2022

Elementary General Education Teacher Perspectives of Administrator Leadership Support in the Inclusion Classroom

Lynda Davis
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Lynda Davis

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Review Committee
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Dr. Sydney Parent, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Christina Dawson, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
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Abstract

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Lynda Davis

MA, University of Phoenix, 2010

BS, Coppin State University, 1998

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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February 2022

Abstract

The passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1975 was the summation of many years of advocacy for students with disabilities in the United States. Many school personnel face challenges implementing the act's inclusion mandate, which requires that all students be educated in the least restrictive environment that provides the best services. More research is needed to understand how principals' leadership practices support inclusion education among their staff. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore general education teachers' perspectives of administrator support in the elementary inclusion classroom. The framework for this study included elements from Bass's transformational, transactional, and passive avoidant leadership theories. A purposeful sampling strategy was used to select 12 elementary teachers with experience in the inclusive setting. Data from semistructured interviews were analyzed inductively and deductively using a priori, open, and axial coding strategies. Participants perceived themselves as being supported by their respective administrators based on their individual needs within the inclusive classroom. Participants perceived principals as using transformational leadership behaviors, particularly idealized influence and intellectual stimulation, to support teachers in the inclusion classroom. Some participants wished for less autonomy and more specific support suggestions. Recommendations included comparing leader and teacher perceptions of support. Positive social change implications include enhancing leaders' behaviors and supports for inclusion teachers to improve their capacity to meet the learning needs of all students.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated, first and foremost, to my family. My husband, David, who knew I could do it before I saw it myself and encouraged me when I wanted to walk away. God, in His infinite wisdom, knew that I would need you to cheer me on when the burden got too heavy. My daughter Chandra who read, assisted in countless edits, and pushed me to keep going; words cannot express how much I love you and appreciate your support. My son Christopher who was always there to pick up the slack. My son Malcolm who checked on me to make sure I was still making progress towards my goal. I love you all. Finally, my dear friend Helen Moore who inspired me more than she would ever know. To my inclusion students, I see you, and I thank you for helping me become the educator I am today. For it is out of my love for you and the desire to see a change that this dissertation was birthed.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Inclusion education is an educational model that school district leaders across the United States use to close the achievement and inequality gaps for students identified with a learning disability (Florian et al., 2017). In the United States, 6.7 million students received special education services in 2015-2016 (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2018). Most (95%) of these special education students were enrolled in public schools, of which 63% were taught in the general education classroom. Data released by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2018) show that scores for special education students in Grades 4, 8, and 12 have remained at the basic level for reading and mathematics since 1996. In 1975, Congress passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It was amended in 1997. The law specified that all children with disabilities have available a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their individual needs. These guidelines are the legal precedent for giving disabled students access to instruction and curriculum equal to their nondisabled peers within the public-school setting. Having access to the same instruction and curriculum as their abled peers helps to maintain high expectations for special education students and promote learning regardless of the severity of the disability (History of IDEA, 2020). Public schools are responsible for evaluating students whom they suspect may have a disability free of charge to the parent.

The concept of inclusive education, in which both special and general education students are in the same learning environment, began in 1990 with the passage of the

American With Disabilities Act. Although IDEA did provide the framework for access to a free and appropriate education for students with disabilities, the law does not include specifics about the quality of education (History of IDEA, 2020). The ratification of Americans With Disabilities Act was the foundation for inclusion today. Inclusion is used to address students' educational needs with disabilities if their educational needs can be met in the general education setting. This means that special education students can be educated collectively with their general education peers. However, the ratified Americans With Disabilities Act did not address the issue of how to implement inclusion. Many school district leaders interpreted inclusion and implemented it differently (Dudley-Marling & Burns, 2014; Haug, 2016).

In this study, I focused on the behaviors school administrators use to support and influence general educators' effectiveness in working with students with disabilities in the inclusion setting in one school district in a mid-Atlantic state. If teachers do not receive the necessary support and guidance, special education students may not perform as well as intended in the inclusive setting. This premise was supported by the data for special education students, as reported on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2018) report. McLeskey and Waldron (2015) found that when inclusion is implemented without offering teachers academic support from administrators, inclusive students do not show academic gains on assessments. Although there is research on administrators' positive and negative effects on special education student academic achievement (Bettini et al., 2015; Cameron, 2016; Cobb, 2015; Esposito et al., 2018), an initial review of the literature yielded little information on the support and guidance

administrators provide to general education teachers who teach special education and those teachers' perspectives on the supports they receive.

In this chapter, I will identify the current gaps in the literature regarding administrator supports for general education teachers in the inclusion setting and the supports that general education teachers deem necessary to best aid students with a disability. Principals need to provide more instructional support for general education teachers in the inclusion classroom because teachers often lack the knowledge of inclusion implementation required to meet the needs of inclusion students (McLeskey & Waldron, 2015). School administrators who are familiar with the practice of teacher support may need to adjust their behaviors to support inclusion teachers with insufficient knowledge to instruct students with disabilities. Major sections in this chapter include the background; problem and purpose statements; research question; conceptual framework; nature of the study; definitions of key terms; assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of the study; and significance of the study.

Background

Children with disabilities did not receive a quality education from U.S. public schools to address their disabilities and prepare them to succeed educationally until 1975 (Collins & Ludlow, 2018; History of IDEA, 2020). One of the more significant issues that arose was the difficulties teachers experienced meeting the needs of special education students in inclusion classrooms. Teachers' lack of experience in working with inclusion students meant that practices recommended by experts were not being used to educate them (Dudley-Marling & Burns, 2014; Haug, 2016). Practices such as leadership

support, collaboration among teachers, and a supportive environment for teachers and students create a more inclusive setting (Maciver et al., 2018).

Haug (2016) also posited that the lack of fidelity in implementing inclusion could be a result of administrators' inadequate teacher support. Shoulders and Krei (2016) found that lack of fidelity in implementation is often the result of inadequate teacher development and lack of administration support. Teachers may look to school administration for leadership in this new area. When they do not receive the help they need, they may attempt to compensate for the lack of supportive leadership behaviors by developing their own teaching inclusion strategies (Abery et al., 2017).

Although legislators expects teachers to follow or create effective means of educating special needs children, they have yet to hold principals accountable for creating successful inclusive environments (Billingsley et al., 2017; Shyman, 2015). It appears that there is a disconnect between expectations for administration and teachers. This potentially widens the gap in practice as teachers are often left to their own devices to create effective strategies. To create an effective inclusive environment, teachers may need support from their administrators. Administrators can actively create a successful inclusive environment by seeking their teachers' counsel on individual students, working cooperatively with teachers to create strategies to implement in classrooms, and gaining experiences with disabled students (McLeskey & Waldron, 2015). When administrators actively participate in these endeavors, the supported teachers may effectively meet the academic needs of disabled students in the inclusive classroom.

Pantić and Florian (2015) suggested that a principal's role is critical in all student successes in their schools and collaborating with teachers helps create an inclusive learning environment. Principals should involve themselves in each teacher's classroom's intricacies, meeting the goals of an effective inclusive environment (Moolenaar & Sleegers, 2015). Teachers are more likely to develop strategies for teaching inclusive students when they have the much-needed support of their principals (Bettini et al., 2016). Principals who take a more active role in lending support to teachers help create a learning environment that benefits general and special education children (Bettini et al., 2016). Inclusion may work when general education teachers are given the necessary support to work with students with disabilities. However, a lack of supportive leadership behaviors can be detrimental to general education teachers and students in the inclusive setting. When supportive leadership is missing, teachers often have a negative disposition to inclusion education and students with disabilities (Gaines & Barnes, 2017). Therefore, more research is needed to assess administrator leadership behaviors to create a more effective inclusive environment.

Problem Statement

The problem is the support elementary administrators offer to teachers who teach in an inclusive setting. Esposito et al. (2018) concluded that leadership behaviors affect student performance through the support administrators provide to teachers. There is a gap in teacher support and the literature regarding administrators' lack of supportive transformational leadership behaviors in supporting general education teachers in inclusive settings. Although there have been many studies on the administrator role in

transforming schools (e.g., Price, 2015; Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015; Shani & Koss, 2015), few studies have targeted administrators' leadership behaviors that assist teachers in inclusive classrooms to enhance student success for special education students (Esposito et al., 2018). Morningstar et al. (2016) stated that more research is needed to understand how principals' leadership practices support inclusion education among their staff.

Administrators' supportive behaviors that promote student learning incorporate stimulating teachers intellectually, providing individualized support, and a shared vision (Leithwood et al., 2004). To fulfill the expectations set by the mandates of IDEA, administrators need to provide teachers with support and resources that they can use to meet the needs of inclusive students in the general education classroom (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs, 2018). Current research on what supports administrators' offer is finite (Murphy, 2018). Administrator support does not just benefit the teachers but the students as well.

Additionally, there is a need to research the general education teachers' perspectives on the support they receive from administrators while working in the inclusive classroom (McLeskey & Waldron, 2015). It is necessary to explore teachers' perspectives of support received from administrators because teachers' perceptions can positively influence the success of inclusion students (Cameron, 2016). A lack of support from administrators to general education teachers who teach students with disabilities can lead to teacher frustrations and loss of teacher retention (Gee & Gonsier-Gerdin, 2018).

Teachers' perceptions of lack of training and support from administrators on effective inclusion practices can negatively impact teacher and student interactions, stress, and teacher efficacy in the inclusion classroom (Gaines & Barnes, 2017). It is necessary to explore teachers' perspectives of the support they receive from administrators, resulting in improved learning for inclusion students (Cobb, 2015). Black (2014), Burkhauser (2017), and Price (2015) suggested that student learning increases when teachers perceive that they are well supported in the inclusive classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore general education teachers' perspectives of administrator support in the elementary inclusion classroom. Arrah and Swain (2014) posited that more research is necessary to understand administrators' behaviors that support teachers in the special education setting. When administrators support general education teachers, the teachers are more successful in teaching inclusion students (Wlodarczyk et al., 2015). Support for teachers can be considered an invaluable asset in dealing with inclusive students.

One implication for exploring the perspectives of administrator behaviors in supporting inclusion teachers is that local school administrators can be better informed regarding the assistance teachers need to teach inclusion students. Findings from this study may help district-level administrators create specialized roles that may enhance inclusion students' learning. Murphy (2018) suggested that for schools to offer an effective inclusive program to disabled students, the administrator's support behaviors must be examined.

Exploring teachers' perspectives of administrators' behaviors that support teachers in the inclusive classroom is essential. Teachers who perceive a lack of supportive leadership behaviors from administrators can perceive inclusion negatively (Woodcock & Woolfson, 2019), leading to a less inclusive learning environment for disabled students. In contrast, teachers who perceived their administrators as supportive fostered a classroom environment that supported special education students (Shaukat et al., 2019). Knowing teacher perspectives of their administrators' supportive transformational leadership behaviors may result in successful teaching and learning experiences for teachers and their disabled students.

Research Question

What are elementary teachers' perspectives of administrator leadership behaviors to guide general education teachers in the inclusion classroom?

Conceptual Framework

I used transformational leadership theory to guide this study. This theory was developed by Bass (1997) and is based on Burns's (2012) work on transforming theory, which concerns the ability of leadership to move staff from lower to higher levels of accomplishments through the sharing of power, authority, and ownership of the challenges they face together. Transformational leadership theory was appropriate in examining administrators' perspectives of their behavior in supporting teachers in the inclusion classroom and teachers' perspectives of administrator behaviors in supporting them. There is a direct association between administrators' demonstration of transformational leadership behaviors and increased teachers' confidence in instructing

students in the inclusive classroom (Hoxha & Hyseni-Duraku, 2017; Ninković &

Knežević Florić, 2018; Sharma & Singh, 2017; Sun & Leithwood, 2012). When

principals exhibit transformational leadership behaviors, they provide the support and

tools that teachers need to succeed. Teachers, in turn, can become transformative leaders

in their inclusive classrooms by giving students the support they need to be successful.

These teachers create relationships with students and promote learning and student

growth. This is done similarly to what a transformational leader does by creating a shared

vision, modeling behaviors, challenging students, and providing individual attention and

encouragement (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). This model is not specific to general

education settings but is applicable to developing teachers as leaders in the inclusion

setting. Ultimately, the administrator's goal is to provide teachers with support that they

can use to create a more inclusive setting for their students and enhance learning.

  A transformational leader understands the need to empower their staff with the

confidence to overcome challenges--in this case, through the development of

relationships between a principal and a teacher (Bass, 1997; Bass et al., 2003; Ogola,

2017). As the conceptual framework, transformational leadership theory provided

additional insight into how administrators support teachers in the inclusion classroom.

Specifically, it provided insight on what, if any, transformational behaviors those

administrators show when supporting their teachers.

  Transformational leadership, according to Bass and Bass (2009), is based on

intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized

influence (the four Is; p. 620). In the case of individualized consideration, leaders who

demonstrate concern for staff members are sensitive to their opinions and individual

needs for professional development by becoming role models for their teachers. Using

effective coaching and teaching strategies, the leader guides followers to become aware

of their academic strengths and abilities; therefore, promoting professional self-growth. A

leader who encourages staff to be innovative and creative in their approaches to solving

problems is using intellectual stimulation (Bass & Bass, 2009, p. 620). Here, the

transformative leader involves teachers in the decision-making process by encouraging

new thoughts to challenge old assumptions to best address the inclusion teacher's

problems by creating a supportive environment to instruct students with disabilities. A

transformational leader provides the team inspirational motivation by displaying

confidence and optimism in the application of strategies. They create a team spirit

amongst staff with collaborative activities to accomplish goals and a supportive

environment for students with disabilities. Finally, the leader exerts idealized influence

through modeling of effective instructional practices needed for students with disabilities.

This encompasses the leader engaging in behaviors that will assist individuals in

developing pride that they are followers. These qualities of a transformative leader can

help administrators support general education teachers to build their confidence to

enhance student learning in the inclusive classroom.

   For these reasons, I used the transformational leadership theory to explore

administrators' perspectives of the behaviors they manifest in supporting teachers and

teachers' perspectives on those leadership behaviors. Individuals who are led and

supported by transformational leaders have better outcomes in their work performance

than those who are supported by nontransformational leaders (Avci, 2015). I used the four Is (idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation) to articulate the research question regarding teachers' perspectives on administrators' behaviors of support for inclusion teachers. To answer the research question, I examined interview data to identify transformational behaviors that administrators exhibit when providing support for teachers in the inclusion classroom.

Nature of the Study

I conducted a basic qualitative research study to explore elementary teachers' perspectives of administrators' leadership behaviorsin the inclusive classroom. According to Erickson (2011), a qualitative study includes an examination of participants' actions and their significance; it is appropriate when the aim is to examine perceptions or feelings that are not quantifiable. Also, Creswell (2012) explained that a qualitative study should be conducted to examine a subject or phenomenon for which little is known. Ravitch and Carl (2016) posited that qualitative research contributes knowledge that is different from that provided by quantitative research.

I gathered data by conducting semistructured interviews with participants. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), a semistructured interview is useful as it allows the interviewer to ask follow-up questions that will assist in bringing clarity to a phenomenon. Conducting interviews allowed for the collection of rich data as every participant's perception had the potential to be different. Data obtained in the interviews required analysis to interpret any meaning for the study.

Data analysis in this study involved both inductive and deductive processes. By using the two approaches, I was able to code the data into manageable components. Coding in a qualitative study allows the researcher to identify specific attributes within the data to answer the research question (Saldana, 2016). According to Saldana (2016), a descriptive process or an initial method can be used to answer an exploratory research question, such as how administrators support inclusive teachers. A priori, open, and axial coding were used to analyze interview transcripts.

According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), the researcher engages in a priori coding before looking at the data. Generally, this method allows the researcher to list predetermined codes based on a theory driving the study. Open coding involves labeling or highlighting words to summarize what appears to be dominant in the transcript. The purpose is not to find a conclusive answer to the research question but rather explore possibilities for what is happening within the data. Axial coding generally takes place after open coding. Axial coding can help to identify relationships between codes using short phrases. Qualitative data analysis is an iterative process. Therefore, data obtained from interviews may need to be coded several times before categories and themes emerge. Categories form when the researcher groups coded words that are based on a commonality that emerges. Themes will emerge based on patterns identified in the axial codes (Campbell et al., 2004). In Chapter 3, I further discuss the coding process and other aspects of the methodology.

Definitions

Administrative behaviors: The way a school leader exhibits leadership qualities to increase teacher and school success. A leader shares their vision and organizes and motivates the teachers following them (Döş & Savaş, 2015).

Administrative support: The process of offering the necessary guidance that is needed to assist staff. Leithwood (1992) described this process as constantly helping staff grow, develop their skills, and solve problems more effectively.

Administrator: The principal or assistant principal at the research site.

Inclusion: The principle that all children should have the opportunity to learn together regardless of their challenges in the general education classroom (Dreyer, 2017). It also encompasses the idea that those students are to receive the necessary accommodations or modifications to ensure success in the general education classroom.

Assumptions

To bring validity to research, the researcher must address assumptions in the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Assumptions are beliefs that may be accepted as plausible but cannot be proven to be true. Assumptions helped maintain the integrity of the study. This study required the assumption that all participants were honest with their answers.

Scope and Delimitations

I examined the support elementary school administrators offer general education teachers who teach in an inclusive setting within a school district located in a mid-Atlantic state in the United States. According to Creswell (2012), delimitations are

limitations that the researcher sets. This study was delimited to general elementary education teachers in the inclusive classroom. This study's boundaries excluded other jurisdictions in other school districts in the study state or other states and elementary general education teachers who did not teach inclusive students.

Regarding the framework, I did not use other leadership theories such as transactional leadership theory, situational leadership theory, and trait leadership theory. Transactional leadership is a theory in which leadership seeks compliance from followers by offering reward-punishment (Bass et al., 2003). Transactional leadership theory was excluded because this leadership style does not aim to transform teachers through personal development or individual attention but rather through reward for their efforts. Situational leadership theory is a theory in which the leader is fluid and adjusts their style to the staff members' level of experience (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). This theory was excluded as it focuses on the teacher's level of experiences rather than developing the teacher to meet the students' needs in the classroom. Trait leadership suggests that leaders are born with certain traits that can predict one's ability to succeed as a leader (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). Again, this leadership theory was excluded because it focuses on the administrator's leadership traits but does not address how those administrators support teachers.

Transferability refers to how the findings of a qualitative research study can be applied to a similar situation and people outside of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To increase the study's transferability, I provided detailed descriptions of data collection methods and the type of location where the study occurred. A detailed description of data

collection methods will help the reader apply components of the study to their situations. The study's location is also important for transferability. An urban school setting may have different challenges than a rural one. Describing the location helps the reader understand the behind-the-scenes antecedents taking place in participants' lives. Explaining the time frame for interviews and accommodations necessary to assist participants may help create an environment where transferability is possible. The time frame is necessary as it points to the availability of participants and whether the study had to be altered due to time constraints that are sometimes associated with being a school leader.

Limitations

Limitations in a study are possible weaknesses or problems that the researcher has no control over (Creswell, 2012). An unanticipated limitation of this study was that no principals agreed to participate. The COVID-19 pandemic occurred as I began my data collection, and school leaders at the study site were juggling moving online and retooling their schools. Teachers had more flexibility and agreed to participate, however. Therefore, the study became focused on understanding the teachers' perceptions of principal transformational leadership behaviors. Second, the lack of literature on how administrators support inclusive teachers is a possible limitation of this study. Brezicha et al. (2015), McLeskey and Waldron (2015), and Roberts et al. (2018) concluded that more research is needed on how principals support teachers who work in the inclusive setting.

