher professional development needs</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Created common planning times in the schedule for co-teaching staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Create collaboration friendly environments</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Created various school teams to try to build capacity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Monitoring school activity</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Created a system to build capacity and communication via department chairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ensure there are enough staff to meet the needs of students</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Buffer staff from distractions to their work.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Redesigning the Organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Built a collaborative culture with favorable relationships between faculty &amp; staff and among staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Created common planning times in the schedule</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Leadership Practices</td>
<td>- Engaged staff in future planning activities</td>
<td>- Valued and acknowledged special population teachers’ opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- PBIS implemented</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Provides staff with up-to-date literature on various topics</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; Robinson et al., 2008; Louis et al., 2010b; Carpenter, 2015.)
Setting Directions

Setting Directions refers to the principal’s creation of goals and visions for the district, setting of educational expectations, and communicating this information to all stakeholders (Leithwood et al., 2004; Louis et al., 2010b). Loreman et al. (2005) found that schools that were successful in developing inclusive educational environments had collaborative organizational structures with a shared sense of responsibility and purpose.

Edinburg High School

Mr. Smith was found to clearly communicate his expectations for teachers through his vision. Mr. Smith very clearly set the tone for the school’s approach to inclusion and equity through his creation of a “positive” and “safe” environment with high expectations for the learning of all students and high expectations for teachers to meet the needs of all students. Although his view of inclusion was for all students, this finding is consistent with Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis’ (2008) finding that in schools where principals had a vision of inclusion for students with disabilities, inclusion was more successful. This view is also similar to Goor et al.’s (1997) assertion that effective principals believe all children can learn. Mr. Smith’s expectations for students to learn was high and “realistic” in that he expected students to progress at different rates, but he also emphasized the importance of progress for each student. Mr. Smith created a shared set of values with effective communication and trust and was reportedly “a champion of making sure every student is addressed…within the classroom.” Several teachers reported that they felt that they could trust Mr. Smith and that he emphasized the
importance of meeting the social-emotional needs of students in addition to their academic needs.

There also appeared to be a shared responsibility for the learning of all students and the creation of a common language as evidenced by Mr. Smith’s motto “No excuses” (Billingsley et al., 2018). Mr. Smith’s email signature also contained a hashtag with this motto. Many interviewees cited this motto and understood that the motto extended to students and staff. For students it meant that Mr. Smith expects students to communicate with their teachers and ask for help and clarity when needed. For staff, it meant that Mr. Smith expected teachers to work with other professionals, seek out assistance, and do their best to ensure each child is demonstrating some level of success. He also held the expectation that teachers know their students and implement any services and accommodations appropriately. Knowledge and implementation of services for all students is also key in creating and fostering an inclusive educational environment (Shogren et al., 2015).

Mr. Smith was reported to include the whole school community and make inclusion a routine and integral part of the school through his support of ESOL programs, after school programming, creation of special programs for students in different vocations such as nursing, and support of co-teaching course availability. Creating a culture of inclusion and collaboration has been found to be impacted by principal leadership (Day et al., 2016). Different academic levels of certain subject areas were also described to be beneficial in reaching the needs of various students’ learning abilities. Mr. Smith also led a leadership team which met weekly to discuss issues around the school and engage in
future planning. This is important as Day et al. (2016) found that leadership can directly impact the school culture in secondary schools. Regardless, no one discussed any specific meeting structures that were created by Mr. Smith to build capacity. In all, Mr. Smith created a clear, shared vision of inclusion and set expectations for teachers to be inclusive in their instruction.

**Lewis High School**

Mrs. Foster set many high expectations for instruction across the school, and she was able to provide her vision of the school. These are important factors in creating an inclusive environment (Billingsley et al., 2018). However, her vision did not appear to have an inclusive focus, to be communicated to all staff, nor did the staff describe the vision as shared. Setting high expectations for learning and creating the vision are essential practices in creating an inclusive environment (Capper et al., 2000; Ross & Berger, 2009). Regardless, several staff members indicated that they supported many of her initiatives and actions. Many of the stories described the environment as being impacted much more directly by the principal in that her expectations were perceived to be as more of a requirement than an ideal. Additionally, the vast majority of the interviewees alluded to the existence of shared responsibility of student learning, although none of the teachers tied it back to being set by the principal. Having a shared responsibility of all student learning is also an important practice when working to create an inclusive environment (Burrello & Zadnik, 1986; Capper et al., 2000; Ross & Berger, 2009).
Although a shared set of values with effective communication and trust were described by several staff members, the overall feelings of communication and trust with Mrs. Foster were not always good. Some staff felt that she communicated too much. Additionally, the overall feeling regarding the inclusion of the whole school community was mixed, with many interviewees discussing populations that have been left out. Several staff members did, however, discuss the positive inclusion of various students through the use of co-teaching in several subject areas.

Mrs. Foster stated that her focus this school year was on improving safety, which is an essential piece of a school climate (Billingsley et al., 2018). A handful of staff members reported that safety needed to be addressed and they expressed the improvements they have seen so far in that aspect of the school. Mrs. Foster made safety a priority for all aspects of the school, which is an essential standard for student success described by Capper et al. (2000) and was found to be a key foundational focus by Day et al. (2016). As part of the safety focus, Mrs. Foster has also worked towards consistent implementation of schoolwide discipline policies, which is a standard in inclusive schools (Capper et al., 2000). Although it was not clear if the policies had individually designed consequences or the consistency of the consequences, several staff members at LHS discussed policies.

**Developing People**

*Developing People* involves modeling suitable practices and values and providing staff in the school environment with intellectual stimulation, individual support, and training in order to build capacity (Leithwood et al., 2004; Louis et al., 2010b).
Edinburg High School

Mr. Smith reportedly engaged in distributed leadership and was not very “hands-on” as many interviewees mentioned assistant principals handling instructional concerns more frequently. This is not extremely uncommon in this context as Seong (2019) summarized years of leadership research and concluded it that leadership does not solely rest on the principal. Despite not being very hands on, it seemed that Mr. Smith was still readily available whenever someone needed something. The involvement of other administrators can be positive in that input from others is solicited and the principal is not undertaking the helm of school leadership alone (Hallinger, 2005).

Interviewees indicated that there were close partnerships with administrators and other teachers across the school setting and many cited instances of collaboration across departments. This is congruent to Cobb’s (2015) meta-analysis findings that inclusion is fostered by collaboration, although the studies were specific to special education only. Teachers and staff at EHS frequently recounted stories depicting Mr. Smith’s support and how he has been an advocate for his staff in various situations. Additionally, Mr. Smith reportedly hires people who he feels would be able to reach the students in the school environment. Capper et al. (2000) found that this practice was essential in aiding the principal in creating a vision of inclusion and in embracing that vision in practice (Ryan, 2010).

Mr. Smith had also implemented procedures to foster a professional learning community, which is essential in creating an inclusive environment (Billingsley et al., 2018; Loreman, 2007). He was willing to provide resources to general education teachers
in the form of materials, outside services, people, and professional development through the use of faculty meetings and in-service days. Professional development opportunities were perceived as beneficial by general education teachers especially when special population staff were able to present on instructional methods or materials that would help in the general education classroom. This enabling of staff to learn from each other helps create a collaborative, inclusive environment (Loreman et al., 2005). His creation of collaborative supports is consistent with findings from Bays and Crocket (2007) in which successful instructional leaders create a norm of collaboration. Other professional development opportunities were discussed by teachers including out of the district opportunities that came from Mr. Smith or individual teacher recommendations. Mr. Smith was supportive of teachers who found their own ways to learn new things that would help them meet the needs of the students in their classrooms.

Mr. Smith’s “open door policy” when teachers had a concern or a request was also seen to create a professional learning environment and allowed Mr. Smith to share expertise (Billingsley et al., 2018). Collaborative efforts were encouraged for teachers to work together outside of their departments and to find new ways to meet the needs of their students. These efforts show that Mr. Smith believes in inclusion and is working to reimagine the roles of teachers (Theoharis et al., 2016). Furthermore, administrative observations, provision of feedback, and one-on-one conferences were also seen as helpful and reportedly supported general education teachers in improving their practice. These necessary leadership activities were not perceived as things that were feared by any staff interviewed.
**Lewis High School**

Procedures to foster a professional learning community and the creation of meeting structures to build capacity and provide support were put in place by Mrs. Foster through her creation of various teams (Capper et al., 2000). However, many staff members did not convey receptiveness to these nor did they feel the teams were necessary or valuable. The level of support may have impacted the staff’s views as was seen in Park et al.’s (2019) study. This disconnect becomes a concern when looking at the overall inclusiveness of the educational environment because in inclusive educational settings all members of the school are part of the decision-making process (Loreman et al., 2005). Additionally, the lack of understanding of the purpose of the teams and associated meetings could hinder the overall inclusiveness of the environment (Carter & Abawi, 2018).

Mrs. Foster communicated her vision of the teams providing teachers with power and responsibility, but staff did not appear to have the same understanding as there appeared to be little to no input or feedback from staff regarding those meetings or initiatives. Mrs. Foster’s intention for these teams to be used for problem solving and for teachers to receive instructional support was not widely understood by staff (Theoharis et al., 2016). The creation of a leadership team is a good step towards creating an inclusive environment; however, some staff members conveyed feelings that the “admin team decides everything” and there were “cliques” in the admin team as well as among staff which meant that the teams were not authentic or collaborative (Carter & Abawi, 2018; Theoharis et al., 2016).
Mrs. Foster engaged in distributed leadership when it came to instructional support, when she willingly directed general education teachers to one of the special area teachers or instructional coaches for support. It was also recognized that Mrs. Foster attempted to hire teachers with similar views as her who would fit into the culture she was creating. As cited previously, Capper et al. (2000) and Ryan (2010) found this to be a successful approach for principals working to create an inclusive school environment.