To address this study's limitations, I needed to enlist sufficient participants to reflect the district's population. I was able to do so as far as general education teachers

were concerned. In qualitative research, there is no given formula marking sufficiency. Sufficiency of the sample size occurs when all the information noted in the phenomenon data points is reflected (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). As I discuss in Chapter 3, I selected 12 elementary teachers with experience in the inclusive setting.

Significance

This study helps address a gap in the literature on teachers' perspectives on leadership behaviors. As Wlodarczyk et al. (2015) noted, principals' leadership can directly affect teacher practices and student learning in the inclusive classroom. Such information on administrative support may be vital in enhancing student learning between general and special education youth in the inclusive classroom.

There is a need to examine the type of support elementary administrators offer to teachers in the inclusive classroom because the literature available on this type of support is limited. This study's implications include providing insight on the support administrators offer to elementary teachers, which may lead to increased learning within the inclusive setting. School administrators who understand the importance of support to teachers are better able to strengthen their relationships with teachers, use transformational behaviors to change school policies, and increase inclusive student learning (Shani & Koss, 2015). This study may help current and future school administrators to become aware of the support teachers need.

Summary

Inclusive education resulted from federal legislation mandating a free and appropriate education for disabled youth in the United States. However, critics contend

that federal guidelines are too vague on how to implement inclusion education for

disabled students (Collins & Ludlow, 2018). Administrators need to support inclusion

teachers so that an effective means of implementing inclusion enhances learning for all

students (Florian et al., 2017). I examined the support given by administrators to teachers

using a basic qualitative research study. I interviewed teachers to gain their perspectives

on the support they receive from administrators. In Chapter 2, I will further examine the

literature that addresses the problem as to how administrators support their inclusion

teachers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Researchers have focused on administrators supporting teachers (Price, 2015; Shaffer & Thomas-Brown, 2015); however, there is a limited body of research on how administrators support inclusion teachers to increase student learning in the inclusion classroom (Murphy, 2018). Previous researchers (Cohen, 2015; Conley & You, 2017; Esposito et al., 2018; Morningstar et al., 2016) concluded that more research is needed to understand what support administrators need to provide teachers in the inclusive classroom. An annual congressional report (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs, 2018) noted the difficulty in inclusion implementation. The legal and educational complexity of inclusion has made it unclear as to what support would be appropriate for teachers.

Issues with inclusion are evident nationwide as federal legislative oversight regularly documents any progress or lack of implementation in public schools (National Council on Disability, 2018; NCES, 2018). This problem may be best seen on the local level, however, as the effects problematic inclusion may be more pronounced on a smaller scale. One example would be a school district in a mid-Atlantic state. Data in a report published by the National Council on Disability (2018) revealed that Maryland was one of many states where special education students did not receive inclusion services. These deficiencies are even more apparent with a look at data collected by the National Council of Disability of the region's special education statistics.

Special education students continue to score far below the state baseline of 50% and 56%, respectively, on state assessments. The guidelines for IDEA and free appropriate public education (FAPE) are intentionally broad to allow for state variations in grade level standards. This has led to individual states' interpretation of IDEA, so there is no uniformity of what inclusive practices should be adopted and used in all states for inclusion students (Abery et al., 2017). However, administrators' lack of fidelity and supportive behaviors may contribute to low special education student performance, as Maryland state assessment scores reflect. It may be traced to the incorrect interpretation and implementation of IDEA. When inclusion is implemented correctly or with fidelity, special education students in inclusive settings may succeed if provided with the resources and support.

The challenge of implementing inclusion is pronounced with a school's leadership. Administrators faced with implementing inclusion in the general education classroom must be transformational in their support of general education classroom teachers who provide an appropriate education for all students (Cobb, 2015; Esposito et al., 2018). The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore general education teachers' perspectives of administrator support in the elementary inclusion classroom.

My goal in this chapter is to present literature regarding elementary administrator perspectives of the support offered to general education teachers in the inclusion setting and those teachers' perspectives of the supports they receive. This chapter will contain a history of inclusion and leadership in inclusion settings. Within those sections, perceptions of teachers and administrators on inclusion, attitudes of teachers and

administrators on inclusion education, leadership and special education, transformational

leaders in inclusion settings, and teachers' perceptions of administrators support

regarding inclusion, and research-based recommendations for administrators to support

teachers in inclusive settings will be presented.

Literature Search Strategy

To locate scholarly books and articles, I used Walden University Library

databases, along with Google Scholar, and I performed basic internet searches. The

databases I searched included those within ProQuest, ERIC, and SAGE. Using the

various resources, the following keywords were used: *inclusion education*, *inclusive

education*, *inclusive elementary education*, *teacher perceptions of inclusion*, *principals

and inclusion education*, *principals*, *teachers*, *inclusion*, *best practices of inclusion*,

administrators' perspectives of inclusion, *special education leadership*, and *instructing

inclusive students*. Due to a lack of current literature, I had to combine and alter search

terms throughout this process. With assistance from a librarian at Walden University, the

term *inclusion education* was modified to inclus* to yield a broader range of literature.

Using Google Scholar, it was necessary to use the conjunctions "and" and "or" to

increase the number of results. The search terms *school leadership*, *administrators*, and

principals were often combined with inclus* education to increase search results. The

keywords chosen provided a detailed history of inclusion, administrators' support for

teachers, and the conceptual framework for this study. Most of the peer-reviewed articles

and limited dissertations used in the literature review are within the 5-year time frame of

my expected graduation, with a few articles much older. The older literature gave

perspective on the length of time inclusion has been a topic of interest in the education field. Older peer-reviewed articles and text were used to address specific topics in the literature review because there is limited recent research that addresses the topic. For example, older articles regarding the benefits of administrators in the inclusion setting are used.

Conceptual Framework

In this research study, I explored elementary administrator behaviors in supporting inclusive teachers and teachers' perspectives of those behaviors. The conceptual framework grounding the study was transformational leadership theory. Transformational leadership is a theory used to examine a leader's motivation and influence on workers to better job performance. The concept of transformational theory is that a leader motivates workers to work toward goals that benefit the organization instead of self-interest goals that promote security and safety (Sun & Leithwood, 2012). In education, a transformational leader creates a positive school culture by sharing the school's vision, mission, and shared goals (Sun & Leithwood, 2012). Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) and Cobb (2015) concluded that transformational administrator behaviors affect the school's organization and are responsible for teacher support in the inclusive classroom. Schools managed by transformational school leaders support teachers through curriculum, professional development, and instructional strategies, increasing teacher confidence and ultimately affecting student outcomes in the inclusive setting (Hameiri & Nir, 2014; Urick & Bowers, 2014).

In developing transformational leadership, (2012) posited that an organizational leader exerts a positive influence over the followers or workers to reach a desired outcome. Avolio and Bass (2004) later added to Burn's work by stating that leaders can exert their influence over followers by using individualized consideration, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation (the four Is; Bass & Bass, 2009, p. 620). Bass's theory focused on leaders' behavior and how that behavior can change workers' behaviors by inspiring workers to surpass their perceived limitations in implementing inclusive practices in the classroom. A transformational leader can bring awareness about how administrators support their teachers in the inclusion setting. Leithwood and Sun (2012) posited that when transformational administrators are in charge, they positively affect teacher behaviors in the classroom, and in turn, students also show positive gains in learning. Transformative leaders challenge teachers to create fresh solutions to many problems, such as implementing inclusion within the classroom (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

In the first component of the framework, inspirational motivation, a leader uses charisma to motivate and inspire staff members (Bass & Bass, 2009). A charismatic leader is articulate, confident, determined, and energetic (Bass & Bass, 2009). For example, in the inclusion setting, the transformational leader might use charismatic communication and articulation of a specific plan or goal to inspire their staff's confidence to follow their suggested strategies. Williams et al. (2018) concluded that charisma is a necessary component of inspiration motivation. Without it, leaders are unable to communicate effectively to motivate followers to embrace a set goal.

The second component of the framework, idealized influence, is exhibited by leaders through respect, confidence, and selflessness (Bass & Bass, 2009). A leader demonstrating idealized influence can be seen on the frontline with their staff addressing challenges. They are involved in the work through collaboration and not just delegation. Transformational leaders display determination, motivation, and charisma to their followers. As a result of those behaviors, they can be seen as confident in their knowledge and performance, and they display this same confidence in their followers. Leithwood and Sun (2012) observed that teachers who collaborated with transformational administrators adopted their leaders' behaviors and were more likely to exhibit a greater sense of commitment to the school's mission and vision. Teachers seeking to emulate their leaders' behaviors show dedication and commitment to creating solutions to challenges similar to their administrators.

Intellectual stimulation, the third I in the framework, relies on the staff's creativity to find solutions to challenges. This component requires an open dialogue between administrators and teachers to create practical solutions to challenges. A transformational administrator will inspire and encourage teachers to use new approaches in assisting inclusive students in the classroom. A transformational leader stimulates staffs' intellect by assisting staff in reframing questions, teaching, illustrating, and clearly articulating the success and challenges that the school may be facing (Bass et al., 2003). In the inclusive classroom, intellectual stimulation may be seen as teachers work alongside principals to brainstorm strategies that can be implemented in the classroom.

Individualized consideration, the last component in the framework, requires a leader to give staff individualized attention to coach or mentor them to grow professionally (Bass & Bass, 2009). The purpose of individualized consideration is to identify what motivates staff members. This involves collaborating with inclusive teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses in meeting the needs of inclusive students. Each teacher should receive personal and tailored attention from administrators to address any deficiencies in implementing inclusive settings. An administrator demonstrating individualized consideration may conduct walk-throughs, provide feedback on lessons, give support, and model strategies with instructional support teachers' help. These supports allow teachers to grow professionally, become confident in their performance, and transform their role as school members.

I designed this study to build on the body of knowledge on transformational theory. I used Bass's theory (1997) to explore teachers' perspectives of administrators' leadership behaviors in supporting them. Transformational leadership was used to develop interview protocols for administrators and teachers and to analyze this study's data. The results of this study have the potential to assist administrators in identifying their leadership behaviors that can best support teachers in enhancing the learning of special education students in the inclusive classroom.

Transactional Leadership and Passive/Avoidance Leadership Styles

Based on the participants ' responses and results, I decided to add transactional leadership and passive avoidant leadership styles to the conceptual framework. These two leadership styles are part of the full range of leadership model developed by Bass (1998).

This leadership model includes the most proactive (transformational and transactional) to the least productive or active (passive-avoidant leadership).

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership is characterized by the mutually and contractually relationship between a leader and follower to achieve organizational goals. Transactional leaders demonstrate behaviors that help them achieve their goals, such as focusing on motivating with reward or punishment, demanding conformity (obedience), and closely monitoring and controlling their workers. Avolio (2005) described this leadership style as a quid pro quo, meaning that the level of commitment is relevant to the leader's incentives. These leaders are described as goal-oriented, strict adherers to rules and regulations and as being open to disseminating information, focused on the chain of command, and reactive to followers actions when it comes to accomplishing organizational goals (Bass, 1998; Herminingsih & Supardi, 2017; Naresh & Krishna, 2017). As transactional leaders focus on accomplishing organizational goals, they usually emphasize the reward exchange between themselves and their followers.

In conclusion, transactional leaders are open to disseminating information that may be vital to completing tasks. For example, a transactional leader may inform followers of any updates that may impede progress and any change in the due date of a project, or a plan. They will give instructions on using different processes, such as accessing student data on a given platform where software is housed and achieving desired results. One example of this would be a principal leading professional development on using a new grade book software so teachers can use it to upload student

grades. Besides disseminating information, transactional leaders work to maintain current

organizational lines of authority and structure to improve work efficiency (Bass, 1990).

For example, in education, a transactional administrator would ensure teachers

understand district goals for student achievement. These leaders may urge teachers to

meet school district goals by giving more resources during professional developments

that teachers can use to increase student achievement in the inclusion classroom.

Transactional leaders also closely monitor subordinates as they complete assignments to

ensure the desired performance goal is met and there are no deviations from the tasks.

Finally, transactional leaders clearly communicate their expectations and incentives for

workers who meet the expected outcome. The leaders' transactional behaviors help to

keep followers focused on the task at hand.

Monitoring and Controlling

This construct involves the leader closely monitoring and controlling employee

performances and attempts to correct employee errors (Bass, 1990, 1998). Close

supervision of performance by transactional leaders is definitive to the leadership style.

Close monitoring is essential to transactional leaders demonstrating active management

behaviors because they attempt to ensure that the followers' final product matches their

expectations for a project (Avolio et al., 1999). For example, a transactional administrator

would monitor teachers' student testing data and meet regularly with teachers to ensure

positive progress in students' data. These principals would address student progression

problems with the teachers to ensure that learning or data goals are realized.

Motivation with Reward or Punishment

Contingent reward is another behavior in which a transactional leader sets expectations for completing organizational goals and uses rewards to reinforce those expectations (Antonakis et al., 2003; Bass, 1998). The leader uses reward or punishment as the motivation for getting compliance from workers (Naresh & Krishna, 2017). For example, a leader that exhibits contingent reward behaviors would set data goals for grade levels. Instructions on achieving those goals may be discussed with all followers or among grade-level leaders (grade supervisors) who can hold their grade-level followers (grade teachers) to the standard. If children meet their performance goals, grade-level leaders and teachers may receive shout outs from the principal or some other type of reward, such as additional resources for their classrooms.

Team Conformity

Finally, a transactional leader who displays team conformity relies on the chain of command to motivate employees to comply with the leader's standards or expectations (Bass, 1998). These leaders focus on maintaining the status quo, or the normative procedures, rules, and culture, and rely on workers' obedience to reinforce rules and follow the leader (Avolio, 2005). A transactional leader demonstrating this behavior will expect employees to seek their advice for decisions that need to be made or clarification. For example, a transactional principal would expect teachers to come to them for approval before making changes to their schedule to offer extra help to students. These leaders see themselves as the final authority.

Impact of Transactional Leadership

The behaviors of transactional leaders, regardless of the specific type of transactional leadership, also have an impact when these leaders are in the inclusive setting (Cohen, 2015). When transactional leadership is used in the school environment, it has positive and negative aspects. Transactional leadership can positively affect schools, such as teachers' job satisfaction and teacher support. Lan et al. (2019) posited that when transactional leaders demonstrated active management behaviors, such as providing direction, guidance, and resources, teachers reported feeling satisfied in their position. There is a positive correlation between transactional leaders who use verbal praise (contingent reward) with their workers and the worker's level of creativity and job satisfaction (Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2019). Administrators who displayed contingent reward behaviors such as offering praise, setting expectations, and active management behaviors closely monitor and address problems reported job satisfaction from teachers (Sayadi, 2016). Administrators who provide guidance, praise, and resources to their teachers may produce feelings of competency and job satisfaction in handling the inclusive classroom's challenges.

Transactional leaders can also affect how teachers receive and perceive administrators' demonstrated support. Eboka (2016) found that transactional leaders supported teachers by demonstrating active management by exceptions and contingent reward behaviors. This means that leaders closely monitor and provide some incentives for completing a task. Transactional leaders may choose these behaviors to promote their aim of meeting district or school goals.

Although transactional leadership can positively affect a school community, it can also have some drawbacks, such as exercising too much control and not encouraging creativity in employees. Transactional leaders displaying controlling and close monitoring behaviors are focused on ensuring that rules are obeyed, and things continue to run smoothly (Avci, 2015). These control and monitoring behaviors can discourage followers from using any creativity in executing their duties. Furthermore, Bass (1998) and Avci (2015) expressed that these leaders are focused on their formal authority and dependent on established rules to maintain control. They aim to make sure that policies remain in place and expectations are met. Teachers under a transactional leader were less creative in their teaching approach (Ebrahimi et al., 2017) because transactional leaders focus on results rather than how they are obtained.

Transactional leadership can also reduce teacher motivation. When transactional leaders are overly focused on monitoring to find fault or discrepancies in teachers' work, this behavior harmed teacher motivation (Alasad, 2017). This behavior appears in teachers being micromanaged instead of trusting teachers' professional abilities and judgment to do their job. Avolio (2005) stated that this type of leadership focuses on achieving results and not on developing workers. Transactional leaders do not motivate beyond the exchange of performance and pay paradigm (Khan, 2017). Transactional leaders will ignore new ideas or ideas that do not fit into their plan for achievement but instead rely on motivation that comes from rewards for meeting goals.

Passive-Avoidant Leadership

Passive avoidant is a leadership style where an organization's formal leader grants followers full autonomy to achieve organizational goals. Bass et al. (2003) described such a leader as someone who fails to provide specific directions, goals, and standards to followers. Bass (1998), Bass et al. (2003), and Naresh and Krishna (2017) further described the characteristics of this leader as one who abdicates his/her responsibilities, avoids giving instructions, careless, shows indifference to staff, diverts from requests for assistance, fails to follow up, and makes themselves unavailable either physically or mentally from work. This form of leadership has two distinct behaviors: passive management by exception and Laissez-faire.

Laissez-faire

A passive avoidant leader who demonstrates this behavior usually takes a hands-off approach in their guidance to give the follower opportunities to work without too much interference from the leader (Avolio, 2005). This leader shares very little information regarding the work that is expected (Avolio, 2005). For example, a passive avoidant principal generally would not provide direct or clear instructions on how to complete tasks. Instead, the leader identifies what the job is and when it is expected to be completed. A passive avoidant principal may provide some resources that may help the teacher complete the task without directions.

Passive Management by Exception

Leaders who demonstrate this behavior do not actively monitor progress during the process of meeting organizational goals; however, they will punish underperformance

(Bass, 1998). Howell and Avolio (1993) described leaders who demonstrate this behavior as only becoming involved after mistakes. Their objective is to point out the mistakes that had been made, avoiding reasons for correction. For example, a passive avoidant principal would not actively monitor the progress of students' data during the school year. However, if students' goals are not met at the end of the year, the principal could punish the teacher with a low score on their end-of-year evaluation, impacting the teacher's ability to move up the pay scale.

Impact of Passive Avoidant Leadership

Leaders who display these behaviors in an organization may have adverse effects on their followers, such as giving too much autonomy instead of leading, being disconnected from followers, and followers' job dissatisfaction. Wong and Giessner (2018) suggested that passive avoidant leaders who demonstrated laisse-faire behaviors by giving too much autonomy to workers were often seen negatively by workers and considered ineffective leaders. Leader behaviors such as giving too much autonomy over work were contributing factors in workers' negative perceptions of their leader. Finally, in another study, school administrators' passive-avoidant leadership behaviors can lead to the adverse effect of job dissatisfaction in staff (Cansoy, 2018; Miller, 2018).

Passive management by exception behaviors such as not leading, and being disconnected, can lead to teachers feeling dissatisfied with their job (Sayadi, 2016). This behavior can cause the leader to appear ineffective and teachers feeling overwhelmed with the job demands. Bass (1998) confirmed that passive avoidant leaders do not take responsibility in leading, which can negatively impact workers. Passive avoidant leaders

who refuse to make decisions and provide little to no support to followers can leave them feeling frustrated in their position. The leader's inactivity can be interpreted as an inability to fulfill organizational goals and leave the follower feeling unsupported (Wong & Giessner, 2018). When leaders display these characteristics to followers, it may be detrimental to the follower's motivation in completing organizational tasks as the leader does not display initiative or care.

In contrast, passive avoidant leadership does have some positive aspects, including increased creativity and leaders providing a sense of satisfaction and ownership to teachers (Nazim & Mahmood, 2016). Passive avoidant leaders are also known for granting teachers the freedom to find the best way possible to achieve organizational goals. Passive avoidant leader behaviors such as giving full autonomy to teachers can impact teachers positively by allowing teachers a sense of independence over their creativity and efforts in the classroom (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). This additional freedom that teachers may experience under a passive avoidant leader may increase teachers' creativity. They have room to experiment and strategize to find ways that best help students learn. Finally, the hands-off approach or not actively monitoring leadership behaviors can provide teachers with a sense of satisfaction and ownership for their accomplishments. This style affords teachers the freedom to make decisions, resources, and tools to complete their job (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). Such behaviors may positively impact teachers' feelings of competency as they may feel that they are solely responsible for the classroom results. It is up to them to utilize skills and techniques to meet organizational goals like advancing student learning.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

The concepts that will be reviewed in this literature review are inclusion and leadership in inclusion settings. The benefits of transformational leadership in the educational setting, the history of inclusion, teacher and administrators' attitudes about inclusion will be addressed in the first half of the literature review. The second half will discuss leadership in inclusion settings, and teachers' perceptions of the support administrators provide regarding inclusive education.

Benefits of Transformational Leaders in the Educational Setting

Transformational leadership has been well researched regarding its effects in the educational setting and its relation to teachers and transformational leaders. The effects of transformational leadership can be seen as improving the school climate, involved stakeholders, and increase student achievement (Leithwood, 1993; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Leithwood (1992) noted that some of the benefits of having transformational leaders in the school included increased teacher leadership opportunities and productive interpersonal relationships. Day and Sammons (2013) concluded that transformational leadership in the school setting instills vision in their staff, develops teacher practice in the classroom, sets school goals, and involves community stakeholders in school decisions.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) examined the benefits and effects of transformational school leaders using a national representative sample of teachers across England and a specialized model of transformational leadership. In this quantitative study, Leithwood and Jantzi conducted a Likert-type survey administered to over 500

teachers in the elementary grades. Benefits to teachers documented in the study included perceived improvement within work settings, motivation, capacity, and overall changes in classroom practices, which can change their schools' culture. Leithwood and Jantzi found that transformational leaders greatly influence teachers and their classroom practices. The authors also concluded that although transformational leadership is transformational in building teacher capacities, practices, and motivation, those effects do not necessarily translate into increased student achievement. Leithwood and Jantzi posited that transformational leadership works best in climates needing change, and a transformative leader can further alleviate current job dysfunction by motivating teachers.

Leaders have a considerable influence over their school climate, making it potentially important that the best leadership style is chosen for a school's growth (Allen et al., 2015; Fullan, 2008; Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016). Transformational leadership is one form of leadership advocated for schools looking to improve their teachers and students (Allen et al., 2015). Administrators demonstrating transformational behaviors can affect many factors in a school, including organizational climate, student achievement, and teacher job satisfaction (Allen et al., 2015; Fullan, 2008).

Allen et al. (2015) examined transformational leadership behaviors and their effect on one elementary school. Allen et al.'s study took place in a suburban school district in Texas in which a purposeful sample of elementary principals and their teachers were administered the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X). This questionnaire is used to measure the degree to which principals exhibit transformational

behaviors. Administrators self-assessed themselves using the MLQ-5X, and teachers

assessed their principals based on their perceptions using the same questionnaire.

The study results found a statistically significant correlation between leadership

that demonstrates transformational behaviors and a positive effect on school climate.

Much like the study conducted by Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), student achievement

results, while positive, were not significant. Both authors suggested that transformational

leadership benefits the school environment and affects student achievement positively

though indirectly.

Based on the studies outlined above, principals who demonstrated

transformational behaviors positively influence their teachers' behaviors and the

achievement of their students (Allen et al., 2015; Berkovich & Eyal, 2019; Leithwood &

Jantzi, 2006). Transformational leaders in school settings benefit the school by creating a

more positive school environment that may ultimately translate to higher student

performance (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). This can be achieved by developing respect

amongst staff members, demonstrating moral and ethical behaviors, setting a clear vision

for the school, and encouraging problem solving creatively.

In American education, states hold school leadership solely responsible for

progress or lack of student achievement (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016). They are

influential in many factors that affect student achievements like teacher job satisfaction

and school climate (Allen et al., 2015). As transformational school leaders with inclusive

classrooms are choosing behaviors that positively affect their students, they may want to

take a closer look at which behaviors have the most influence on enhancing student learning.

Using a quantitative study, Boberg and Bourgeois (2016) conveniently sampled teachers and students from charter school districts in southern central United States about teachers' perceptions of their principals' transformational leadership behaviors. The authors concluded that transformative leaders demonstrated cooperative behaviors with their teachers, commitment to school goals, and increasing teacher capacity were best for improving teacher perceptions. Along with transformative behaviors, incorporating management skills like monitoring, coordinating classroom instruction, and classroom learning enhanced transformative leadership's effects on teachers' perceptions of school climate (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016). As with the previous studies (Allen et al., 2015; Berkovich & Eyal, 2019; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006) transformational leadership behaviors directly affected teacher behaviors and the school environment. However, the study results did not show a direct relationship between transformational leaders and student achievement (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016). Overall, it was concluded that transformational leaders would need to use various strategies to increase student achievement. The benefit of having a transformational leader in schools is the indirect influence they have on student achievement by influencing and changing teacher behaviors.

Past studies have recognized positive teacher behaviors, school environment, and student achievement as being a benefit of having transformational school leaders (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Leithwood, 1994; McLeskey et al., 2014). Boberg and Bourgeois

(2016) noted that school leadership could use transformational components to increase overall teacher abilities, which may influence student achievement as highly efficient teachers can mitigate student cognitive disengagement with their confidence in teaching their curriculum.

Inclusion: Authorization of IDEA

IDEA's authorization is the result of decades of legal precedence and reform and advocacy from various organizations. Beginning with the decision of Watson v. The City of Cambridge in 1893, disabled youth were widely considered unteachable and excluded from the public school setting. To combat schools that refused to teach disabled children, private citizens and parent-led organizations created private schools that explicitly taught special needs children (Weintraub & Ballard, 1982). As Yell et al. (1998) noted, these parents held the collective goal of the social acceptance of disabled persons, beginning with equity in public school education. Some of the first parent organizations to emerge were the American Association of Mental Deficiency, the United Cerebral Palsy Association, and John F Kennedy's Panel on Mental Retardation (Miller et al., 2007). These organizations sought legal grounding to demonstrate that disabled students deserved the right to be educated.

This legal standing came in 1954 with the Civil Rights Movement's momentum via Brown v. Board of Education (1954). The newly afforded educational right to African American children was extended to disabled children. Using the Brown v Board as precedence, lawyers imputed that the Fourteenth Amendment protected all classes of people's educational rights regardless of disability; therefore, public education must be

available to all (Yell et al., 1998). This right to education was further validated by other court cases, such as Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children v Pennsylvania in 1971, which absolved the state's law that mentally disabled students were unteachable (Osgood, 2005). These cases are often viewed as the legal foundation of IDEA because it was here that the right to an education for disabled persons was first granted. However, the integration was not being fully implemented. Only one in five disabled children was educated in 1970, and states using legislation to prohibit students with specific disabilities from attending a school such as blindness and deafness (Westling & Fox, 2014).

Legal exclusion resulted in over one million children excluded from public education, with another 3.5 million in public education not receiving proper support for their disability between 1971-1973 (Martin et al., 1996). These students' parents advocated for further legislative reform that resulted in the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), which was renamed IDEA upon its renewal in 1990 (Dudley-Marling & Burns, 2014). IDEA was written as a 10-year mandate followed by reauthorization every 3 years to allow for any possible amendments. The concept of IDEA was that all children, regardless of the severity of a disability, had a right to basic accommodations to receive a "free and appropriate" education in public schools (FAPE; *Board of Education v. Rowley*, 1982, p. 201).

To qualify for IDEA benefits, a school designated personnel must test a child for a disability to determine special education eligibility (Heward, 2012). The stipulation of

the law required that school districts create individualized education plan (IEPs) and offer

modifications or accommodations to a student based on their disability

(Dudley-Marling & Burns, 2014). School administrators were ultimately responsible for

creating the least restrictive environment possible for the children based on this plan.

Disabled children were to be taught in the general education classroom with their abled

peers while given the appropriate modifications/accommodations to receive an education

(20 U.S.C. § 1412(5)(A) (Supp. III, 1998). Knox (1999) suggested that the federal

government used federal funding to create buy-in for implementing IDEA across the

country. With school districts on board, they were now legally responsible for creating

IEPs to meet the educationally needs of disabled children.

Despite the many amendments to IDEA following its initial authorization, it has

been challenged judicially because of the ambiguity of the wording of *free appropriate*

public education and *least restrictive environment* (McGovern, 2015). Vague legal

language within the law left the courts and lawmakers to decide what the law's mandates

were and whether these requirements were met (McGovern, 2015). One example of the

vagueness of the language in IDEA was when the Congressional definition of FAPE

came under scrutiny in 1982 with the *Board of Education v. Rowley* U.S. Supreme Court

decision. Parents of a Deaf first-grader requested a sign language interpreter as an

accommodation used in the classroom. This accommodation was denied by the school,

which led the parents to take legal action. The Supreme Court gave their decision using a

two-part exam, whether the child's state of residence complied with IDEA and whether

the child's IEP's design gave a "meaningful benefit" to their educational progress (*Board*

of Education v. Rowley, 1982, p. 206). In their decision, the courts implied that Congress

intended the act to give base accommodation to create equity, which meant that a sign

language interpreter would be unnecessary for the school district to provide. This

decision created the "meaningful benefit/progress" standard. Therefore, as long as a

special education student has made some academic progress (i.e., test scores), their FAPE

is considered appropriate (458 U.S. 176, 200, 1982). The "meaningful benefit" standard

is a guide when developing IEPs for students. IEPs are intended to provide a base level of

support that creates some benefit for students' education and is considered an appropriate

accommodation. The issue of what is considered a "meaningful benefit" for the student is

often left to judges and school districts to determine, as no authorization of IDEA has

sought to clarify this issue within the legislation itself. The issue is that even though the

Supreme Court ruled in 2017 that schools must offer disabled students a meaningful

educational benefit, the courts failed to define what constitutes a meaningful benefit

(Yarnell & Wasser, 2018). As "meaningful benefit" is left to the interpretation of

individual school district and state personnel, this has contributed to the lack of fidelity in

implementing inclusive practices that benefit special education students.

Perceptions of Administrators and Teachers on Inclusion

As more cases of complex disabilities arise, there may be a need to understand

teachers' perceptions of the changing field of inclusion. Teachers' perceptions of

inclusion can be positive or negative, which can affect how they teach their students,

manage the classroom, and ultimately affect student achievement. Per researchers, Mngo

and Mngo (2018), Amr et al. (2016), and Varcoe and Boyle (2014) successful inclusion

starts with the teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards inclusion education. A negative

perception can produce adverse outcomes for students. For example, a recent study by

Ewing et al. (2018) concluded that an increase in the number of students with complex

needs over recent years has caused many teachers to feel overwhelmed at trying to meet

all students' with varying abilities needs in the inclusive classroom. Teachers may feel

overwhelmed for various reasons, including lack of appropriate curriculum, training in

teaching special education strategies, and school environment (Amr et al., 2016).

Teachers who feel overwhelmed with inclusive students may try to pass those students on

to the special educator or other service providers (Amr et al., 2016). In contrast, positive

attitudes often lead to strategies that encourage student success in an inclusive classroom.

Supports and training need to be provided if teachers are to develop a positive attitude

towards inclusion (Amr et al., 2016; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Teachers who have a

positive perception of inclusion reported feeling supported or being given the tools (i.e.,

classroom aid, time, and curriculum) needed to support their students (Amr et al., 2016;

Eriks-Brophy & Whittingham, 2013). Teachers with a positive attitude towards inclusion

are more likely to create a learning environment where differentiation of instruction takes

place to meet the needs of all learners and have a positive influence on all students in

their class (Amr et al., 2016; Varcoe & Boyle, 2014).

Concerns about teachers' attitudes toward inclusion are not unique to elementary

classrooms. In a recent quantitative study, Mngo and Mngo (2018) sought to examine

secondary teachers' perceptions of inclusion students. The authors also sought to examine

whether the years of experience affected how they perceived disabled students. Using the

Opinions Relative to the Integration of Students with Disabilities questionnaire, 400 middle school teachers across seven schools were sampled for this study. The questionnaire is explicitly used to measure teachers' perceptions of inclusive students in the general education classroom. The study population's demographics for the study showed that more than half of the teachers sampled, 52%, had 6-15 years of experience, while 33% had 6-10 years. Teachers accounting for 23% had fewer than 5 years of teaching experience, and 18% had 11-15 years of experience. Finally, teachers with experience ranging from 16-31 years accounted for 24% of the sample.

The study results showed that 58.12% of teachers felt negative about teaching students with disabilities, although 74% believed there are some benefits to inclusive education. The study results raise the concern that even though teachers support the idea behind inclusion, those same teachers prefer separate classrooms or schools for those students identified as disabled (Mngo & Mngo, 2018). Teachers who did not have high confidence in their ability to teach inclusion students were more likely to respond to the questionnaire that disabled students should be in a separate classroom. This accounted for 42% of the sampled teachers. However, 36% of teachers who had a favorable view of their ability also believed students with disabilities are not served best in the general education classroom. Mngo and Mngo (2018) believed that these results showed contradictory findings. These researchers relied on past studies to clarify that those teachers' feelings can change over time.

Mngo and Mngo (2018) posited that although teachers have negative attitudes about inclusion classrooms, proper support makes a difference for these teachers. Often

inclusive teachers require formal training to learn to educate disabled students; however, according to Mngo and Mngo, 81.5% of the teachers admitted to having no training or support to teach students with special needs. Without the proper support to educate both special and general needs students, both groups of students may receive little to no benefit academically from being in the inclusive setting. For example, teachers who struggle to adequately accommodate the special needs students and general education students in an inclusive setting but have adequate support will effectively teach both groups of students.

Ideally, teachers should not have to search for resources but be provided support and resources from their administrators and district leadership to succeed in the inclusive classroom (Mngo & Mngo, 2018). Teachers who perceived themselves as not being able to teach inclusion students believed this resulted from lacking instructional support from their administrators. Teachers who perceived inclusion negatively expressed that those supports in the form of instructional materials, classroom management, setting clear expectations, and trust were not evident in their school. However, one resource that was examined in the study was teachers' formal education. Teachers with a master's or doctorate were more likely to develop positive attitudes about inclusion (Mngo & Mngo, 2018). Teachers' confidence to teach inclusion students increased with more knowledge they gained from education on how to implement curricula and the demands of implementing IEPs in the inclusive classroom. Teachers do not just require education but support as well from administrators. In the study, Mngo and Mngo (2018) discovered that when leaders engaged with teachers, it resulted in an increase in implementing inclusive

practices in the classroom and a positive view of inclusion. School leadership involving

themselves in curriculum development and offering support for instructional issues in the

inclusion setting has been more effective than distanced leadership (Mngo & Mngo,

2018). Administrators should help their teachers create a curriculum that meets both

general and special education students' needs. The availability of both training and

resources for inclusive teachers can change their perceptions of inclusion from a negative

to a more positive one. They develop the skills and use the resources necessary to teach

in the inclusion classroom.

As mentioned above, previous research has shown that the success of inclusion

can be attributed to teachers' perceptions of inclusion and their ability to adapt to the

classroom demands to meet all students' needs. Teachers' perceptions and attitudes can

also be based on the type or severity of the disability that they are challenged to

undertake as an inclusive teacher. There are 13 categories of disabilities that are

recognized under IDEA from which students can be identified as needing services. These

categories are listed as Specific learning disability (SLD), Other health impairments,

Autism spectrum disorder, Emotional disturbance, Speech or language impairment,

Visual impairment (including blindness), Deafness, Hearing impairment, Deaf and

blindness, Orthopedic impairment, Intellectual disability, Multiple disabilities, and

Traumatic brain injury. Under each category, the severity can range from mild to

moderate, and it is essential to note that a student can qualify for services under more

than one category. However, the severity of disabilities is not explicitly named under

IDEA except in the case of Autism, multiple disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and

emotional disturbance. In these cases, IDEA stipulates that these disabilities make it difficult to accommodate or meet students' needs in a special education program (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office of Special Education Programs, 2018).

Eriks-Brophy and Whittingham (2013) surveyed 63 teachers to determine teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards the inclusion of special education students who were hearing disabled. Using a Likert-type questionnaire, teachers were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with 60 questions on inclusion. This study's main objective was to examine teachers' perceptions and attitudes. Eriks-Brophy and Whittingham (2013) also sought to examine the level of support teachers perceived they received from administrators and how satisfied they were with those supports offered. The teachers in this study stemmed from various grade levels, from primary to secondary. At the time of the study, over 80% of the teachers had a student diagnosed with a hearing disability. The remaining teachers having had recently taught a student with a hearing disability in the general education classroom.

The researchers concluded that teachers in the primary and secondary levels overall felt comfortable teaching students identified as hearing disabled (Eriks-Brophy & Whittingham, 2013). The majority of the teachers, both in primary and secondary, indicated that their education and training they received in school did not adequately prepare them to work with inclusive students. However, they felt that they were able to teach inclusive students based on their support from administrators and support staff. Primary teachers in the study reported feeling more confident in teaching inclusive

students due to the support they received from administrators and the Itinerant Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ITDHH). On the other hand, secondary teachers reported less confidence in teaching their inclusive students than those who received fewer services from the ITDHH.

Eriks-Brophy and Whittingham (2013) also noted that the teachers who felt more confident and viewed inclusion positively reported feeling supported by administration because of their ability to communicate and give input on the student's IEP goals. Finally, Eriks-Brophy and Whittingham were able to identify a correlation between a teacher's perception of inclusion and their perceived workload. The more teachers felt supported, the more confident they felt about inclusion. The more training and support teachers received; they were more likely to view inclusion positively but had a negative perception when they felt unsupported (Eriks-Brophy & Whittingham, 2013).

Contrary to the study above, a study completed by Ruppar et al. (2016) found that when teachers taught students who had severe disabilities that could potentially affect the classroom environment, they were more likely to have a negative perception of inclusion. The purpose of their study was to examine teachers' perceptions of the ability to teach students with severe disabilities in the classroom. This study took place in Wisconsin during the 2012-2013 school year. Over 5,000 teachers were found to be eligible to take part in the study using the school district's email system, but only 10% of those teachers were randomly selected for a total of 598 teachers. Teachers evaluated their perceptions and preparedness to work with students diagnosed as severely disabled using a vignette-style survey. Three vignettes were created to which participants read all three

descriptions of fictional students. Based on the vignettes, teachers rated their ability and preparedness to teach students identified as having severe disabilities. Only 104 teachers completed the survey and answered all questions.

The researchers showed that teachers perceived themselves as being less prepared to instruct those students described in the vignettes with the most severe disability. Teachers reported feeling more comfortable with their ability to teach inclusive students when the students' disability required simple monitoring or one disability, such as in Eriks-Brophy and Whittingham's (2013) study, in which students were diagnosed with being hearing impaired. The more disabilities a student is identified as having or, the higher the students' needs, the less prepared teachers reported feeling about teaching inclusive students and thought of inclusion negatively (Chung et al., 2015; Ruppar et al., 2016). Similarly, Hosford and O'Sullivan (2016) found that teachers are more receptive to inclusion and felt more confident when students were not identified as having severe disabilities or multiple challenges. The findings of this study can be established by Chung et al.'s (2015) study in which they found that teachers were inclined to have more negative attitudes towards children with autism because teachers found their behavior to be more challenging. However, consistent with Mngo and Mngo's (2018) study, Ruppar et al. (2016) found that teachers with more training perceived themselves as more prepared to teach all students regardless of disability. This could be due to teachers being exposed to more literature on special education and instructional strategies for differentiation of instruction (Eriks-Brophy & Whittingham, 2013; Ruppar et al., 2016; Woodcock & Woolfson, 2019).