Additionally, Mrs. Foster frequently talked about the purpose of department chairs as did the special services coordinator. It was articulated by Mrs. Foster that teachers know to speak with their department chairs first before going to her. Yet only one of the general education teachers discussed the role of the department chair. It is unclear from this study if the teachers viewed this delegation of responsibility as an instructional leadership trait, as many in the Louis et al. (2010b) study did not hold this view. Louis et al. (2010b) also found that secondary school principals believe they are engaging in instructional leadership when they delegate responsibility to department chairs. Their study found that department chairs actually “provide little to no instructional leadership” (p 91).

Professional development opportunities were detailed by numerous interviewees; however only one of them indicated that Mrs. Foster played a part in these activities. Staff at LHS reported that they enjoyed hearing from the special population teachers and staff at faculty meetings or on in-service days as it often helped them meet the needs of students in their classes. These opportunities allowed for shared resources and expertise as well as demonstration and discussion of instructional methods and materials. Collaboration and meaningful professional learning opportunities are hallmarks of
inclusive environments (Shogren et al., 2015). It was not very clear if general education teachers felt as though they had a voice when it came to selecting topics of these sessions; however, the special services coordinator indicated that Mrs. Foster solicited feedback on this from department chairs.

Common planning was a priority of Mrs. Foster when it came to co-teachers so that they could share resources and expertise. Collaboration was encouraged across the school and positive relationships were described in isolated cases indicative of some inclusive practices (Billingsley et al., 2018; Day et al., 2016). Despite Mrs. Foster’s statement of her attempts to create a collaborative culture, the majority of the school staff did not know or articulate this aspect of Mrs. Foster’s leadership or vision.

**Managing the Instructional Program**

Managing the Instructional Program involves allocating resources and support for instructional practice by monitoring school activity, ensuring there are enough staff to meet the needs of students, and buffering staff from distractions to their work are also essential practices principals must engage in to manage the instructional program (Leithwood et al., 2004; Louis et al., 2010b). Teachers who understand and exhibit effective teaching and learning practices are essential in the creation of a collaborative, inclusive educational environment (Loreman et al., 2005).

**Edinburg High School**

Mr. Smith supported teacher instruction by allowing them freedom to use various methods and techniques to meet their students’ needs such as scaffolding and integrating movement into the instruction. Mr. Smith encouraged and expected teachers to use
differentiation in their instruction. He also supported the use of new instructional methods and materials in faculty meetings and in-service days. He felt that it was more beneficial for general education teachers to learn about new methods and updates from the special population staff at EHS rather than for them to listen to outside trainers, as there was more trust in people they were familiar with. Shogren et al. (2015) similarly found that in inclusive schools there were opportunities for such teacher to teacher support.

Mr. Smith was viewed as being encouraging to teachers in their use of technology. He has also been cited as sharing or providing resources to any teacher or staff member when they needed or requested them. Creative use of resources has been found to help in fostering an inclusive environment (Shogren et al., 2015). Spanish versions of textbooks are available and various technology programs were available for teachers to access to assist them in instruction as all students were provided with a Chromebook.

Observations, feedback, and one-on-one conferences were utilized by Mr. Smith and the assistant principals, which is key in monitoring and improving instruction at the secondary level (Day et al., 2016). Feedback was sometimes written down and given to teachers, while at other times it was in person immediately after observations. Many teachers noted that Mr. Smith explicitly looked for evidence of knowledge and implementation of accommodations and differentiation when he looked at Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), lesson plans, and conducted observations. Teachers overall
viewed these interactions with Mr. Smith and the other administrators as positive and effective.

Lewis High School

Mrs. Foster reported that she had several requirements for all teachers to help improve their instruction including focus walls, navigation boards, and syllabi. Her explanation of the benefits of these was tied to making the classrooms more inclusive, even though only two of the teachers mentioned the requirements. It is important to note that the teachers did not appear to understand or did not articulate the relevance or importance of these for inclusive practice. Regardless of these requirements, teachers reportedly had freedom to do whatever they wanted in the classroom. Some teachers were able to describe an example of how Mrs. Foster responded to their instructional approach, although it wasn’t really relayed as “support” so much as she “approves” of it. Mrs. Foster was further reported to be supportive, but frequently reported to be so only when qualifier statements such as “if you’re doing your job” and “if you’ve got documentation” were added at the end of the example. Regardless of the specific conditions of support, teachers still evidenced feelings of shared responsibility, which is important to create and foster an inclusive environment (Park et al., 2019).

Additionally, PD was not mandatory if there was nothing pertinent to staff that was imminently required, and teachers were allowed to use that time to spend in their classrooms. This was viewed as helpful by many of the teachers. Many interviewee responses defaulted back to describing explicit services that were offered within the
school to demonstrate how the school is inclusive. The majority of respondents could not always articulate what practices were implemented that created an inclusive environment.

Mrs. Foster and other administrators’ engagement in classroom observations and provision of feedback were discussed by the majority of staff. Observations and the provision of feedback are both essential aspects of both instructional leadership and practices that aid in creating an inclusive environment (Day et al., 2016; Leithwood et al., 2004; Louis et al., 2010b, Shogren et al., 2015). Feedback was generally viewed as helpful in that Mrs. Foster or the assistant principals attempted to check on and encourage teachers to find ways to address all of the student needs in the general education classroom. Checking gradebooks, SLOs, lesson plans, and navigation boards, were ways that Mrs. Foster reportedly attempted to ensure that instructional content and strategies align with the school’s vision. Although her vision wasn’t widely acknowledged as being inclusive, it was understood that the needs of all students should be addressed (Shogren et al., 2015). Mrs. Foster also encouraged use of different types of assessments within the classroom including performance-based assessments, which Capper et al. (2000) found to be helpful in creating inclusive schools.

Mrs. Foster provided support in the form of access to other staff members who had more knowledge of specific topics such as instructional coaches and special population teachers. This provision of resources was noted specifically in situations where she observed or was informed that a general education teacher was having difficulty meeting the needs of all students in the classroom. Proving resources becomes essential as secondary level general education teachers identified this activity by the
principal to be important in improving student outcomes (Day et al., 2015). Overall, LHS staff did not overtly view the principal as being an essential part of resource access, similar to findings in Lyons et al. (2016) study. Despite this, instructional materials and resources were generally always supported or provided by Mrs. Foster or her admin team when requested by general education teachers.

Several teachers talked about the meetings and teams that were created, which could be good for inclusive practice, but the tone of the interviewees’ responses was not one of approval and joy. Although the staff at LHS discussed various initiatives and instructional requirements that were designed with the intention of improving instruction for all students, they were often perceived as burdensome or were not mentioned at all by teachers. This may have been because the teachers did not feel as if they had a voice in any of these matters or that they perceived these things to be mandated.

**Redesigning the Organization**

Redesigning the Organization involves restructuring the organization and building relationships to strengthen the overall culture of the school (Leithwood et al., 2004; Louis et al., 2010b).

**Edinburg High School**

Mr. Smith has created a school climate that is warm and welcoming through the creation of course structures which will allow teachers to better meet the needs of students and creation of common planning times. Common planning times were created in the school schedule so teachers who engaged in co-teaching could meet each day. These opportunities and changes in the school structure have been found to improve and
foster inclusive educational environments (Elfers & Stritiku, 2014). Common planning times also provided teachers time to meet with their departments when necessary. Special population teachers also had the flexibility in this schedule to meet with general education teachers or their departments, depending on the need.

Co-teaching courses were reportedly added when teachers suggested it or when a need was seen in a specific student population. Relationships between all of the special population teachers and general education teachers were described as collaborative. This teacher to teacher support has been found to be beneficial to general education teachers (Shogren et al., 2015) and to create an inclusive environment (Billingsley et al., 2018). All of the relationships the interviewees talked about were positive and many stated that even outside of their departments there were people they felt comfortable talking to.

**Lewis High School**

Mrs. Foster has supported the creation and implementation of co-teaching structures for many subject areas including English, Mathematics, and agricultural science. These new structures have been created in other schools as ways to create multiple learning spaces for all students (Shogren et al., 2015). Mrs. Foster has attempted to arrange common planning times in the master schedule to facilitate more collaborative opportunities for these teachers. Again, these opportunities have been found to be beneficial to teachers and in creating an inclusive educational environment, Billingsley et al., 2018; Shogren et al., 2015). Mrs. Foster’s attempts to make inclusion a routine and integral part of school have been with the student’s best interests in mind. Yet, there was
a clear disconnect between her and many staff members’ involvement and understandings of these attempts.

Mrs. Foster has made it a priority to create a safer school environment for everyone through her enforcement of policy and her creation of school safety teams. This is similar to schools in the foundational phases of creating inclusive educational environments in Day et al.’s (2016) study of secondary principals. The enforcement of policy was not widely discussed, but was generally viewed positively. The school safety teams were frequently discussed in the overall discussion of Mrs. Foster’s creation of teams, so the overall view of the safety teams specifically is unclear. The focus on safety may have also been an attempt to make the school climate more warm and welcoming, yet some staff perceived the environment as being the opposite, again potentially impacting the inclusivity of the school environment overall (Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008).