Regardless of teachers' perceived ability or their perceptions of inclusion, all the studies have in common is teachers' desire for more training in meeting special education students' needs and the desire for support from school administrators. All teachers in these studies look to administrators for creativity in problem solving, academic vision, and positive feedback on their job in the classroom with inclusive students. According to Fowler et al. (2019) in their recent State of Special Education Report to the Council for Exceptional Children, it was reported that most teachers believed they needed an administrator who was appreciative, flexible, knowledgeable, and showed commitment to the school community. The support that teachers perceive they receive can help to change their perceptions of inclusion, and principals play a significant role in that change of perception.

Principals' Perceptions of Inclusion

Principals play an essential role in the school climate for teachers and students. It is important that if inclusion is to be effective, the principal must play an active role in the implementation of inclusion (Cameron, 2016). Similar to teachers, principals' perceptions of inclusion can play a role in whether inclusion is successfully implemented in which all learners thrive or a community where teachers struggle to provide for students independently (Livingston et al., 2001). Understanding these perceptions may help district leaders find the best ways to help administrators implement inclusion successfully within their schools.

One study by Praisner (2003) examined principals' attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities. This quantitative correlational study used the Principals and

Inclusion Survey (PIS) to randomly select 408 elementary school principals in

Pennsylvania. Principals in this study managed schools from kindergarten through sixth

grade. The PIS has 28 questions and contains four sections designed to measure the

extent demographics, training and experience, attitudes toward inclusion, and beliefs

about most appropriate placements are related to principals' attitudes. The data from this

study were analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented the data with percentages.

The study results showed that 47% of the schools whose principals participated in

this study had six to 10% of their student body identified as students with a disability.

About 21% of principals in this study had positive attitudes about inclusion, but 77% of

principals responded that they felt uncertain about inclusion. However, when inclusion

was presented in a general term, most had a more positive outlook on inclusion.

However, negative opinions rose when inclusion was presented in a manner of mandatory

compliance (Praisner, 2003). The results also pointed to a correlation between attitudes

and experiences with disabled students, which was the more positive experiences an

administrator had with disabled students. The more positive their attitude was towards

inclusion (Praisner, 2003). This correlation also applied to administrators who gained in-

service training with students with disabilities. However, it is not the number of

engagements; it is the quality of those engagements that principals have that affects their

perceptions and decisions, such as special education students' placement.

In this study, principals showed that positive engagements affected student

placement decisions. The likelihood of the least restricted placements for students

increased when principals had more positive experiences with special education students

(Praisner, 2003). Also, principals who held more positive attitudes about inclusion were more inclusive in their placement of students (Praisner, 2003). However, eleven individuals chose not to answer this question on the survey as they saw placement as a case-by-case basis, which is how it is described in IDEA. In terms of taking case by case, most cases of speech and language impairment (94%), physical disability (87%), health impairments (85%), specific learning disabilities (82%), deaf and hearing (74%), and blind/visual impairments (72%) were placed within their least restrictive environment or general education classroom (Praisner, 2003). However, for emotionally disturbed and autistic students, a more restricted environment was often chosen. These results showed the perceptions of principals and the effect of their perceptions on students with disabilities.

The perceptions that principals have of inclusion can affect inclusion implementation success, especially regarding student placement (Praisner, 2003). While each child's IEP team ultimately controls a child's placement, the principal's influence in that decision is considerably significant (Praisner, 2003). As such, the concept of full inclusion is not being upheld by principals who chose disabled students whom they believe are more proper for inclusive education regardless of the child's ability to perform in the inclusive classroom. To combat these negative perceptions, Praisner (2003) noted that experience with disabled students should be encouraged among administrators to gain a new perception of a disabled student's ability and need to perform in the general education classroom. Also, exposure to special education via training will help improve principals' general perceptions and help prepare administrators

to become involved in the implementation of inclusion. The use of exposure to positive experience and training can help principals successfully implement inclusion. They will gain a knowledge and skill set that is more closely aligned to special education's realities.

Principals have a considerable amount of direct influence among teachers and indirectly influence students (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013). To improve the inclusive environment, teachers' perceptions and principals must be examined as they are influential in the admission and placement of special needs students (Joy & Jonathan, 2018). These perceptions should be examined to understand what resources are needed by principals to aid and influence teachers and students in their schools and create the most effective learning environment.

In another study, principals' attitudes towards the inclusion of disabled students into general education classrooms were investigated. Joy and Jonathan (2018) conducted a research study using an adapted version of the Scale of Teacher's Attitude towards Inclusive Classrooms (STATIC). This instrument gathered data such as years of service in general education, knowledge of inclusive teachers, and inclusive education attitudes. This study used a six-point Likert scale instrument with 1equaling strongly disagree, 2 for disagree, 3 for not sure but tend to disagree, 4 for not sure but likely to agree, 5 for agree, and 6 for strongly agree. This study's sample was taken from public and private secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, Nigeria. 116 principals across 71 private schools and 45 public schools were used in this study; 55 of these principals were male, and 61 were female.

The results of this study presented principals as having mixed attitudes about inclusion, with 24% having a negative attitude, 45% holding a neutral attitude, and 31% having a positive attitude (Joy & Jonathan, 2018). When comparing the principals' attitude toward inclusion and knowledge of special education, like Praisner (2003) and Livingston et al. (2001), principals with a higher knowledge base of special education had a much better attitude towards inclusion (Joy & Jonathan, 2018). However, the number of years that a principal had worked in general education and whether they worked in public or private schools did not affect their inclusion attitude. (Joy & Jonathan, 2018). Finally, the study tested for the difference between genders; but the results did not show a difference between the gender of the principals and the attitude toward inclusion.

The results showed that the challenges of implementing inclusion successfully are affecting the attitudes of principals negatively (Joy & Jonathan, 2018). They are expected to restructure classrooms and programs to meet disabled students' needs, facilitate IEPs, and keep an effective learning environment for all students (Joy & Jonathan, 2018; Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013). Joy and Jonathan (2018) posited that these challenges foster negative attitudes towards inclusion students without proper training or resources. To combat administrations negative views on inclusion, workshops, and seminars that show the benefits of successful inclusion may improve the attitudes of principals, as knowledge of special education or disabled students enhances the attitude of principals to one that is more welcoming of inclusion (Joy & Jonathan, 2018; Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013; Praisner, 2003).

Since school administrators play a significant role in the school environment and classroom practices, their attitudes and perceptions on inclusion cannot be ignored. However, they must be examined further to discover what effect they have on inclusive classrooms. In a study completed by Titrek et al. (2017), they sought to examine school administrators' attitudes in how they perceived special education students in the inclusion classroom. Also, the authors wanted to see if administration demographics influenced administrators' attitudes towards inclusive students.

This quantitative study, which took place in Sakarya Province, included 232 school elementary and middle school administrators in Turkey. The study utilized a customized questionnaire called the Principals' Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education (PATIE scale) to collect data from participants. Using the PATIE scale, demographics, years of experience working with disabled students, students' levels of disabilities, and enrollment rates were rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Participants rated their agreement to the items from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree.

When asked whether inclusion was beneficial to disabled students both academically and socially, the study results revealed that principals in the elementary and middle school grades had a slightly positive perception of inclusion in the general sense. Upon the examination of administrators who received professional development in special education, the authors found that principals who had any training showed a more positive attitude towards inclusion of disabled students in the general education classroom than those who had not any training in special education. Titrek et al. (2017) also noted that the more years of teaching experiences an administrator had in the general

education classroom and being exposed to disabled students, the more they were likely to report having a positive perception about inclusion. This finding is similar to other studies completed by Joy and Jonathan (2018), Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), Livingston et al. (2001), Mngo and Mngo (2018), Praisner (2003), and Ruppar et al. (2016) in that the more support, exposure, and training an educator has with disabled students, the more favorable their perceptions are of those students.

As with other studies mentioned above, the administrators in this study reported feeling unsure or lack confidence in their ability to lead schools with inclusion classes because of their lack of knowledge, skills, and special education training (Titrek et al., 2017). These studies make it clear that whether an educator's role in the school is teacher or administrator, more support is needed for inclusion students to be successful in the inclusive classroom. Evidence from research shows that administrators have an indirect or direct influence on inclusive students through their attitudes and perceptions, which can create either an ineffective or effective inclusive setting for these students (Cohen, 2015; Salisbury, 2006; Titrek et al., 2017). According to Salisbury (2006), how school administrators view inclusion points to their level of commitment, progress, and support they can offer to general education teachers in the inclusive classroom. Cohen (2015) and Shani and Koss (2015) noted that transformational leaders who had a positive attitude of inclusion facilitated the teachers' same attitude in their building.

Summary and Conclusions

This literature review contained peer reviewed articles and scholarly journals that were used for research in this study. The topics covered in this chapter were the benefits

of transformational leaders in the educational setting, the history and authorization of IDEA, and administrators' and teachers' perceptions of inclusion. In this chapter, I examined the benefits of transformational leaders in schools and how this results in higher student achievement, a more positive school climate, and a higher sense of capacity and ability among teachers were. In this chapter, I covered that IDEA is a summation of years of advocacy by disability rights groups and legislative precedence. IDEA has helped improve education in the United States for many children; however, more needs to be done for these children to succeed in the inclusive classroom. I talked about how the challenges of successful implementation of inclusion are larger than one teacher or administrator. Moreover, although both administrators' and teachers' general perceptions towards inclusion are primarily positive, implementation of inclusion is not as successful as it could be because of the lack of resources and proper training for dealing with special needs children.

Much research has been done on teachers' perspectives on inclusion in recent years; however, there is a lack of research on administrators' perspectives on their behaviors that support teachers in the inclusive classroom and the teachers' perspective on the support they receive from administrators. Understanding the perspectives of both teachers and administrators can help find what support administrators may need to give teachers so that teachers may be successful in teaching inclusion students. As the goal of this study was to examine teachers' perspectives of administrator leadership behaviors, this study will help fill in some of the current gaps in the literature about administrator behaviors that support teachers in the inclusive setting.

   In Chapter 3, the method used in this study will be detailed. The chapter includes information on the researcher's role, methodology, participant selection, instrumentation, procedures for data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness. Finally, ethical concerns will also be presented.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore general education

teachers' perspectives of administrator support in the elementary inclusion classroom. A

qualitative method was appropriate as it allowed for a more in-depth examination of

teacher perspectives of administrators' leadership behaviors. In this chapter, I describe

the research design and rationale, discuss my role as the research, and provide an

overview of the methodology. The Methodology section includes information on

participant selection; instrumentation; recruitment, participation, and data collection

procedures; and the data analysis plan. Trustworthiness and ethical concerns are also

presented in this chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

I sought to answer the following research question: What are elementary teachers'

perspectives of administrator leadership behaviors to guide general education teachers in

the inclusion classroom? I chose a basic qualitative design with interviews to explore the

phenomenon. A basic qualitative design is suitable when a researcher seeks to understand

participants' experiences, the meaning behind the experiences, and the process behind an

action (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It was appropriate to research the problem using a

basic qualitative design because I was interested in the participants' experiences related to

administrators' behaviors.

Role of the Researcher

In this section, I describe my professional role and my role as a researcher. I have

been a classroom educator for the past 21 years across various elementary grades. I

worked as a computer resource in a prekindergarten (pre-K) through Grade 8 school for 5 years. Following that, I taught fifth, second, and third grades in a general education setting. I currently function as a fourth-grade teacher, team leader, and technology liaison in an elementary school in the district where this study took place. I have taught and currently teach special education students in the general education setting. However, I did not have any personal or professional relationships with, or function in a supervisory capacity for, this study's participants.

As the researcher for this study, my role was as an insider-observer. I was the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data. Researchers can take on different research approaches to interact with participants to obtain the most accurate data and minimize effects on the analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). One approach a researcher can take is the role of the insider-observer. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) stated that an insider often has more access to information, problems in the organization, and participants. Additionally, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) posited that being an insider-observer can help a researcher access reliable data. As an insider-observer, it was important for participants to know that I am a current teacher in the district. Also, I had the advantage of understanding the expectations and procedures set by the district. It also helped me to identify differences in practice from the expectations the district has outlined. As a teacher in the district, it was critical that I only interview teacher participants I did not know personally and who were in a different part of the district. During data collection, I interviewed participants during off-duty hours, and I made sure not to engage participants in conversations concerning issues in the district.

My role as an insider-observer requires that I disclose my biases and how they might have influenced data collection and analysis. According to Seidman (2013), researchers should identify their biases and reveal them in their study. By disclosing any potential bias, I ensure the trustworthiness of my study. Researcher bias may include assumptions, influences, or insights that have the potential to influence the outcome of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To address bias, I kept a reflexive journal during the study. A reflexive journal is used for ongoing self-reflection of biases in the study to minimize researcher bias (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Being reflexive on the researcher's role, thoughts, and assumptions help to establish validity for the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

One bias that I have is my view that administrators offer little assistance to teachers concerning the correct implementation of IEPS. To address this bias, after each interview, I reflected on the interview process. I wrote down my thoughts on the participants' answers to the questions and how interview responses differed from my opinions using a reflexive journal. I reflected on my assumptions or beliefs that could affect the outcome of the study.

To further address potential bias, I also used member checking and a peer reviewer. Member checking is used to help researchers minimize researcher bias in a study. A researcher requests participants to check the accuracy of the findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) to ensure that the researcher has captured the meaning of their responses. I used member checking by following a two-step process. First, copies of the participants' transcripts were sent to them to review the accuracy of their responses to the interview

questions. Second, I emailed a two-page summary of the draft study findings for each participant to review for the accuracy of my interpretations of their data.

Finally, a professional colleague functioned as my peer reviewer to review for bias in my data interpretations. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), this strategy allows a researcher to use a peer to review the research process. My peer reviewer reviewed all the data to check for the logical development of codes, themes, findings, and recommendations. The peer reviewer for this study is familiar with qualitative research and does not have an association with the interviewed teachers. In addition, she was given deidentified data to further protect participants.

Methodology

This section includes information related to participant selection, instrumentation, recruitment, participation, data collection, and data analysis.

Participant Selection

For this study sample, members of the potential participant pool were elementary teachers drawn from an urban mid-Atlantic state. The exact number of elementary teachers in the district is not available. Per the website, 14% of the student population receives special education services. Of the students in the district, 55% are considered low income. All schools incorporate inclusion in their educational program, but administrators determine how inclusion is incorporated.

For this study, I used a purposeful sampling strategy to select participants. Purposeful sampling is a strategy a researcher uses to identify specific criteria or experiences in selecting participants for a research study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The

purposeful sampling method is also appropriate when the researcher aims to gain insight

or understand an issue being studied (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Furthermore, Etikan

(2016) stated that purposive or purposeful sampling involves selecting individuals who

do not mind sharing their perspectives on the studied issue. This strategy was chosen

because I could select participants with knowledge of the phenomenon (inclusion

implementation).

I used specific criteria to recruit teacher and administrator participants.

Administrators needed to be the managing principal at a pre-K through Grade 5 school,

employed within the participating school district for at least 2 years, and be a supervisor

of inclusion teachers. No principals volunteered to participate, which limited the data

collection and analysis. However, it should be noted that researchers have long studied

employees' perspectives of their leaders. For example, Avolio and Bass's (2004)

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaires have been used with employees to understand

leaders' behaviors in the workplace. In addition, in a qualitative study, Woodcock and

Woolfson (2019) examined teachers' perceptions of their principals on inclusion

implementation barriers in the classroom. Using a principal leadership scale, Al-Mahdy

and Emam (2018) studied teachers' perceptions of their principal's response to inclusion.

Because there is some basis in these studies for examining teachers' perspectives of

leader behavior, I interviewed teacher respondents in this study. My goal was to

understand their perspectives of their leader's behaviors based on their experiences with

the leader. That assumption is much like that of research done using leadership

questionnaires that target employees' assessment of leadership behaviors. For example, in

a study completed by Ross and Cozzens (2016), the authors administered the Leadership

Behavior Inventory to determine teachers' perceptions of their administrators'

effectiveness.

Instrumentation

I used a semistructured interview protocol (see Appendix A) to collect data to

answer the research question. The research question was, What are elementary teachers'

perspectives of administrators' behaviors that support inclusive classroom teachers? I

functioned as the main instrument for data collection of the semistructure interviews.

Merriam (2009) stated that the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection in

a qualitative study. To record interviews, I used my iPad along with the recording

application program TEMI. These devices allowed for audio recordings that

synchronized to the iCloud. The data collected are password protected and can only be

accessed by myself.

I used the research question, the framework, and related literature to develop the

interview protocol. Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggested that a conversational guide or

protocol should be developed to guide an interview. The protocol ensured that interview

questions were aligned with the research question and the conceptual framework. The

purpose of the interview protocol in qualitative research is to keep the interview

semistructured and keep the interview focused on questions that will help answer the

research questions (Creswell, 2012).

The interview protocol featured open-ended, probing, and follow-up questions as

necessary. Gorman et al. (2005) recommended writing open-ended questions so

participants can elaborate on their responses. Another benefit of open-ended questions is that the data collected are the participants' words and may generate more forthright information. I included probing questions as well as open-ended questions in the protocol. According to Babbie (2011), probing questions should be asked when clarity is needed to respond to inconclusive responses. I wrote and asked probing or follow-up questions to allow participants an opportunity to expound on their answers.

While creating the interview questions, I phrased the questions to elicit responses that reflect the participants' perspectives. Content validity was utilized to ensure that the interview questions reflected leadership behaviors from subordinates' perspectives. Content validity is how well an instrument assesses the subject that it was designed to measure (Salkind, 2010). Bass et al. (2003), Bass and Bass (2009), and Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) posited that content validity is determined by ensuring that open-ended questions developed in the protocol are reflective of participants' perspectives. I reviewed the conceptual frameworks for this study and followed specified procedures to obtain content validity. My doctoral committee reviewed the interview questions. An administrator colleague in the special education department also reviewed the questions to ensure that leadership behaviors were reflected in the interview questions.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recruitment

I sought Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) authorization to recruit participants and collect data. I also contacted the District Research Department Office via the district intranet system to request permission to conduct the study. An

online form needed to be completed that stated the study's purpose, potential participants, and benefits for district stakeholders. The district research department meets once a month, and requests for studies must be submitted on the first business day of each month with a possible response at the end of the same month. Notifications for the study's approval were sent to my email account listed on the request for study form. I obtained Walden IRB approval after the district granted its approval.

Principal Recruitment. The initial plan for this study was to include principal perspectives in the exploration of the topic. I used the district list of elementary schools to obtain email addresses to contact principals. Emails of recruitment were sent to principal participants within 1 day of receiving IRB approval from the district. The email message contained an overview of the study's problem and purpose, my professional and personal contact information, and the consent form. Participants were given 1 week to respond to the recruitment email to participate in the study. After the week had passed and I did not receive any principals' responses, I sent a follow-up email to potential administrators. A second follow up email with the interview questions and consent form was sent to principals to encourage participants. After the two additional follow-up emails across the next 2 months, I did not obtain any administrator responses to participate in the study, and no further contact was made.