Mrs. Foster also reportedly encouraged teachers to go to their department chairs with issues or questions, rather than coming directly to her. This was in an attempt by Mrs. Foster to distribute leadership to aid in creating a collaborative culture (Day et al., 2016). The majority of staff members indicated that relationships with administrators, often with Mrs. Foster specifically, were not great, although staff relationships with other staff were often viewed positively. This many have attributed to the lack of an inclusive feeling in the discussion of the school climate as Poon-McBrayer and Wong (2013) found that close partnerships were essential in the success of inclusive educational practices.
A Summary of Edinburg High School

In this section, I summarize the overall findings from Edinburg High School and describe how the AI principles and freedoms were viewed. The positive principle was previously described in Chapters 2 and 3 in impacting the wording and choice of the interview questions. The constructionist principle was demonstrated in the meaning making that occurred in the use of the conversations and stories told by interviewees (Calebrese et al., 2008; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). The results from Edinburg High School painted a picture of a supportive, well liked, principal who had high expectations for the learning of all students. Mr. Smith was able to establish visibility, which is essential in creating an inclusive environment (Capper et al., 2000). Staff at EHS also perceived Mr. Smith to be very supportive of anyone, but they also acknowledged that he expected that they were doing their job in the first place. Mr. Smith was also perceived to be approachable, had an open door policy, and made himself available whenever a staff member asked to speak with him. All of these created the freedom to be heard, the freedom to choose to contribute, the freedom to act with support, and the freedom to be positive (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010).

Professional development opportunities were abundantly available to all general education teachers on a wide variety of topics that could help them improve their instruction. General education teachers felt that the professional development opportunities Mr. Smith facilitated and provided at faculty meetings and on in-service days were most beneficial when special population staff and instructional coaches were presenting. It is important for professional learning opportunities for teachers to be
meaningful (Billingsley et al., 2018). Interviewees at EHS rarely discussed the service options available for students, but frequently discussed the practices that they or other teachers/staff engaged in within the school to make it an inclusive environment. Participants also described the various class structures and examples of how students are supported in the general education classrooms. Many of them tied these things specifically to Mr. Smith’s involvement or support.

The relationships and collaboration that occurred at EHS were overwhelmingly positive and ultimately supported by Mr. Smith, especially when it came to co-teaching or team teaching in the general education classrooms. This evidenced the freedom to be known in relationships and the freedom to dream in the community as some of the co-teaching relationships were initiated by the teachers (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). Furthermore, Mr. Smith created structures within the school to allow teachers time to collaborate within and across departments. He also tried to create common planning times for teachers who engaged in co-teaching. General education teachers felt comfortable in asking for assistance from instructional coaches, special education teachers, guidance counselors, and ESOL teachers as well as Mr. Smith. The free choice principle was evidenced here (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). All of the stories told by the staff at Edinburg High School depicted an inclusive educational environment with a very supportive, trusted leader.

Many of the characteristics displayed that made the environment at EHS appear more inclusive were very similar to those discussed by authors of studies on inclusion for special education students. It appears that the principal’s engagement in these activities
can foster an inclusive educational environment for all students. Although not every one of the inclusive educational practices that can be supported by a principal were specifically addressed by the interviewees at EHS, there was an overwhelming feeling of inclusion from all responses. The only inclusive practice that was not explicitly mentioned by anyone at EHS was that the principal inspects the physical structure of the school. Mr. Smith, along with one teacher, generally discussed a concern with how spread out the school is physically, but did not elaborate on the topic much farther.

Mr. Smith clearly articulated his vision and the values he emphasized appeared to be shared with all staff. Mr. Smith appeared to utilize the enactment principle and facilitated it through his vision and motto. Additionally, Mr. Smith managed the instructional program through the use of classroom observations, providing feedback to teachers, and one-on-one conferences with teachers. Overall, the climate of the school was conveyed to be inclusive and positive.

**A Summary of Lewis High School**

The stories told at Lewis High School (LHS) painted a much different picture than those at EHS. Despite so few stories of commendation of Mrs. Foster and her leadership endeavors, the AI framework encourages the focus on the positive things and discuss what made those possible (Ludema et al., 2001). Most staff viewed Mrs. Foster’s role as indirect with a focus more on safety than anything else. Although Mrs. Foster engaged in many instructional leadership practices, these and her use or support of inclusive practices were not clearly connected to creating an inclusive educational environment overall at Lewis High School.
At LHS, Mrs. Foster had high expectations for both students and staff, but appeared to be more in control of the inner workings of the school. Despite the limited perception of distributed control, setting high expectations for all students is critical in her work towards creating a more collaborative, inclusive culture. Several interviewees also reported that they liked Mrs. Foster and appreciated various aspects of her personality and leadership style such as her honesty and directness as it helps them “know where they stand” with her. Nonetheless, several staff members at LHS reported that Mrs. Foster was viewed as intimidating by some general education teachers. It is unclear in this study whether Mrs. Foster’s gender played a role in this view, but it was similarly found in a study by Burton and Weiner (2016) that a female principal was perceived to have a communication style that was intimidating on job interviews, whereas her male counterpart was recommended to be more aggressive and forceful.

Although the interviewees for LHS mentioned many of the ways a principal can create and support inclusive educational environments, many were more principal led than collaborative. This was similar to findings from Louis et al. (2010b) indicating that some secondary level principals “wrongly assumed that if a vision of high-quality instruction was well articulated, then high-quality instruction would happen” (p. 91). I am not asserting that high quality instruction was not happening at LHS, but the impact of Mrs. Foster on instruction was not clearly visible through this study, aside from the various expectations she had set for general education teachers such as navigation boards, syllabi, and focus walls. These instructional practices will likely be beneficial to all of the
special population students, but the teachers had not perceived them as being important or helpful.

Mrs. Foster did, however, place importance on creating schedules which allowed co-teachers to engage in common planning, which likely facilitated the freedom to be known in a relationship. This action along, with her creation of various school teams evidenced her attempts to create a collaborative culture and collaborative networks, which Blase and Blase (2004) cited as important components of successful teaching and learning.

Additionally, several teachers spoke of the willingness of Mrs. Foster to provide resources to teachers and to listen to staff when they had concerns, which demonstrate the freedoms to be heard, to choose to contribute, and to act with support (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). Many staff spoke of Mrs. Foster’s encouragement and provision of professional development opportunities, which was considered a support by many. The special education law knowledge Mrs. Foster had was also discussed by several interviewees as was her foci on this population of students, which is consistent with the findings of Wakeman et al. (2006) who found that secondary principals were more involved in special education activities when they had more knowledge in that area.

Summary of Where Principals Gained Knowledge

Mr. Smith and Mrs. Foster reported that the knowledge they had gained came from several different avenues. Similar to Johnson & James (2019), both principals indicated that the most influential avenue was their experience on the job, being a teacher and working with special population students and teachers than in their principal training...
programs. Mrs. Foster also attributed a great deal of her knowledge from being an assistant principal over the special education department at LHS.

Mr. Smith additionally stated that he believed some of his knowledge could be attributed to his administration degree coursework.

Similar to Angelle and Bilton’s (2009) finding, Mr. Smith stated that there was little coursework involving students with disabilities and none on working with ESOL students. Mrs. Foster did not explicitly state whether or not any of her administrative degree courses covered working with students in special populations, but she did not attribute her knowledge to any coursework. Neither administrator mentioned coursework regarding gifted education, so it may be assumed that they received none, which would also be consistent with McHatton et al.’s (2010) study results.

Mr. Smith further discussed his endeavor to be a lifelong learner and the continued learning opportunities that he seeks on his own. Although Mrs. Foster did not explicitly make a statement about this, several of the staff members made reference to Mrs. Foster’s continued learning and her active pursuit of a doctoral degree. It was unclear if either or both of the principals engaged in informal or formal training opportunities, but the lack of clarity may indicate similar results in Ryan’s (2006) study that found principals indicated there are few training opportunities for administrators.

**Implications**

In this section, I discuss the implications for practice, research, and policy. One implication for practice is that many of the procedures found to be effective in creating inclusive schools for students with disabilities can be slightly modified and applied to
creating an inclusive educational environment for all students. Another implication for practice is that principals and general education teachers need to receive more training on inclusive practices. Additionally, principals need to ensure that their vision is clearly understood by assistant principals and teachers in their schools and that assistant principals are acting in ways that will help the school meet the principal’s vision. It is clear that principals do not have to have control of every aspect of the school to create an inclusive environment, but rather the principal must be available and provide resources to staff. Furthermore, principals must create structures which allow for collaboration across departments and disciplines in order to ensure the success of inclusive practice. Principals must also set high expectations for the learning of all students and clearly communicate expectations to all staff members and ensure staff are working towards the same goal.

One implication for research is that more studies on inclusion expand their definition of inclusion to ensure that they are studying the needs of all learners, particularly how the principal supports the inclusion of all students. This research also needs to be expanded to more states and districts within the United States, as the research on inclusion has predominantly been conducted in other countries. The extension of this research to elementary and middle school levels is also needed to determine if the practices for special education inclusion are successful in meeting the needs of all students, especially given that the school structures are inherently different from the structures of a high school, as in this study. An additional implication for research is the use of the AI framework in P-12 educational organizations. Although the framework was not used it in its entirety, the use of the framework was beneficial in providing an asset-
based focus rather than a deficit-based focus, which so often is used in educational research. Although it was not a focus of this study, the literature review and a statement by Mr. Smith indicate a need for more research into the coursework requirements for administrators on topics for special populations students, aside from special education only. Even though this study did not include any student achievement data, it would be interesting in future research to look at the impact of the principal’s support of general education teachers in creating an inclusive environment on student achievement scores. Other implications for research center around the gender of the principal. Although gender was not an intentional factor of the investigation it was interesting that the results evidenced Mrs. Foster engaged a great deal of instructional leadership practices over inclusive educational practices. This is similar to a study by Hallinger et al. (2018), wherein they found that female principals engaged in more active instructional leadership practices. Additionally, the gender difference of the two principals in this study may have impacted the perceptions of their respective leadership styles by staff in each of their schools as Burton and Weiner (2016) found that a female principal’s communication style was seen as aggressive and made people feel uncomfortable, but the male principal’s communication style did not. In a study of female principals, Murakami and Tornsen (2017) found female principals often focused on strict fairness so as to not appear to have a laissez-faire leadership style. Burton and Weiner (2016) also cited a lack of research on this topic in P-12 education.