Teacher Recruitment. Teacher recruitment took place within 1 day of receiving IRB approval. I used the district intranet system to obtain the email addresses of potential teacher participants. I briefly stated the study's problem and purpose, my professional and personal contact information, and the consent form in the email. Teachers were given 5

days to reply to the invitation. Per the recruitment letter, participants who wished to participate replied to my original email to confirm their interest in the study. Within 1 day of receiving confirmation of interest from participants, I sent a reply to teachers who confirmed their willingness to participate in my study. In the confirmation email to participants, I scheduled a date for interviews, described the content of the consent form agreement, and provided directions for completing it. It was explained to participants that they should review the consent form and reply "I consent" to the email to participate in the study. Returned consent agreements were stored on my OneDrive on the cloud for security purposes. At the end of the recruitment process, a total of 12 teachers were recruited. A follow-up invitation email would have been sent if the required number of participants had not been met. This step proved unnecessary; all needed participants were recruited from the first email.

Participation

My initial target was to interview 5-6 administrators in elementary schools and 10-12 teachers for a total of 15-18 participants. No principals volunteered to participate in the study; therefore, the resulting sample consisted of 12 teachers. The study was adjusted in the following manner:

1. No principals were obtained, so only teacher participants were used.

2. The research question aligned to administrators was eliminated from the study.

3. Phone interviews instead took place due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I contacted potential participants through the district intranet email system. Participants were sent an email in which I introduced myself and provided contact information, details, and the purpose of the study. Teachers who were interested in the study were asked to reply to the recruitment email. Participants could reply "I consent" in the email. Once participants had agreed to take part in the study, I scheduled an interview and sent them the informed consent form via email. I conducted individual telephone interviews with 12 teachers in a secure and quiet location. Before starting the interview, I reviewed the informed consent with each participant, and I asked each participant for permission to record the interview.

Data Collection

Seidman (2013) suggested that the best method of understanding individuals' experiences in the education system is through interviews. For this study, I collected data through a single session semistructured interview with each of the teacher participants. On the day of the interview, I reintroduced myself to teacher participants and explained my role in the school district. This allowed me to gain rapport and trust with the participants. I reminded teacher participants that the interview would be recorded. I reassured participants that I would protect their confidentiality by not sharing or identifying their information nor report their school site. I also informed them that their identities were confidential. I assigned each of them a pseudonym, such as Daisies, Orchid, and Lily, to further protect their identity. Participants were informed that all information obtained during the interview was secured in a password-protected laptop kept in my home office, and I only had access.

Before the start of the interview, I checked the audio recording device for proper functioning. The interviews were recorded using the application TEMI on my iPad. Using my iPad allowed the interview to synchronize to the iCloud automatically and secured the information. I began the interview process with demographic questions such as years of teaching, grade-level experience, special education training, and length of time at their current school.

During the interview, I used the interview protocol (see Appendix A) to maintain focus on the questions that needed to be discussed. I used probing questions as necessary for clarification. At the end of each interview, I allowed time for any questions that the participants may have had, reminded them that their answers were confidential, and provided them with information about how they could contact me should they think of anything else. Participants consented to future contact should a follow-up interview be necessary for clarification purposes. After data collection, I sent participants a thank you email for their participation.

Data Analysis Plan

The data collected during participant interviews provided the basis for addressing the research question. Data collection in a qualitative study will produce large amounts of data, so it is imperative that data analysis starts as soon as possible (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I used an inductive approach to analyze the data collected from participants. This approach was appropriate as it incorporated the framework and research question to guide the analysis of data. Merriam (2009) posited that an inductive approach should be used to conduct a basic qualitative study.

Creswell (2012) noted that data analysis involves reducing collected data into smaller parts. The plan for this study was to analyze the data in the order that interviews were completed. After each interview, I immediately transcribed participant data into a Microsoft Word document. I stored the transcripts for easy retrieval using the participant's pseudonym. All audio recordings and transcriptions were stored on Microsoft OneDrive. I began the analysis process by reading all transcripts to grasp a basic understanding of the collected information.

Saldana (2016) stated that a qualitative researcher codes data to break information into manageable pieces. The codes I developed assisted in breaking down and organizing the information collected through participant interviews. I used the conceptual framework of transformational leadership theory to develop codes before coding the data. According to Saldana, a priori codes developed before analysis can help answer the research question.

Transformational Data Analysis

In the first phase, the codes developed came from the leadership behavior groups described in the transformational theory. The behavior groups were inspirational motivation, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The leadership behaviors and the codes associated with them were as follows:

- Inspirational motivation behavior codes were setting goals, being available, and establishing communication.

- Idealized influence behavior codes were showing concern/care for teachers and sets examples.

- Intellectual stimulation behavior codes seek staff input, act as a facilitator, allow autonomy, challenge thinking, delegate tasks, and emphasize teamwork.

- Individualized consideration behavior codes support teachers, check progress towards goals, acknowledge teacher effort, listen to others, encourage, and create opportunities.

Change in Data Analysis

The second phase of analysis involved open coding. This phase required examining each line of the transcript and developing codes that emerged from the text. I completed a priori coding on the transcript data and discovered that not all the coded data aligned with transformational leadership behaviors. Based on this outcome, I contacted my methodologist, and we agreed that other leadership behaviors would need to be considered. These outlying leadership behaviors fit best with transactional and passive avoidant leadership behaviors. This required further research to add transactional and passive avoidant leadership styles to the conceptual framework. Saldana (2016) posited that codes created during this phase are subject to change as the analysis progresses. Based on these additional leadership behaviors, new open codes were developed.

Transactional and Passive Avoidant Leadership Data Analysis

For the last analysis phase, I returned to the open codes and looked for relationships among the codes and coded data. During this process, I collapsed open codes that were similar or were related into categories. When a relationship is found among the open codes, categories can be formed (Patton, 2002). The categories formed were leadership provide supports, leaders provide communication, leaders acknowledge,

and leaders provide supervision. I continued this process until all codes fit into a matching category.

A component of data analysis is to identify discrepant cases or outliers in the data. Discrepant data or outliers are pieces of data that do not fit into a specific pattern (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Searching for outliers was important to ensure the validity of the data set. There was one discrepant case in the data that resulted from the participant interviews. The participant stated that, when answering the interview questions her answers were based on her interactions with two principals instead of her current principal. Ravitch and Carl (2016) suggested that researchers reread their data set to ensure that themes reflect data collected to account for discrepant data or outliers. As a result of this discrepancy in the interview data, it was necessary to separate the discrepant data for separate reporting. This process is reported in the results section of the study in Chapter 4.

<h2 style="text-align:center">Trustworthiness</h2>

In a qualitative study, trustworthiness is established using four components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Much like in quantitative studies, the researcher must explain how the study was valid by internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity. Trustworthiness is important in qualitative research because it helps establish the study's integrity (Creswell, 2012).

Credibility

Like internal validity in a quantitative study, credibility is used to demonstrate that the study's purpose was accurately reported (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). According to

Korstjens and Moser (2018), credibility can be assured in a qualitative study through triangulation, member checking, reflexivity, and peer review. Member checking involves using the study participants to check the accuracy of their data used in the findings (Merriam, 2009). I engaged members in member checking by emailing a copy of their transcript and a summary of the draft findings. First, to review the transcript, participants were asked to review their responses to the interview questions and respond within 5 days with changes through email. Participants had 7 to 10 days to review the initial findings, make comments on the document, and email their comments back to me. Next, I checked their corrections against my interpretation and the original recording for accuracy and made the necessary corrections using the participants' responses. Another critical strategy for increasing credibility is peer review. Peer review involves debriefing with a colleague about the process, data, findings, and preliminary interpretation (Merriam, 2009). To engage in peer review, a colleague was asked to review the research processes to ensure credible findings.

Transferability

Transferability refers to how the findings in a qualitative study can be applied to similar situations by another stakeholder (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) stated that a researcher needs to provide enough details about the site and procedures for anyone who reads the study. To allow for transferability, I provided readers with clear descriptions and details explaining this study's process. This included providing robust details on data collection, location of the interviews, recruiting volunteers, and analyzing the data are detailed for replication of the study.

Dependability

Dependability refers to how stable and reliable the process of collecting data is in the research study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To attain dependability, a researcher may choose to use audit trails and triangulation. To obtain dependability through audit trails, I provided a well developed sequential explanation of choices and the rationales for the choices made during the study. To increase the dependability of my study, a professional colleague functioned as a peer reviewer. This person is a Walden doctoral candidate and an educator with certification in special education. The purpose was to examine the data's accuracy and the logical development of codes, themes, and findings in the study.

Confirmability

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011) confirmability is established when the researcher has sufficient evidence to show that the study was unaffected by researcher bias. Confirmability is obtained when a researcher practices reflexivity to examine how their viewpoints or positions influence the study (Yin, 2011). Practicing reflexivity ensured that the study results are those of the participants and not of the researcher. Using a reflexive journal and detailing procedures before, during, and after data collection helped ascertain this study's confirmability. Transcript review and member checking were used to check researcher bias. Participants were sent a copy of their interview transcripts and a summary of the draft findings. They were given 7-10 days to respond with changes. Once those responses were received, I made the necessary corrections to the findings.

Ethical Procedures

A qualitative study can present an ethical challenge, given that the researcher is often the instrumentation used to collect data. For this reason, specific guidelines need to be developed and followed when interacting with participants in a qualitative study (Creswell, 2013). The participants' protection should be a concern of any researcher; therefore, the IRB process was vital in the research process. Walden's IRB guidelines guided me in the ethical treatment of participants during the data collection processes, how findings are shared, and how data were handled during and after the study. I received Walden's IRB approval before starting data collection. Walden's IRB approval number is #01-16-20-0739856. I applied for and obtained IRB approval from the district prior to contacting participants.

I followed the IRB policy. I ensured that all participants provided their informed consent to participate in the study. Before starting each interview, I reviewed the consent form with participants. IRB guidelines stipulate that participants have a right to stop their participation in a study at any time without adverse effects.

Participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty prior to starting the interview. Confidentiality is one of the rights of participants. To maintain confidentiality, participants were provided a pseudonym, which was used to store participants' transcriptions and report the findings. All identifiable information was stored on a password protected home computer, which I have access to for data analysis purposes. Additionally, all computer files will be kept secured for 5 years beyond the completion of the study.

Summary

This chapter contained a description of the research methods that were used in this study were discussed. A basic qualitative design was selected for this study. This study helped add to the growing body of knowledge of elementary teachers' perspectives of administrators and their support in the inclusion classroom.

A detailed description of the research method, participant selection, procedures, ethical concerns, data collection, and analysis that were used was discussed. In Chapter 4, the exact steps that were taken for data collection and analysis will be discussed in greater depths. Also, the results of the study and evidence of trustworthiness will be examined.

Chapter 4: Results

Using a basic qualitative research study design, I explored teachers' perspectives of administrator support. One research question was used to guide this study: What are elementary teachers' perspectives of administrators' behaviors that support inclusive classroom teachers? In this chapter, I will review the study's setting, data collection, data analysis, and results. I will also provide evidence of this study's trustworthiness by reporting procedures for establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Setting

This research study took place in a large metropolitan school district in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. According to the NCES (2018), there were close to 80,000 students in the school district in 2018, of whom approximately13,000 students had IEPs. This district is also the fourth largest school district in the state according to the state department of education. Records from the state department of education data indicated that for school year 2018-2019, just under 60% of pre-K through 12th grade special education students spent 80% or more of their time in the general education classroom. At the same time, another 12% spent 40-79% of their time in the general education classroom. Further review of the data indicated that of the students identified with a disability, 48% were in elementary grades.

Participant Demographics

From the identified school district, I recruited participants for the study's interview. An invitation was sent out to 10 school administrators and 20 elementary

teachers. Twelve teachers responded and agreed to participate in the study. I anticipated that 5-6 administrators would participate; however, none agreed to participate in the study after several attempts to contact potential administrator participants. All teacher participants were current elementary inclusion teachers at the time of the study. All teacher participants taught in Grades 2-5 and had taught K-2 and 4-6 within the district. Two participants taught at the same school but in different grade levels. One participant is a career changer with a Juris Doctor and a master's degree in elementary education. Eight participants reported having their master's degree, and three participants reported having their bachelor's degree. Many responded that they took an undergraduate course in special education during their education training but could not recall the course's name. Table 1 contains the demographics information for the study participants.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Degree(s)	Current grade	Previous grade	Training
Daisies	Bachelor's	5		Undergrad
Enchanters	Bachelor's	4 & 5	K	Undergrad
Jasmine	Master's	2	1, 4, 5, 6	Undergrad
Keli Flower	Master's	3	4	None
Lilac	Master's	4	2, 5	None
Lily	Master's	1	4, 5	Undergrad
Magnolia	Bachelor's	K		Undergrad
Mallow	Master's	3	1-6	Undergrad*
Marigold	Master's	1	4-5	None
Orchid	Master's	3	4	None
Scilla	Master's	5	4	Master's
Azalea	Doctorate	5	6-8	PD*

Note. PD = professional development.
*Summer PD offered through other districts.

None of participants had completed special education or inclusion training through the district; however, two participants took summer professional development offered through other districts.

Data Collection

After gaining approval from the Walden IRB, I contacted the selected school district's IRB department. I completed an electronic application for site approval. Within one day of receiving site approval, I purposefully selected and emailed elementary teachers and principals a recruitment letter and a consent form for the study through the district intranet system.

Recruitment for teachers and principals started in March 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic when all schools statewide were closed. One week after sending out the recruitment email, I received agreements to participate from 12 teachers but no principals. This study's proposed sample size was 15-18 participants, with 5-6 of those being elementary school principals. Although the intended number of teachers was met, no principals responded to the invitation emails. Three follow-up emails were sent out to principals after the initial recruitment to encourage participation. The first follow-up email was sent out 2 weeks after the first invitation. I received no responses from principal participants. The second follow up was sent out 2 weeks following the first follow-up email. No principals responded to the second invitation. I completed a third follow-up in July 2021. I chose this time period because principals were expected to report back to their buildings in preparation for in person learning, which may have increased the likelihood of receiving a response from a potential participant.

Subsequently, I emailed principals an invitation to participate in the study and marked it high importance. After 3 weeks of waiting for a response, I received no responses from principal participants. After the fourth attempt to recruit principals failed, I decided to change the focus of my study from the original purpose of the study to examine the behaviors of administrators in supporting their inclusion teachers to solely examining the teachers' perspectives of administrators' leadership behaviors that support them in the inclusion classroom. I proceeded with the teachers who agreed to participate. This study adds to existing research on teachers' perspectives of their principals' leadership behaviors (Al-Mahdy & Emam, 2018; Avolio &Bass, 2004; Woodcock & Woolfson, 2019).

Within one day of teachers replying "I consent" to the recruitment email, I contacted each participant by email to schedule a day and time for the telephone interviews. In my email, I also informed participants that the interview would take place over the phone due to COVID-19 restrictions. Interviews were originally planned to take place face-to-face with participants. However, the data collection method for the interviews changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It changed from semistructured face-to-face interviews to semistructured telephone interviews that lasted approximately 15 minutes each. Data were collected from teacher participants using the teacher interview protocol (see Appendix A). Permission to record interviews was sought and granted from each participant before interviews began. During the interviews, I used the Temi app on my iPad to record interview data, which transcribed the interview as they were recorded.

Data Analysis

In this section, I provide a detailed account of the data analysis for this study. The process of analyzing the transcripts, the cycles of coding, theme development, and results will be explored in this section. An inductive approach was used to analyze participant data. Using an inductive approach in a qualitative study allows the researcher to build themes from patterns identified in the raw data (Creswell, 2012; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Using an inductive approach allowed me to look for leadership behavior patterns within the data and use those patterns to move from codes to categories to themes.

Following the interviews, I prepared the data for analysis. I listened to the recordings and matched participant transcripts to the audio recordings. Once I matched the transcriptions with the audio recordings, I sent participants their transcriptions and requested that they check their transcripts for accuracy. Once participants approved their transcript, I assigned and used a pseudonym for each transcript and recording to assure participant confidentiality. I saved the recorded interviews and the transcriptions on a password protected computer in my home. They will be kept for 5 years beyond study completion.

Within the analysis process, there were two phases of coding. The initial phase consisted of a priori coding, and the final phase was open coding. In the first phase, I completed one cycle of a priori coding for transformational leadership behaviors. However, during a priori coding, transactional and passive avoidant leadership behaviors were also identified in the data. Therefore, it became necessary to further code the data for transactional and passive avoidant leadership styles. According to Avolio (2005),

Bass (1998), and Bass and Riggio (2006), leaders rarely demonstrate just one leadership style. However, it is usually a combination of leadership styles within the full range leadership model (Avolio, 2011), depending on the situation. Therefore, two additional cycles of a priori coding were completed for transactional and passive avoidant leadership styles.

A Priori Coding

A priori coding entails developing codes ahead of time using the conceptual leadership frameworks (Saldana, 2016). To prepare the data for coding, I read the transcripts multiple times and examined the conceptual framework to review leadership behaviors. I noted each leadership behavior in a journal to identify similar leadership behaviors from participant transcripts. I created a Word document for each leadership construct. Within the document, I created a two-column table. Column 1 was labeled a priori codes and column two labeled participant responses. In Column 2, I inserted participant data that reflected the codes listed in Column 1. I used the same coding sheet format for transactional and passive avoidant using the constructs associated with those leadership styles. An example of the table can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Participant Coding Sheet: Inspirational Motivation

A priori code	Participant response
Motivates	
Sets goals	
Understands	
Available	
Communication	

A Priori Coding for Transformational Leadership

I read the transcripts and searched for participant responses for wording and phrasing aligned with Bass's description of transformational leadership constructs. Bass (1998) described leader behaviors for inspirational motivation as motivating, encouraging, communicating, and setting goals for followers. I used those terms to guide my search for similar behaviors from participant responses. When I came across leadership behaviors aligned to the construct, those behaviors were underlined, and the evidence was highlighted. This was done for all four constructs. Then I copied and inserted evidence from the transcript and inserted it into column two. For example, data were coded "sets goals" if participants mentioned their principal as setting goal(s) in their responses. Five participants mentioned that their principal set goals for their school. For instance, Participant Azalea said, "she holds ILT meetings, instructional leadership team meetings. That is typically where any schoolwide goals are made." Sets goals was the only behavior identified for inspirational motivation. The leader minimally demonstrated the behavior of inspirational motivation. Participants shared that their leader set goals but did not mention whether those goals were clear, high expectations, or reasonable. As per Bass (1998), the leader must set high reasonable goals for their followers.

The a priori codes for idealized influence were "sets examples" and "demonstrated care/concern for staff." Bass (2009) stressed that idealized influence is evident in a leader who is selfless, well respected, is a role model, and shows care for their followers. Five participants reported their principal demonstrating care/concern for the staff. For example, if participants stated their principal's behavior as *she is open to*

questions I have about anything, she listens to me, and is available to me, then those

terms were coded care/concern. An example of participant data for idealized influence is,

"she pretty much has an open-door policy, so if you need anything from her, she's really

there" (Scilla). This example was coded as care/concern on the coding sheet. The

behavior demonstrated care/concern was minimally demonstrated to participants by the

principals. Participants did not express that this behavior was expected to be reciprocated

throughout the faculty.

      The a priori codes were challenged thinking, facilitating, seeking staff input, and

emphasizing teamwork for intellectual stimulation. Bass et al. (2003) described leader

behaviors as challenging thinking, encouraging creativity, and taking a hands-on

approach to solving problems. For instance, I coded data as emphasizes teamwork if the

behavior was displayed to participants or explicitly stated as an expectation by their

principals in their response. One participant responded that their principal challenged

their thinking. Azalea stated

> I think that one of the things that she does is try to push my thinking. So, if I have
>
> a goal and I set a goal, she will sometimes ask me some questions about my goals.
>
> She'll ask me questions to make sure that whatever the goals I am setting are
>
> higher level and rigorous goals and that I'm not cycling.

The words "pushes my thinking and ask questions" were keywords identified for the code

challenges thinking. Two participants stated that their principals facilitated meetings

between special and general educators. Participant Scillia said, "She's facilitated some

meetings or some round tables with the special educators so that we can get their insight

into things (inclusion)." Another participant stated that they are invited to give staff input during meetings. Participant Jasmine stated, "We get invited to attend SIP (School Improvement Plan) meetings to share our concerns when it's being drafted." Three participants stated that their principal encourages teamwork. For example, Participant Lily shared, "She's asked the IEP chair and the SPED (special education) resource teachers to collaborate with the general education teachers to provide information on meeting students' needs."

The last construct I examined from transformational leadership was individualized consideration. The following codes were identified based on participant responses: acknowledge teacher efforts, support, check progress, create opportunities, and encourage. Bass (1998) explained that a leader demonstrating individualized consideration pays attention to their followers' needs, creates opportunities for new learning, encourages, and supports. Six teachers stated their principal acknowledging staff for their efforts. For example, Mallow said, "I do notice he will acknowledge teachers for positive things that he sees in the classroom." Five teachers described their principal as supporting them in the inclusion classroom. Behaviors were coded support if participants used the terms "supportive," "support," "supported," "helpful," and "helps me" to describe their leaders' behavior. An example of participant response that aligned with the behavior of supporting staff was, "she is very supportive, definitely open and accessible when needed" (Orchid). Three participants stated that their principal checks their progress regularly to see how they are doing in their classroom. For example, Lily stated, "Our principal does learning walks on a regular basis." Two participants stated

that their principal created opportunities for new learning. Scilla said, "she's been really good about finding the time or coverage for me to go to them (professional development)." Two participants stated that their principal encouraged them in the inclusion classroom. Jasmine stated, "the principal has been very positive and encouraging, just very, very motivating all around."

A Priori Coding for Transactional Leadership

To begin Cycle 2, I first used a copy of the coding sheet created for transformational leadership constructs and modified it for the constructs of transactional leadership. I replaced all transformational constructs with transactional constructs. The transactional leadership constructs are monitoring and controlling tasks, providing motivation for task accomplishment with reinforcement (positive/negative), and expecting team conformity.

For the first construct of monitoring and controlling, I used Bass's definition of leadership behaviors to examine similar or exact wording used in participant responses. I reread the transcripts for leadership behaviors aligned to the constructs. I used an asterisk to identify behaviors and highlighted evidence in blue to differentiate from the transformational evidence highlighted previously. I then copied and pasted evidence from the transcript and inserted it into the table. Codes were entered into Column 1, and participants' responses were entered into Column 2. The a priori codes for this construct were *feedback, monitors progress,* and *offer suggestions*. Bass (1998) explained that when a transactional leader displays monitoring and controlling behaviors, they closely monitor their staff, correct errors, set goals, and give direction. For the code feedback,

one participant reported their principal giving specific feedback on how to improve her work with inclusion students. Participant Orchid said, "She comes to my classroom very often to observe, and from that, she will offer specific professional advice based on what she's seen in the class." Four participants reported that their principal monitored progress. "I think it's done through her monitoring of progress monthly" Orchid stated. When it comes to offering suggestions, four participants reported receiving suggestions from their administrators. Jasmine stated, "She'll sit in on IEP meetings and offer suggestions and support."

The a priori codes for the second construct of motivation with reinforcement (positive/negative) were *communicated expectations/goals, reinforce expectations*, and *provides resources*. Bass (1998) stated that a leader showing motivation with reinforcement would recognize and reward meeting expectations. Five participants responded that their principal communicated expectations/goals with staff. Participant Orchid stated, "She typically makes her goals very clear during staff meetings in terms of what her expectations are for special education students." While four participants reported that their principal reinforced expectations to make certain goals were being met. Participant Jasmine stated, "We definitely get a lot of recognition and encouragement for meeting the data goals and for supporting our students the best that we can." Four participants answered that their principal provided resources for them in the form of professional development, websites, or books. "She has given out resources and tools such as websites. That could help with meeting students' needs" (Lily).

The third and final construct for transactional leadership was team conformity. The resulting a priori codes from participant responses were disseminating information and providing assistance. In this construct, the leader expects rules to be followed, reinforces expectations to prevent deviation, provides assistance to maintain the status quo, and monitors mistakes (Avolio, 2005). One participant responded that the principal has passed out literature during meetings to assist staff members for the code disseminating information. Participant Jasmine stated, "There have been some articles that have been given out to read at the ILT (Instructional Leadership Team) meetings, and those have been helpful." The code of providing assistance came from three participants who stated that their principal would assist or help them when needed. An example of participant response came from Azalea. "She will try to assist us." I continued the coding process until the remaining data did not fit into transformational or transactional. Therefore, I continued with the third cycle of coding for passive avoidant leadership.

A Priori Coding for Passive Avoidant Leadership

In the third cycle of a priori coding, I examined the constructs for passive avoidant leadership style. There were two constructs associated with this leadership style: laissez-faire and passive management by exception. For the first construct, laissez-faire, I searched the transcripts for words or phrases aligned to leadership behaviors as described by Avolio. According to Avolio (2005) a leader displaying laisse-faire behaviors will offer little support, shares little information or direction, and offers support only when asked. The a priori codes identified were refer to expertise, autonomy/independence, and

abdicate responsibilities. For the code refer to expertise, four participants reported their principal referring them to the IEP chair or a knowledgeable teacher for assistance in inclusion. Participant Marigold said, "She does what she can, but she typically defers to the expertise of the special ed team." Two participants stated that their principal encourages independence or gives them autonomy in the inclusion classroom. Participant Azalea shared, "She also encourages independence. I guess it's supportive without being too controlling cause she does allow me to make my own decisions and have autonomy."

Passive management by exception was the second construct in passive avoidant leadership. I reread the transcripts and searched for data that fit the descriptors of leaders who demonstrate passive management by exception behaviors. These leaders are involved only when necessary, punish subordinates for not meeting expectations, and do not monitor subordinates' progress (Howell & Avolio, 1993). The a priori code for this construct was provide generic feedback. Eight participants reported being given nonspecific feedback in their interactions with their principal. For example, participant Scilla said, "Teacher shout-outs during staff meetings, I think that is about it." After completing a priori coding, I continued the analysis process through open coding.

Open Coding

The second phase of coding began with rereading each participants' transcript to begin open coding. Open coding is a process of searching for the repetition of words, phrases, or concepts in the transcripts (Saldana, 2016). To do this, I hand coded each participant's transcript by underlining and annotating repeated behaviors found in participant responses. As an example, the word shout-out was repeated throughout the

transcripts. As a result, I underlined the word shout-out and annotated the word on the side of the transcript.

Once I hand coded all transcripts, I then transferred the codes and the related data to a table. To do this, I created a two-column table in Microsoft Word. The first column was for the codes, and the second column was for participant responses. I typed the codes identified during open coding into column 1 and participant's data in the second column. For example, participant responses that had the code feedback were placed under column 2. Participants' pseudonyms were written in parentheses under their quotes (see Table 3).

Table 3

Open Codes and Participant Data

Open code	Participant response
Feedback	Definitely, during feedback, I do notice he will acknowledge teachers for positive things that he sees in the classroom or data movement. (Mallow)
	Informal and formal observation feedback. (Lilac)
	She actually leaves notes or feedback on our actual lesson plans. (Orchid)
	I guess general feedback and also listening to my feedback. (Kelli Flower)

Once I completed the table, I made a printout of it to reevaluate the codes and data. In open coding, codes are eliminated or merged with other codes because they are closely related (Saldana, 2016). For example, some participants did not use the words feedback but stated that their principal told them they were doing a good job, wrote notes, or sent emails after formal or informal classroom observations. Therefore, the old codes (wrote notes or emailed) were combined into one code- "feedback," and the ancillary evidence

was moved under the new code (feedback). Saldana (2016) stated that categories form when codes that are related or similar are grouped together. To do this, I made another printout of the tables and cut the coded data into strips to form categories. For instance, the related codes disseminate information, communicate, set goals, and seek staff input were grouped to form the category communication. I reassessed the formed categories for patterns that would assist in identifying themes in the data.

Theme Development

The final phase of analysis involved creating themes based on repeated patterns identified in the data. Six initial themes emerged from the data analysis. They were:

- communicate goals for the school

- communicate expectations for teamwork

- encourage teacher expectations

- communicate support for teachers and instruction

- communicate expectations through reinforcement

- communicate independence and autonomy for teachers

A researcher should reread their data set to ensure that themes reflect the data collected (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I cycled through the data by reexamining the transcripts, codes, and categories. I noticed that three subthemes closely resembled each other, so it was necessary to combine them. I combined communicate goals and encourages teacher expectations into one theme. Encourages teamwork and expectations through reinforcement were combined into a second theme. Support for teachers and instruction

and communicates independence and autonomy were merged into the third theme. Three themes were created during this phase of analysis.

- The leader communicates goals and expectations for the school and checks progress. (Theme 1)

- The leader encourages teamwork among teachers for meeting expectations by offering reinforcement. (Theme 2)

- The leader communicates support for teachers and instruction through granting autonomy and independence. (Theme 3)

Developing Theme 1

Theme 1 was formed from repeated patterns in the codes across all the participant data. All the data and codes that were related to communication were placed into one category regardless of whether the behavior was transformational, transactional, or passive avoidant. Therefore, Theme 1 was derived from merging responses to similar transformational, transactional, and passive avoidant leadership behaviors using participant data. Only one construct from transformational leadership was identified for theme one. The construct inspirational motivation with the behaviors, motivation, sets goals, understands, communication, and availability were identified. Keli Flower mentioned an example of participant data that aligns with the behaviors. She stated, "At the beginning of the year, the principal reviews what the goals are for the school with staff."

Next, for transactional leadership, all three constructs of team conformity, monitoring/controlling, and motivation with reinforcement (positive/negative) were

present in theme one. These behaviors were identified using the constructs and

participant data; closely monitor/monitor progress, communicate expectations/goals,

provide resources, and provide assistance. Participant Lilac said of her principal,

[principal communicates] "by setting student learning targets and adaptive teaching plans

for teaching content."

     Lastly, in passive avoidant, both laissez-faire and passive management by

exception constructs were also seen in this theme. The passive avoidant leadership

constructs of laissez-faire and passive management by exception had the behaviors of

monitoring progress, disseminating information, communicating to reinforce

expectations, and reinforcing organizational goals. An example of participant data

aligned to the constructs and behaviors was shared by Lilac, who stated, "information is

presented by special educators or academic coach during professional development

meetings."

Developing Theme 2

     For Theme 2, acknowledgment, feedback, and reward were the repeated patterns

in the codes, so these codes were combined to form one category. This theme also had a

combination of leadership behaviors from transformational, transactional, and passive

avoidant. The constructs, participant data, and similar leadership behaviors were

combined to form this theme.

     Two constructs from transformational leadership were present in Theme 2, which

were individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation. The specific behaviors

identified were facilitator, challenges thinking, delegates, teamwork, encourage, and

acknowledge teacher efforts. Scilla shared an example of participant data aligned to these behaviors, "I think a lot of what she does is facilitate the meeting of the minds between the special educators and the general educators."

Transactional leadership also had two constructs: motivation with reinforcement (positive/negative) and team conformity present in Theme 2. The behaviors identified were praise /reward based on meeting expectations, praise based on meeting achievements, reinforcing expectations, communicating expectations/goals, and offering suggestions. The following quote by Orchid is an example of participant data aligned to transactional behaviors in this theme. Orchid said:

> She tells us during staff meetings if she can't do it herself, it will be through the vice principal, and if they can't help us, they definitely provide contact as who we should contact for help. That is typically done one on one.

Finally, in passive avoidant, the constructs of laissez-faire and passive management by exception were seen Theme 2. The leadership behaviors were reinforcing expectations, delegating to others, feedback, offering suggestions, and referring to expertise. One example of such participant data was this quote by Keli Flower, "She might give me a suggestion as to what I can improve on, which is two to three times a year."

Developing Theme 3

Theme 3 emerged when there was a repeated pattern of independence codes. Data and codes that were similar to the code of independence formed one category. Theme

three was a merge of transformational, transactional, and passive avoidant leadership behaviors.

The constructs of idealized influence and intellectual stimulation were identified for transformational leadership. The behaviors associated with those constructs were supportive, setting examples, care/concern, available, autonomy, support for students, encourages, and creates opportunities. A participant example of this is with Azalea, who said, "We talk about the successes or challenges that we faced in that particular week. And so, I think just allowing me the space to be able to reflect out loud with someone else has been supportive."

There were two constructs as well from transactional leadership. They were monitoring and controlling and motivation with reinforcement (positive/negative). The behaviors listed monitor/monitor progress closely, feedback, will help with problems, refer to expertise and provide resources. An example of participant data that fit these behaviors came from Orchid. She said, "She comes to my classroom very often to observe, and from that, she will offer specific professional advice based on what she's seen in the class. Again, if she is not available, the vice principal will do the same."

In passive avoidant, both constructs of laissez-faire and management by exception were apparent in the data. The behaviors refer to expertise, provides assistance, feedback on meeting expectations, refer to others, autonomy on meeting student needs, and independence to teach were used along with the participant data. One piece of participant data came from Magnolia. She stated, "She really kind of looks at the IEP chair to direct information."

Finally, all themes resulted from participant data based on teachers' perspectives on classroom support. Ross and Cozzens (2016) posited that principals' leadership behaviors are essential in building a community of support and trust. The themes are further described in the results section of this chapter. Also, in Appendix B, I have reported all salient data from participants. The data reported is divided into themes and leadership styles.

Results

Twelve teachers were selected as research participants for a semistructured interview to understand their perspectives on administrators' behaviors that support them in the inclusion classroom. All interview questions were aligned to the study's conceptual framework based on inspirational motivation, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration of the transformational leadership theory. The interview questions were designed to answer the research question; what are elementary teachers' perspectives of administrators' behaviors that support inclusive classroom teachers? Participants were given a pseudonym for confidentiality purposes in the interview. Open coding was used to identify the repeated patterns in the codes to form categories. I reexamined the categories for patterns to create the themes in this study. According to Merriam (2009), themes develop when repeating patterns begin to emerge in the data. This section describes the results of this study in terms of the themes that emerged.

Themes Related to the Research Question

As no principals chose to participate in this study, the second research question related to principals' perceptions of their leadership behaviors was eliminated from the study. Data collected from the interviews were coded to identify themes that helped answer the remaining question. What are elementary teachers' perspectives of administrators' behaviors that support general education teachers in the inclusion classroom? Although interview questions were structured for inclusive education responses, participants' responses do not reflect this but rather their general experience with their administrators. Themes emerged after I reassessed the open codes and categories created during the second phase of coding. Similar categories were grouped to form themes. The themes that emerged in this study were:

- Leader communication

- Leader encouragement

- Leader granting autonomy and independence

Theme 1: Leader Communication

Transactional Leadership

Theme 1 was: The leader communicates goals and expectations for the school and checks progress. I asked participants to share their experiences on how their principal communicated school goals and expectations. Participants described their principals as taking the time to set expectations, communicate school goals, and checking on staff progress in meeting set goals. To set time for communicating goals and expectations, some principals took advantage of previously scheduled school meetings. As an example,

participant Azalea noted that her principal uses school leadership meetings to set goals. She said, "She holds ILT meetings (instructional leadership team) meetings. And that is typically where any kind of schoolwide goals are made." Azalea also mentioned that teachers from every grade level, including special education teachers, examine IEPs and any district mandates to create school wide goals.

Additionally, participant responses also reported evidence of principals monitoring teachers' progress towards meeting goals. Participants' principals used a variety of ways to monitor goal progression. For example, Scilla said, "She comes around and looks at our lesson plans and makes sure that we have the modification matrix (for IEP students) are filled out." Scilla also believed that setting the expectations was not enough, but the follow up on the expectations could be better. She said, "Really, that's about it as far as making sure the expectations are given to us. But the follow up I guess, just because of everything else that is going on could be better." Another strategy displayed in participants' responses was with Daisies. Daisies' principal uses negative reinforcement to communicate and reinforce IEP objectives. She said, "if she gets enough pushback, she always goes back to it's the law, and the last thing you want to do is lose your certification." Daisies went on to say, "I think the most important thing even in a scare tactic is to get us to recognize that these are still children, and they still deserve a free and quality education." Daisies also mentioned, **"**She'll email if she's really worried about a student or not. She'll ask for a meeting. Just run it by you and ask questions." While participants detailed principals using some of these strategies for goal setting,

communicating expectations, and checking progress, other leaders took a different approach.

Passive Avoidant Leadership

Some participants described their principals as not clearly setting goals or checking on their progress. One participant, Mallow, mentioned that her principal does not clearly define any goals for her school. She said, "He sends an email after an informal observation, and that's about it (data)." Another participant did not experience goal setting but stated that her principal talks to her informally to check on her progress. Keli Flower said, "She usually just talks to me, informally. She might just pop in my office." Still, other participants were told by their principals what the goals were for the year during meetings. Jasmine, for example, stated that the goals are written in her School Improvement Plan (SIP) but did not know what they were. "These are goals in our SIP; however, I do not know what they are without looking."

Additionally, Orchid stated that they get told during staff meetings what the expectations are for special education students. She said, [Principal] "Makes it clear during staff meeting what her expectations for special education students are." Lastly, one participant had a principal that showed transformational leadership behaviors to communicate with staff.

Transformational Leadership

One participant, Magnolia, shared a specific goal that her principal has set for her school. Magnolia said, "Our schoolwide goal is that every student, or at least the ones reading below, leaves on grade level." She later clarified that her principal does not make

exceptions for IEP (inclusion) students. However, modifications are made for special education students. "She doesn't make exceptions for whether the student has an IEP. She would ask, what are you going to do?" By using the transformational behavior of inspirational motivation, principals communicate clear roles and responsibilities of teachers and motivate teachers in meeting school goals. The perspectives offered by the participants on communicating goals/expectations and checking progress revealed that principals used different leadership styles to interact with their staff. Also, most participants' answers were general to the school population when asked how their principal set goals for their grade level or school towards inclusion.

Theme 2: Leader Encouragement

Theme 2 was: The leader encourages teamwork among teachers for meeting expectations by offering reinforcement. Participants were asked to describe how their principals encouraged them to become involved in the school, communicated teamwork expectations, and rewarded or acknowledged their efforts in working with inclusion students. Commonly verbalized responses by participants from the interview were categorized into the theme of the leader encourages teamwork among teachers to meet expectations by offering reinforcement (positive/negative). In this theme, as in the earlier theme, teachers' answers were general to the general education classroom even though the questions were directed towards an inclusive learning environment.

Transactional Leadership

There were participants whose principals encouraged teacher involvement in accomplishing school goals and encouraged teachers to cooperate to meet goals using a

reward system. For participant Jasmine, the reward for her efforts as well as her peers was verbal praise, "We definitely get a lot of recognition and encouragement for meeting the data goals and for supporting our students the best that we can." When asked about teamwork amongst the staff to address the needs of inclusion students, Jasmine shared that the staff is expected to work together to help all students. "Same as with everything we do, it is expected we all work together to best help all students." Participant Scilla mentioned something similar to Jasmine when she said, "Collaboration is definitely encouraged with the special educator to make sure that goals are met."