Implications for policy center around certification requirements for educators. Principals and general education teacher training programs also need to provide more
coursework on how to work with special population students. This can also be extended to the need for more training opportunities for administrators outside of formal coursework on the topics of inclusion and special population students.

Conclusions

It appears that being an instructional leader alone does not equate to a principal being supportive of all students and their diverse needs within the school environment. However, many of the actions do overlap or have commonalities. Both principals had high expectations for all student learning and there was some evidence of distributive leadership practices in both schools. Villa and Thousand (2017) found that the communication of high learning expectations for all students is an essential perspective for inclusive school leaders to hold and convey to school staff. Staff at LHS described the individualized learning aspects occurring within the general education classrooms, but these actions were not encouraged or reinforced by Mrs. Foster as principal.

Staff at both schools discussed being able to work well with other adults in the building. However, LHS staff had more negative views on this in certain pieces of the environment, and the relationships with the principal were similar in that aspect. The differences in inclusivity at each school could be partially attributed to the relationships. Blase and Blasé (2002) and Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis (2008) found that the use of a team approach, which involved collaboration and positive relationships, was an important factor in making the school inclusive. Similar to Lyons et al. (2016), in schools where inclusion was successful, the general education teachers had a shared sense of responsibility for all students in their classrooms.
Both case sites were similar to Louis et al.’s (2010) study of principals in that many of the teachers did not report a vast array of direct or frequent interactions with their respective principals, especially when it came to discussions about instruction. For LHS, this can be explained somewhat by the fact the Mrs. Foster had taken on all first year teachers for her direct evaluation procedures and no first year teachers were selected for participation in this study. Both schools had student populations of around 1600 students with one principal and four assistant principals, so the lack of direct, frequent interaction can also be attributed to the principal engaging in more distributed leadership actions.

The lack of collaboration and involvement of teachers and staff in decision making created a less inclusive environment at LHS than at EHS even though the LHS principal did engage in many of the instructional leadership activities such as observing and giving feedback. It also appears that the LHS principal’s vision was not communicated well to all stakeholders, or rather it was not accepted by all stakeholders, so it was not a shared vision.

Some differences in staff responses across schools may also be attributed to the years each principal had in the principalship. Mr. Smith had been principal at EHS for several more years than Mrs. Foster had been principal at LHS, although she, and many interviewees, reported that she was an assistant principal for many years prior to becoming principal. The working relationships in the school may not have had enough time to be built as strongly at LHS.
All in all, when principals are advocates for general education teachers and provide them with resources, the general education teachers appear more willing to go above and beyond for their students. Obtaining general education teacher input and meaningfully integrating input and feedback into the vision and initiatives within the school also helps teachers feel supported when trying to meet the needs of special population students in their classrooms. Lastly, providing general education teachers with time and access to other staff to collaborate seemed to be beneficial to all teachers.
Appendix A

Email Template for Contacting District Directors of Special Education

Use this template when contacting district Directors of Special Education to obtain recommendations of principals who are exemplars of inclusive instructional leaders. Scripts are in bold.

Hello, I’m ________, and I’m a ______ at Clemson University. I am emailing you requesting your assistance for my dissertation research. If you are willing, I am looking for recommendations from directors within the WPEC group for potential candidates for my research project on principals who are supportive of inclusive educational practices. For the purposes of the study, we are referring to inclusive education for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), 504 Accommodation Plans, English Language Learners (ELLs), and gifted students. If you have a principal in mind that has created and/or fosters an inclusive educational environment in his/her school, please email me the name of the principal and the name of his/her school. You are welcome to recommend multiple principals within your district if applicable. We are looking to include 3-5 principals in the study if possible. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at ________.

Thank you in advance for your help.
Use these scripts when contacting district officials to enquire about potential principals. Scripts are in bold. The first script is for cases where the principal was nominated by a Special Education Director. The second script is for cases where the principal was identified by a superintendent.

Script 1: If principal was nominated by Director of Special Education

Hello, I’m ________, and I’m a ________ at Clemson University. I am calling because ___[principal name]____ has been nominated as a potential candidate for our research project on principals who are supportive of inclusive educational practices. We are considering this principal as a possible participant in our study, and we would like to collect some more information about him/her. For the purposes of the study, we are referring to inclusive education for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), 504 Accommodation Plans, English Language Learners (ELLs), and gifted students.
Could you first tell me how long this person has been a principal at his or her current school?

In what ways do you think ______ has created an inclusive educational environment at ________ School?

Is there a procedure for approving research conducted in your district? If yes, get information about the process and who to contact.

Script 2: If Superintendent identified principal:

Follow up if Superintendent does not agree with recommendation provided by Director of Special Education.

Do you have any other principals within your district currently whom you would recommend be included in this study?

In what ways do you think _____ has created an inclusive educational environment at ________ School?