Passive Avoidant Leadership

Some participants described encouragement for teamwork as coming from sources other than their principal. In some instances, participants were directed to more qualified staff members to answer questions and get advice on inclusion or special education. Participant Jasmine shared that she might get help from special educators during a staff meeting. "We have had some staff meetings where the IEP chair and other special educators have given us ideas to use to modify assignments, as necessary." Giving suggestions on whom to speak to is one way Marigold described her principal. "She [the principal] suggests collaborative conversations, and she recommends whom I should speak to on the special ed team." Still, some principals did not offer any direction towards teamwork or encouragement. For example, Lilac shared that "Help usually comes from special educators, not administrators" Or "Suggestions usually come from the special educators or teammates, not the principal."

Transformational Leadership

A few participants described principal behaviors associated with the transformational leadership style, particularly idealized influence and intellectual stimulation. These behaviors included instilling intrinsic value for teachers in completing organizational objectives and cooperating in completing goals that benefit inclusive students. For example, Jasmine's principal demonstrated idealized influence behaviors to encourage teacher participation. Jasmine said, "The principal doesn't, always, but sometimes, she'll sit in on IEP meetings, and then that's where she'll offer suggestions and support for us." Mallow shared, "We have the ILT [Instructional Leadership Team] we talk about instructional strategies to meet the needs of students. Overall population data and special ed. twice a month." Azalea shared similar sentiments.

I guess maybe just encouraging me to make sure that I attend as many collaborative planning meetings with grade levels as I can to make sure that they are feeling that there's teamwork going on and they feel like they're being supported, with the teamwork and not just doing it by themselves.

Theme 3: Leader Granting Autonomy and Independence

Theme 3 was: The leader communicates support for inclusion teachers and instruction by granting autonomy and independence. For this theme, there were three sub-themes in the data. They are (a) support through feedback, (b) support through delegation and resources, and (c) support through independence and autonomy. Participants were asked to share if they had experienced any challenges in the inclusion classroom and how their principal helped them overcome these challenges. Despite the challenges that

participants stated they faced in the inclusion classroom; participants also shared that they received support from their administrators.

Support through Feedback

 Participants were asked to share how their principal helped them overcome challenges or supported them in the inclusion classroom. Some participants responded that their principals supported them by providing rewards and feedback on instructional strategies directly addressing concerns when they first occurred.

Participant Orchid stated that her principal attempted to engage with issues directly. Orchid explained, "Typically, any concerns that I have, she attends to the issues directly. If she is busy at the time, then it is forwarded to the vice principal or other front office staff for help." Orchid also talked about how her principal got involved with challenges involving problematic students. She mentioned that students who have IEPs that are violent, disruptive, need frequent breaks, or are not medicated are sometimes referred to a special room. However, her principal will step in when those resource rooms are not available. She said, "Sometimes, she will ask that I send them to the office where she will attempt on her own to try and calm them down."

Another participant, Lilac, spoke about her principal providing feedback based on instructional observations. She said, "Informal and formal observation feedback which are done face to face." Like Lilac, Jasmine stated, "she [principal] has been supportive. If she is not able to or cannot answer a question that one of us have, she will find the answer or direct us to the IEP [Individualized Educational Program] chair so that we can get some clarity.

Support Through Delegation and Resources

Other participants detailed their principal appearing to offer indirect support by directing the participants to "more qualified" staff members when they had issues. Daisies mentioned that her principal provides support indirectly. "There're other people in the building to support. I think she puts people in place to give that support." Like Daisies, when Lily was asked how her principal supports her in the inclusion classroom, she stated other people who provide assistance. Lily said, "Our IEP chair, a specialist from the district, and the SPED resource teachers offer support."

Participant Marigold also received some support from her principal. However, the principal depended on others to provide support and help with instructional issues. Marigold stated, "She [the principal] does what she can, but she typically defers to the expertise of the special ed team." Like Marigold, Magnolia stated that "she [the principal] really kind of looks at the IEP chair to direct information." Providing indirect support through human resources and more planning time may increase role ambiguity between principals and teachers.

Participant Lily talked about her principal providing resources and facilitating collaborative sessions between the teacher and other staff members to create solutions to meet challenges in the inclusion classroom. Lily said, "She has given out resources and tools such as websites that could help with meeting students' needs." "She [also] assigned one of the educational associates to help with small group planning." Finally, Daisies says this about her principal,

She's trying to turn every stone over, especially with our students in the special

education department who need extra accommodation because they've been

unseen for so long and haven't been given the support that they needed for a very

long time.

Support through Autonomy and Independence

In some responses, participants spoke about principals supporting them by

allowing them to make decisions that would impact their classroom without necessarily

seeking permission from the principal. Participants felt that their principals gave support

by providing them with autonomy or independence when meeting the needs of their

students with disabilities in the inclusion classroom. For example, Magnolia expressed

that her principal "allows us freedom to do what we want in the big scheme of things."

Magnolia explained that with the freedom to manage her time, she attempts to meet the

needs of her inclusion students in small groups:

So, the first 15 minutes lesson and there's four individual groups as we can pretty

much do whatever we need to do in those four groups to get our kids where they

need to go. She gives us the freedom to design our own manipulatives and stuff

that would be best for that group. I don't have all my inclusion students together,

obviously; I have one in one group and then one in another group.

Azalea, who has dual roles as a fifth grade ELA inclusion teacher and special

education resource person, felt that autonomy over her time was the support she

appreciated. "I think maybe allowing me to make my own schedule and allowing me to

alter that schedule as I need to alter it." Azalea further explained that her principal gives

her the freedom to make decisions, "So, she doesn't tell us no or make decisions for us."
Indirect supervision from principals is a form of support for teachers. Azalea shared, "So,
she hasn't really been super strict she's trusted my choices in terms of managing my
time." When asked about her successes in implementing inclusion in the classroom,
Azalea stated, "she encourages independence. I guess it's like supportive without being
too controlling cause she does allow me to make my own decisions and have some
autonomy."

In summation, all participants perceived that their principals' behaviors were
supportive of them, other teachers, and classroom instruction in the inclusive classroom.
Based on participants' perspectives, principals attempt to address their concerns for all
students receiving a quality education and not just inclusive students by supporting
teachers. Similar findings were reported in a study completed by Allen, Grigsby, and
Peters (2015). The authors concluded that administrators who support instruction and
students positively impact the quality of instruction presented to students in the
classroom. Billingsley et al. (2017) shared that the role of the principal is essential in
promoting the achievement of students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom.
Support may differ in appearance depending on the individual principal's leadership
behaviors. However, the teachers perceive that they are receiving support.

Discrepant Case

According to Patton (2002), reporting a negative or discrepant case in a study
ensures its credibility. Yin (2011) stated that identifying misleading or misguided
information in your data should be reported and strengthens a research study. In this

particular study, there was one discrepant case. The participant did not know the answers to many of the questions posed. In one instance, she said, "Is it bad that, I honestly don't know?" In another question, the participant stated that she was not sure how the principal promoted teamwork toward inclusion implementation. "So, I don't know how much of it comes from him, but I'm at one of those schools that closed, and the staff merge with another school." Enchanters went on to say that she does not know how her principal motivates or supports her but later on said that he was supportive of her. "Anything we need, he'll do. I mean, honestly, anything we need, he'll do. If we need to purchase alternative texts, he'll do it. He's amazingly supportive. He really is."

The participant's answers were conflicted, as she described two different sets of behaviors from her principal. The participant was contacted for further clarification. She verified that she referred to two principals, present and past when answering the interview questions. This was because she was teaching at a school recently shut down and is currently with a different principal at a new school. She further explained that she thought of both principals during the interview and gave a mix of both administrators when responding to questions. The participant was not specific about what answers or how many of her answers were specific to her current principal. However, the participant maintained that her current principal at the end of the conversation is very supportive. Because of the participant's inconsistency, Enchanter's data are reported here but excluded from the study's overall data analysis. The case is important and is explained here because it has helped me realize that leader behavior may often depend on the context or situation in which it occurs (Bass, 1998).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Engaging participants with the data analysis can confirm credibility in a qualitative study to assess the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2013). For this study, credibility was established by using the measures of member checking and peer review. Member checking involves allowing participants to review the draft findings for accuracy (Merriam, 2009). I engaged in a two-step process for member checking. In the first step, I emailed participants a copy of their transcript to check for accuracy and email me their changes. Participants were given 5 days to check the accuracy of their answers to the interview questions. In the email, teacher participants were informed to email me any changes. Two participants responded to my email, stating they did not wish to make any changes. The other participants did not respond. The second step necessary to ensure credibility required that I emailed each participant a two-page summary of the draft findings for member checking. Participants were given one week to review the findings and email me any changes. No revisions to the findings were necessary.

The second measure that I took to ensure credibility was peer review. Peer review utilizes an outsider unfamiliar with the study to check the accuracy of the research process (Creswell, 2013). For this process, I used an educational colleague who is also a doctoral student. The colleague first provided feedback on the interview questions and secondly on the analysis of the data.

Transferability

Transferability can be defined as how the findings in a qualitative study can apply to similar situations by the reader (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To ensure transferability, I thoroughly reported and described this study. This study is limited to elementary general education teachers who teach in an urban school district in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Purposeful sampling was used to recruit general education teachers who teach in the inclusive classroom with a semistructured interview approach to collect data. For analysis, an inductive approach using a priori and open coding was used to understand teachers' perspectives of the support they receive from principals in the inclusion classroom. Coding, category, and theme development using examples of participant data were thoroughly explained to increase transferability. Using the descriptions provided in this study, a reader would determine whether the findings in this study are transferable to their situation.

Dependability

Dependability is how stable and reliable the process of collecting data is in a study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). For this study, dependability was obtained through audit trails and the use of a peer reviewer. In conducting audit trails, every choice and the reasoning for the choices were explained in detail throughout the analysis. Changes to the study were documented and recorded in a journal. Initially, 5-6 administrators were proposed for this study; however, no principals responded to the invitation. Another change that was recorded was the change in interview format. Interviews were supposed to take place face to face. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the collection

process changed to telephone interviews. However, data collection is considered

dependable since the interview protocol used was consistent across all participants.

Participants were asked the same questions in the same order. I also utilized a colleague

in a doctoral program as a peer reviewer. This was done to ensure the data's accuracy

through the development of codes, themes, and the study's findings. Using these two

measures, I illustrated the dependability of this study.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to confidence in the findings of the study. This study was

confirmed by using reflexivity. Reflexivity helps ensure that the study is not affected by

the researcher's bias (Yin, 2011). I used a reflexive journal to detail the data collection

procedures and analysis before, during, and after the process began. Constant evaluation

of the interview recordings and transcriptions helped to keep the data clear and free of

biases.

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Summary

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In this chapter, I described the setting for data collection and described in detail

the steps taken during data collection. The data analysis process and the steps taken to

code participant responses accurately are also explained in full detail. In conclusion, I

explained the results of the study and addressed evidence of trustworthiness.

This basic qualitative study examined teachers' perspectives to identify

administrators' behaviors that support them in the inclusive classroom. The data

collection method for this study was a semistructured phone interview with 12 teachers.

Ten teachers were from different schools, with the remaining two at the same school but

on different grade levels. An in-depth analysis of participants' responses was used to answer the research question. Data were analyzed using two phases of coding, which resulted in six themes initially, with three themes consolidated into one theme. There was a total of three themes after data analysis was completed. For the first theme, it was concluded based on data analysis that administrators' behaviors in supporting teachers in the inclusive classroom centered around their ability to communicate goals, check progress, and set expectations for teachers. For theme two, teachers perceived that their administrators communicated expectations for teamwork amongst staff. They also pushed encouragement for teacher participation in the learning community. These administrators push support for teachers and instruction by providing guidance and resources when needed. Teachers are also reminded that when expectations are met, they will be rewarded for their efforts. Lastly, in theme three, administrators gave their teachers the independence and autonomy to make the decisions that best meet their students' needs.

Based on this study's findings, administrators support teachers in their buildings to support students in inclusive classrooms. However, participants' responses demonstrated that the level of support is not the same for all administrative leadership styles. Some administrators provided material support, while others turned to human resources by deferring to special educators or IEP chairs as a central point of information for their teachers. Participants' responses also showed that some administrators involved teachers in goal setting for the school or grade levels. In contrast, other administrators told the teachers what the goals and expectations were for the school. Also, the timing of when expectations were shared was not consistent among all leadership styles, which

may impact the prioritization of inclusive students' needs. Overall, administrators are

attempting to support their teachers; it is evident from the teachers' perspective that their

support varies from school to school. In Chapter 5, I will address the findings, limitations

of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusion of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore general education teachers' perspectives of administrator support in the elementary inclusion classroom. In this chapter, I will interpret the findings and discuss their implications and the study's limitations. I will also offer recommendations before providing a conclusion to the study. The research question for this study was, What are elementary teachers' perspectives of administrators' behaviors that support general education teachers in the inclusion classroom? Participant data were coded and organized into three themes. Based on participants' perspectives, principals do not simply use transformational leadership behaviors to support teachers in the inclusion classroom. They also use behaviors based on transactional leadership and passive avoidant leadership. Also, participant responses detailed that principals' behaviors are not always perceived as effective support.

Interpretation of the Findings

The data and subsequent analysis of this research study allowed me to come to several conclusions about teachers' perceptions of administrative support, the effects on teachers' ability to instruct in the inclusive classroom, and the differentiation of administrative support. In the following paragraphs, I present the findings based on the themes developed during the analysis.

In Theme 1, participants described administrators based on how they communicate goals, set expectations, and check on the progress of these goals and expectations. One of the primary sources from which principals draw their goals and expectations for the inclusive classroom are district mandates for schools. These

mandates ultimately come from the district's interpretation of IDEA, a set of laws that govern inclusion and disabled children's education (U.S. Department of Education, 2018)). From IDEA, the school district works with an appointed special education team to create IEPs that school administrators must communicate and reinforce how to follow its accommodations and objectives with their teachers.

However, in this study, I found that administrators communicate and reinforce expectations based on their leadership behaviors. Participants who had principals exhibiting transactional behaviors were said to have spent time setting and reinforcing expectations. This is in line with literature stating that transactional leaders explicitly state and clarify subordinate roles and expectations so that goals are understood by all (Avolio, 2005; Avolio & Bass, 1995). This behavior may help teachers understand their roles and responsibilities in education that help them meet organizational goals (Prasad & Junni, 2016). Teachers may find understanding and meeting the needs of inclusive students daunting as they are unsure how to do so. Having a principal who clearly defines their role and expectations in this area may be seen as support. This can also be viewed as support for some teachers as their principal eliminates potential frustration in defining their role as the teacher of inclusive students. For example, Daisies stated this about her principal, "My principal typically looks at the data from the previous year and see what our strengths and weaknesses are from that year to give us a projection of what we want to aim for the next school year."

Clearly defined roles may also show teachers what to implement and how to implement inclusion within their classrooms. For teachers new to teaching or inclusion,

this guidance may be viewed as support and greatly appreciated. Participants also described principals who displayed passive avoidant leadership behaviors, which resulted in minimal time spent in goal setting or unclear goal setting. Participants also described their principal as giving minimal or no reinforcement to their unclearly defined goals. This behavior pattern has been documented in scholarly literature. When goals and expectations are not established, passive avoidant leaders may also demonstrate little to no reinforcement for meeting school goals (Naresh & Krishna, 2017). However, in this study, despite undefined goal setting and unclear reinforcement from administrators, participants whose principals behaved this way did not say their principal was unsupportive. Although the exact reason for this was not explored during the interview, one possible explanation for this is the compatibility factor of passive avoidant leadership behaviors with expert subordinates. Passive avoidant leaders tend to pair well with expertly trained or experienced subordinates who may develop more creative solutions to organizational issues under their leadership (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019). Magnolia stated, "we can pretty much do whatever we need to do to get our kids where they need to go." These creative solutions may be better able to aid students because teachers can directly respond to classroom needs.

Finally, there were participants with principals who demonstrated transformational behaviors by explicitly communicating goals, expectations, and reinforced goals by motivating teachers to meet the school's goals. This behavior aligns with the construct of inspirational motivation from the transformational leadership style. In inspirational motivation, transformational leaders share their goals for the organization

and motivate followers to help meet these goals by creating intrinsic value in goal

completion (Prasad & Junni, 2016). This inspiration is often coupled with support from

transformational leaders that enables followers to meet these goals. Additionally,

participants reported being informed and receiving regular "check-ins" to ensure

resources were used appropriately and that there was progress in completing the goals.

Participants may view inspirational motivation behaviors for creating and monitoring

goals as having a supportive principal. This behavior from principals may increase

teacher productivity (Berkovich & Eyal, 2019). Teachers may look to model their

strategies and solutions for inclusive children around both given resources and their

principal's expectations toward inclusion goals (Baptiste, 2019). For example, when it

came to goal setting for inclusive students and making sure those goals are met, Orchid

stated,

> She typically makes her goals very clear during staff meetings in terms of what
>
> her expectations are for special education students. She will pretty much tell us
>
> where she expects the children to be by a certain time in the year.

Setting clearly defined goals that are achievable is a characteristic of transformational

leaders; therefore, teachers in that environment may view their principals as supportive of

them.

In Theme 2, participants shared how their principal communicated their

expectations for teamwork among staff members and encouraged teacher participation.

Principals displaying transactional behaviors appear to use previously established goals,

roles, and expectations to create a reward system to motivate teachers to meet school

targets. This behavior is in line with the reward contingent transactional leadership style. Reward contingent leaders use agreed-upon rewards to motivate workers to give satisfactory work performance (Khan, 2017). For teachers who may like or require rewards for meeting agreed-upon adequate performance measures, this behavior from a principal can positively affect teachers. Principals who use reward contingent behaviors by providing external rewards like verbal praise help increase teacher involvement and cooperation among staff members in meeting school goals (Rana et al., 2016). In addition, proper motivation for meeting school ambitions of cooperation and participation for the inclusion classroom may also positively affect students. When teachers are appropriately motivated, their work performance increases, leading to increased student performance on standardized testing (Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2019; Sayadi, 2016).

However, some principals were described as using other methods to encourage teacher participation and cooperation. In the case of principals demonstrating passive avoidant behaviors, administrators left teacher participation and cooperation up to the teachers. Another behavior was principals maintaining an "open door" policy where teachers were encouraged to ask questions about meeting school objectives. These behaviors are linked to the passive avoidant leadership style. In passive avoidant, leaders are resistant to providing direction to followers. However, they remain open to answering questions and providing resources to followers to help them meet organizational goals (Naresh & Krishna, 2017). This resistance to directly creating teacher relationships— which may be the foundation for teacher cooperation and meeting school goals—may have a positive result. Passive avoidant behaviors can be beneficial in encouraging

teamwork among staff members. Teachers may feel that cooperation is not forced but developed from a genuine relationship within the group (Nazim & Mahmood, 2016). Therefore, teachers will have to rely on each other's knowledge, advice, and support to meet school objectives (Barling & Frone, 2017). This then generates the needed cooperation among teachers to meet school goals as they work with one another.

Additionally, a teacher may perceive their principal as supportive when they display an open door attitude, allowing teachers to receive instruction, gain resources and strategies when they need them (Nazim & Mahmood, 2016). This may allow teachers to choose how they will participate in accomplishing school objectives. In combination with allowing genuine relationships to foster, teachers will also work together to accomplish tasks within the inclusion classroom.