For both instances where principals were nominated and where principals were identified by our team:

Do you have any questions about the study? Answers to most questions can be found on the information letter which will be given to all participants before the study begins. Refer to this when answering questions.

Conclude conversation with:
Thank you for your help. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at ________.
Appendix C

Phone Script for Contacting Principals

Use this script when contacting principals to invite them to participate in the study.

Hello, I’m ________, and I’m a ______ at Clemson University. I am calling because I am conducting a study at Clemson University on principals who support inclusive education. I am calling because you were recommended by ________ and your superintendent, __________ think your experiences at ________ are a good example of a principal who is supportive of general education teachers in providing inclusive educational environments to meet the needs of all students, specifically, students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), 504 Accommodation Plans, English Language Learners (ELLs), and gifted students. Would you be willing to participate in our study? If yes, use the information letter to explain the study and to ask for their help in identifying their staff participants. If no, thank them for their time and end the call.

Conclude conversation with:
Thank you for your help. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at ________.
Appendix D

Email Script for Contacting Teachers

Use this script when contacting teachers to invite them to participate in the study.

Hello, I’m _________, and I’m a ______ at Clemson University. I am emailing because I am conducting a study at Clemson University on principals who support inclusive education. I am emailing because you were recommended by your principal to give your perspective of how your principal supports general education teachers in providing inclusive educational environments to meet the needs of all students, specifically, students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), 504 Accommodation Plans, English Language Learners (ELLs), and gifted students. Would you be willing to participate in our study?

If yes, use the information letter to explain the study and to ask for their availability to participate. If no, thank them for their time and end the call.

Conclude conversation with:

Thank you for your help. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at ________.
Appendix E

Interview Protocols

Principal
The definition of inclusion is education that focuses on all learners, the strengths of students, collaboration, and teaching that is adaptive and supportive. ** The definition of “special populations” includes special education students, 504 accommodation plan students, gifted students, and ELL/ESOL students**

Background
- Please describe your background experience in education especially specific to each special population

1. What is your philosophy/approach to instructing general education students?
   Prompt if necessary:
   A. What are the expectations for providing instructions to all students? Are those different for students with diverse backgrounds (i.e. language barriers, special needs, gifted, cultural diversity)?
2. What do you think you/your school is doing well relative to inclusive practices in the general education classrooms?
3. What are your expectations for teachers, students, and the community within the school relative to inclusionary practice?
   Prompt if necessary:
   A. Do you have policies in place that are reflective of these expectations?
   B. Do you use formative/summative evaluation procedures to improve instructional practices of general education teachers? If so, how?
      o Do you look at lesson plans? If so, how/in what way? How frequently?
      o Do you use observation data? If so, how/in what way? How frequently?
   C. What materials & textbooks do you provide that help general education teachers improve and differentiate their instruction in the classroom?
   D. Do you utilize other staff members to support general education teacher instructional practices? If so, whom? e.g. instructional coaches, guidance counselors, special education staff, ESOL teachers?
   E. Do you utilize meetings to support or improve instructional practices in your building? If so, how? e.g. PLC meetings, staff meetings, special population meetings like IEP, ESOL, 504
   F. How would you describe the relationships among staff?
4. Can you think of any documents or materials that I could see or have access to that would show how you have created an inclusive environment? (e.g. staff meeting agendas, school handbooks, etc.)
5. Where did you learn to do all of these things you do to support general education teachers and/or create an inclusive educational environment?
A. In college? In your admin degree program? Through PD you’ve selected? Through PD your supervisor has recommended to you?
The definition of inclusion is education that focuses on all learners, the strengths of students, collaboration, and teaching that is adaptive and supportive.

** The definition of “special populations” includes special education students, 504 accommodation plan students, gifted students, ELL/ESOL students**

Background

- Please describe your background experience in education, especially specific to each special population

1. What do you believe is the general approach of the principal towards instructing all students in the general education classroom?
2. How well do you think that approach is working?

3. Describe how your school engages in inclusive educational practices and how your principal supports these practices?

Prompt if necessary:

a. Does/Has your administrator used formative/summative evaluation procedures to support or encourage you in improving instructional practice? If so, how?
   i. Does s/he look at lesson plans? If so, how/in what way?
   ii. Does s/he look at observation data? If so, how/in what way?

b. What materials & textbooks are (you) provided that help improve and differentiate instruction in the general education classroom?

c. Do you think/feel your principal utilizes you or other staff members to support or improve general education teacher’s instructional practices? If so, how? e.g. instructional coaches, guidance counselors, special education teachers, ESOL teachers?

d. Does your administrator help or support your efforts in supporting general education teachers?

e. How would you describe the relationships among staff and administrators?

f. Does your principal utilize meetings to support or improve general education teacher instructional practices? If so, how? e.g. PLC meetings, staff meetings, special population meetings like IEP, ESOL, 504?

4. What are the principal’s expectations for providing instruction to all students?

Prompt if necessary:

a. Are the expectations different for students with diverse backgrounds (i.e. language barriers, special needs, gifted, cultural diversity)?
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