Still, some principals displayed transformational behaviors when working with their teachers. In this case, principals were viewed as displaying the constructs of idealized influence and intellectual stimulation. Leaders set high standards and model examples for idealized influence, and employees return this behavior with trust and respect, creating organizational pride and motivation for meeting organizational goals (Rana et al., 2016). For intellectual stimulation, open discussions help increase innovation, creativity, and cooperation in the workplace (Rana et al., 2016). When transformational behaviors are applied in the workplace, specifically intellectual stimulation and idealized influence, principals can increase teacher involvement in meeting goals (Rana et al., 2016). These two behaviors help teachers to work with one another and by themselves to meet school targets. Teachers who received such supports

in implementing curricula, instructional materials, classroom management, and clear expectations communicated that they felt more comfortable with their inclusion students (Mngo & Mngo, 2018). Teachers also viewed their principal as supportive. The administrator gave clear examples of accomplishing goals and room to find creative ways to duplicate that example uniquely. These creative solutions are likely to be based on the emergent needs of teachers' inclusive classrooms, ensuring that students receive the exact help they need for their issues.

Last, for Theme 3, based on participant data principals seemed to demonstrate only passive avoidant leadership behaviors. Participant responses aligned with Avolio's (2005) description of passive avoidant leaders who demonstrate laisse-faire behaviors. These leaders can be described as ones who abdicate their responsibilities by offering staff the freedom to do as they see fit (Bass et al., 2003; Naresh & Krishna, 2017). Participants' responses indicated that some principals trusted their teachers' skill levels to do what they (teachers) believe is in their students' best interest. This trust often left teachers to create their solutions towards the inclusion classroom. At the same time, the principals provided resources as needed. This is in line with Nazim and Mahmood's (2016) conclusion that employees experiencing such freedom can increase their creativity in the classroom. Principals behaving in such ways also allow teachers to directly influence the classroom and how school objectives are met, which may be constructive. Makgato and Mudzanani (2019) explained that teachers receiving this form of support take ownership of their classroom and feel a sense of accomplishment when working

with their inclusion students. So, students may be the recipient of creatively devised planning, which may increase student achievement.

Thus, a chief finding throughout the study was that administrators communicated and reinforced expectations that encouraged teacher participation and cooperation and gave teachers autonomy based on their leadership behaviors. Despite varying leadership behaviors, participants consistently mentioned their principal as supportive of them in these areas. This may have occurred because teachers may have varying needs from their principal in the inclusion classroom. From participant responses, principals are tailoring their behavioral responses to individual needs and situations, which results in different leadership behaviors. These tailored responses may allow teachers to receive adequate autonomy, creative space, and resources while ensuring that roles and responsibilities to the inclusive classroom are met. In addition, because these responses are tailored to both individuals and circumstances, teachers may feel supported by their principal in the inclusive classroom because they behave in ways that communicate support to that teacher. According to the literature, when administrators' instructional practices support teachers, teachers are more likely to feel more confident in the inclusion classroom (Mngo & Mngo, 2018). The findings in this study are clear in that teachers need to feel supported when working with inclusive students in the general education classroom regardless of the leadership behaviors that principals may exhibit.

Limitations of the Study

I made every effort to establish the trustworthiness of this study through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. However, this study has

some limitations regarding selecting this study's participants, timing, data collection, researcher bias, and the exclusion of principals from this study. There is a limitation in the study's sample, as a purposive sampling method was used to interview 12 elementary inclusive teachers in one school district located in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The sample's limitation to a specific urban school district restrains the generalizability of other areas. Next, there is the limitation of researcher bias as I am a teacher in the school district sampled for this study. However, a reflexive journal was kept to minimize researcher bias during data collection, and entries were made after participant interviews were held to keep any potential biases in check. Finally, there was a limitation in principal participation in this study. Initially, the proposed participants included inclusive elementary school teachers and principals, but no principals chose to join the study. This limited participant data collection from principals and teachers to only teachers. As principals did not participate, this limited the study's ability to answer the second proposed research question about how principals perceived they supported teachers in the inclusive setting. As a result, the study addressed only the research question about teachers' perspectives on principals supporting behaviors for the inclusion classroom. Additionally, because only teachers' perceptions were explored in this study, the findings may not be all-inclusive in other schools.

Recommendations

I explored the perspectives of general education elementary teachers who teach in the inclusion classroom about the support that they receive from their principals. There are several recommendations for future research studies and other opportunities. Though

there is abundant research on inclusion implementation in classrooms (e.g., Cameron, 2016; DeMatthews et al., 2020; McLeskey, 2020; McLeskey & Waldron, 2015; Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2018), the research on teachers' and administrator's perspectives of support for teachers in the inclusion classroom is limited. McLeskey (2020) stated that the need for principals to engage in training to be better instructional leaders in the inclusive classroom needs to be addressed. The first recommendation for a future study would be one in the same purview as this study. There is a lack of research regarding teachers' perspectives of administrators' supporting behaviors for the inclusive setting. Gaines and Barnes (2017) posited that lack of administrator support in special education contributes to teacher stress about inclusion students. Therefore, I further recommend that studies look at the perspectives of administrators and teachers on support for the inclusion classroom. Efforts to recruit principals for future studies are needed. A researcher may use a needs assessment survey or interest survey on inclusion to get administrators to participate in a study that looks at administrators' perspective on inclusion. Future studies that follow this same purview would provide more knowledge in this area that is not well researched.

Implications

This study's results and analysis give a foundation for future research into how administrators' leadership styles play a role in their behaviors and how teachers in the inclusive classroom perceive those behaviors. Leadership styles play a crucial role in effective leaders bringing about change in education (Berkovich & Eyal, 2019; Fullan, 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Ross & Cozzens, 2016). This study's findings can aid

school leaders to understand further what supports are adequate for inclusion education to be successful. This study's findings may further encourage administrators to understand that support is not a singular, universal behavior but rather a diversified set of behaviors that should be used accurately to meet inclusive teachers' needs and situations. This study may assist school districts leaders in considering teachers' perspectives on how administrators set goals for inclusion students to meet the mandates of IDEA. Also, this study can help district leaders understand how administrators motivate and provide support for teachers in the inclusion classroom. Thus, district leaders may acquire knowledge of how to train both teachers and administrators in special education to eliminate issues in the inclusion classroom potentially. Last, this study can inspire social change by elevating the expectations and perspectives of teachers, administrators, and district leaders on best practices that support teachers who work with special education students. This study's limitations of having only teachers drives the need for further research on administrators' best practices that will support teachers in the inclusive classroom. By elevating the expectations and perspectives of these parties to the best practices, teachers, administrators, and district leaders can work collaboratively to create a more equitable learning experience for inclusive students in the classroom.

Conclusion

Administrators are the key to student success through the support they provide to teachers (Makgato & Mudzanani, 2019; Nash & Bangert, 2014; Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013). This study provides new knowledge on teachers' perspectives of the support they receive from administrators in the inclusion classroom. The data presented

in this study may provide administrators direction as to how they can better support

teachers in the inclusion classroom to raise the academic achievement of special

education students in the general education setting.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Research Question: What are elementary teachers' perspectives of administrators'

behaviors that support general education teachers in the inclusion classroom?

Part of the interview	Interview prompt and/or questions
Introduction	Hi _____. Thank you very much for helping me with my study. As you know, the purpose of this interview is to talk about administrators' perspectives of their behaviors that support teachers in the inclusion classroom. This should last about 45-60 minutes. Remember this interview will be audio recorded for analysis purposes only. However, I will not identify you in any documents, and no one will be able to identify you with your answers. You can choose to stop this interview at any time. • Do you have any questions? • Are you ready to begin?
Demographics:	1. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed? 2. What grade do you currently teach? How long have you taught that grade? 3. What other grades have you taught? 4. How much training in special education have you received?

Part of the interview	Interview prompt and/or question
Parts of the interview aligned to framework	Interview Questions
Inspirational Motivation: (motivate and inspire)	1. How does your principal set goals for your grade level or the school towards inclusion? 2. How does your principal at your school emphasize teamwork among the staff regarding inclusion? 3. How does your principal include you in creating curriculum targets for your inclusive students? 4. How does your principal motivate you to meet the needs of all students in the classroom?
Idealized influence: (set high moral standards, consider others, and communicate high expectations)	1. How does your principal establish high expectations for you in the inclusion classroom? 2. What format of communication has been established between your principal and you about inclusive students? 3. What challenges have you experienced in implementing inclusion successfully? How did your administrator help you overcome those challenges?
Intellectual stimulation: (stimulate followers to be creative)	1. How does your principal support you in developing creative ways to work with inclusion students in your class? 2. How would you describe your principal's behaviors in helping you to be successful in implementing inclusion in your classroom? 3. What resources are provided by your principal about inclusion/special education? (i.e., books, videos, journals)

Part of the interview	Interview prompt and/or question
Individualized Consideration: (attentive, coach or mentor to develop staffs' potential)	1. How does your principal address your concerns about inclusion/special education? 2. Please share some of the ways that your principal coaches or mentors you to meet the needs of your inclusive students. 3. What are some of the ways that your principal acknowledges teacher efforts in special education?
Close	1. Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study. Your cooperation, time, and participation are appreciated. 2. Do you have any questions for me? 3. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact me at Lynda.davis@waldenu.edu

Probing Questions

Could you tell me more about_____?

What would that look like?

How has your approach to inclusion changed over time?

What kind of feedback have you received in implementing inclusion?

Appendix B: Participant Data

Under each theme, participant data that were not used in the document are reported. In parentheses, the participants' pseudonyms and leadership styles are identified. Data are also grouped by participant for each theme.

Key: TL = transformational leadership, TA = transactional leadership, PA = passive avoidant leadership.

Theme 1: The leader communicates goals, expectations for the school and checks progress.
At the beginning of the year, the principal reviews what the goals are for the school with staff. (Keli Flower. TL)
During those initial planning conferences. We talked about the different populations where they're at and where we want them to go. (Enchanters. PA)
Our principal does learning walks on a regular basis. Also, she checks lesson plans and during collaborative planning, we discuss ways to ensure that we plan lessons to ensure that all students learn. (Lily.TL) After the learning walks, we get feedback on things we are doing well and things we need to improve. Recently, our focus/ goal was accommodation. (Lily. TA) We have meetings during professional development and staff meetings. (Lily.PA) Our principal provides updates in staff meetings and in newsletters (Lily. TL)
We have almost weekly meetings just her and I or sometimes the both of us and the IEP chairperson where we talk about like grade level goals for students with disabilities. As well as individual calls addressing the curriculum, grade level standards while still addressing goals and objectives. She will try to assist us in seeking additional help for those challenges. Weekly conversations with me about what's going on and conversations to help push my thinking and the questions that she asked. (Azalea. TL) She emails a lot, but then as I mentioned before, we have pretty regular meetings. I would say face to face is probably the best way and also the most effective way (Azalea.PA)

She sits in on a lot of those meetings so that she can kind of jump in and give input where necessary. She's really good at making time for our special educator to try and come around and make sure that she's there and available to us. (Scilla. TA)
(principal) by setting Student learning targets and adaptive teaching plans for teaching content. (Lilac. TA)
Usually during a staff meeting or team meeting they emphasized that we have high expectations for all students. (Marigold. TA) We talk about all the children, not just the inclusive students. It's either in person or occasional emails. (Marigold. TA) I think that she does a good job of asking, do you have any questions about anything? She would explain anything to you. (Magnolia. TL)
My principal typically looks at the data from the previous year and see what our strengths and weaknesses are from that year to give us a projection what we want to aim for the next school year. (Daisies. TA) So, I think removing our personal feelings and our personal struggles and make it about the children more (Daisies. TA) She basically tells us this it is what we have to do, and every child deserves a proper education. For the most part, she tells us that this is what we have to do. (Daisies. TA) I think the most important part that she always makes it is not about how we feel. (Daisies. TA)
She typically will do so via email or at times when she pops in for a lesson; she actually leaves notes or feedback on our actually lesson plan. (Orchid. TA) I think it's done through her monitoring of progress monthly. She's very adamant about providing regular feedback through those observations. (Orchid. TA) She comes to my classroom very often to observe, and from that, she will offer specific professional advice based on what she's seen in the class. Again, if she is not available, the vice principal will do the same. (Orchid. TA) She typically makes her goals very clear during staff meetings in terms of what her expectations are for special education students. (Orchid. TL) She will pretty much tell us where she expects the children to be by a certain time in the year. (Orchid.TL)
We are invited, though, to attend planning meetings when SIP (School Improvement Plan) is being drafted. (Jasmine. TL) The principal has been a support since day one. Checking in on myself and checking in on the student, as well as keeping in contact with the parent and attending all of this child's meetings. (Jasmine. TA)

Theme 2: The leader encourages teamwork among teachers for meeting expectations by offering reinforcement.
I guess maybe just encouraging me to make sure that I attend as many collaborative planning meetings with grade levels as I can to make sure that they are feeling that there's teamwork going on and they feel like they're being supported, with the teamwork and not just doing it by themselves. (Azalea, PA)
We have the ILT we talk about instructional strategies to meet the needs of students. (Mallow. TL) We meet like twice a month. (Mallow. TL) We go over data, small groups, pull students, differentiation of instruction. (Mallow. TL)
She's facilitated some meetings or some like round tables with the special educators so that we can get their insight into things. (Scilla. TL) I think a lot of what she does is facilitate the meeting of the minds between special educators and the general educators. (Scilla. TL)
Information presented special educators or academic coach during professional development meetings (Lilac. PA) Special educators meeting with grade levels weekly to discuss students and curriculum (Lilac. PA)
They encourage us to work with the special educators and collaborate together (Marigold, PA)
She asked the IEP chair and SPED resource teachers to collaborate with general Ed teachers to provide information (Lily. TL)
Most of the time, we will have an email, which will then lead to a team meeting (Daisies. TA)
We have grade level team meetings biweekly (Keli Flower. PA)
I think that one of the things that she does is try to push my thinking. So, if I have a goal, and I set a goal, she will sometimes ask me some questions about my goals. She'll ask me questions to kind of like, make sure that whatever the goals that I am setting are actually, you know, higher level and rigorous goals and that I'm not cycling. (Azalea. TL) We talk about the successes or challenges that were faced in that particular week. And so, I think just allowing me the space to be able to reflect out loud with someone else has been supportive. (Azalea. TL)
I think she just been supportive of any concerns I would have or that I would go to her with. (Jasmine.TL) The principal has been very positive and encouraging, just very, very motivating all around. (Jasmine.TL)

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I think he would be open. (Enchanters.TL) He listened, like to genuinely listen. If I have a concern, or I have an idea or I have something I want to try, he is okay with. And if he can't make it happen immediately, he'll say, let's come back to it. (Enchanters.TL)
She gives weekly shout-outs to particular teachers throughout the week! (Jasmine. TL)
He recognizes what we do, I don't know those informal observations all the time and he give positive feedback (Enchanters. TL)
And she's definitely very open about what you are doing well and what you need to improve (Orchid. TL) She'll publicly praise certain teachers, that's usually based on things such as assessments scores going up. (Orchid. TA)
She'll write little compliments to those to teachers in their mailboxes, or she'll send you a text one night if she came into your room and noticed you were doing something good. (Magnolia, TL) Definitely, during the feedback, I do notice he will acknowledge teachers for positive things that he sees in the classroom and data movement. A lot of times that takes place during staff meetings; he'll provide us with shout outs. (Magnolia. TL)
She does offers incentives for the kids who improve in their learning (Marigold. PA) She does give verbal compliments and sometimes written shout outs in the staff newsletter (Marigold. TA)
Shout outs, positive scores during observations. (Lilac. TA)
She does shout out through emails and through announcements or sometimes at faculty meetings. If that data has had any gains or anything like that, she does try to do shout outs with teachers. (Azalea. TA)

Theme 3: The leader communicates support for teachers and instruction through autonomy and independence.
She might give me a suggestion as to what I can improve on, which is two to three times a year. (Keli Flower. PA) I guess just general feedback and also listening to my feedback. (Keli Flower. PA) (She) would likely refer to our IEP chair. (Keli Flower. PA)
If there was anything that I was really struggling with, she would do her best to help me or give me other people that I could maybe talk to that might know more than she does about that particular area or something like that. (Azalea. PA) She emails a lot, but then as I mentioned before, we have pretty regular meetings. I would say face to face is probably the best way and also the most effective way. (Azalea. PA)
My principal, he encourages small groups; that is how he supported me. (Mallow. PA) He is very supportive; I can say that. When he sees more student interaction and less teacher talk, he is happy with that as well. He gives us a lot of websites and sends it to us by email or in the mailboxes. He was a special educator, actually, so sometimes he would suggest strategies that he used in his classroom. So, he uses his personal experience. He doesn't demonstrate, but he will assist students if they are struggling. Sometimes he will work with students. He will get involve in the lesson to push students thinking, which you know I can appreciate. (Mallow.TL)
Our principal typically meets with the IEP department, and they tell us what we need to do. She'll reference something that another grade teacher is doing if I'm struggling implementing something on the metric, she'll refer me to another teacher that is actually doing it well. There're other people in the building to support. I think she puts people in place to give that support. (Daisies. PA)
She marks on her calendar to come back for an observation the next time that the special educators that stay in my room (Magnolia. TL) She'll email if she's really worried about a student inclusion or not. She'll ask for a meeting. Just run it by you and ask questions. Text messages (Magnolia. TL) She's always asking about if we have any questions. she's always open to that type of questions. (Magnolia. TL) she is constantly reviewing the data, so we have to upload all of our modules scores. (Magnolia.TL) She comes to get our grade books, and she's constantly looking at data. (Magnolia.TL) she would like to try and come up with a solution. If it was like a behavior problem, she will pull in their parents with a meeting with her and our director of culture and climate. (Magnolia. TL) She would talk to our teacher, our resource, and our special educators (Magnolia. TL) She doesn't make exceptions for whether the student has an IEP. She would ask, what are you going to do? (Magnolia. PA)

She can be helpful, diligent Our principal highly emphasizes the importance of meeting the needs of all learners through lesson planning for small and whole group instruction. (Lily. TA)
She's been really willing to have us take up additional professional development opportunity. She's been really good about finding the time or coverage for me to go to them (PD). (Scilla. TL) But typically, with talking and through email. (Scilla. PA)
I think she just been supportive of any concerns I would have or that I would go to her with. (Jasmine. TL) She definitely makes herself available to answer questions as best as she can. (Jasmine. TA)
She said she would help me if it is needed.
He observes, he sees, we're doing the curriculum, he sees the kids engaged, he sees that they're learning, sees all that stuff and he kind of is just like, whatever you need, I'm going to support you instead. Try it your way. Make it work for you. (Enchanters. TL) He's supportive, he sees it, he supports the kids, like if my kids do something and they want to share it with him, they share with him, and he gives them feedback he really honestly is an amazing principal. (Enchanters. PA) Anything we need, he'll do. I mean, honestly, anything we need, he'll do. If we need to purchase alternative texts, he'll do it. He's very supportive of everything that we do. So, one of the things that I wanted was technology so they (students) could access different modes of the texts. So we have the technology, every student has access to technology in the classroom so they can use the resources through the technology to access the text or if they need to have the text read to them or if they need to read it and then it'd be typed in for them. But yeah, like he'll take ideas, he'll think about them and figure out how to make it, better. I'm thinking human resources. I don't know if that works but I mean we have specific teachers I guess it's like that everywhere they work with specific grade levels in the lines of communication are open. Like in the beginning of the year, we were trying to figure out how to get the books read to them. Like we worked together to kind of like get supports to them (students) to make that happen. (Enchanters. PA) I would assume because he does his best to include them in what we're doing curriculum wise. (Enchanters. PA)

We are told not to lower our expectation for them.
she's very verbal with us, we have a lot of conversations back and forth; other than that, it would be email or feedback from lesson observations.
Outside of staff meetings, formal observations, pre, and post-Ob. (observations) and things like that, she will arrange meetings with me to discuss the needs of those inclusion students. (Orchid. TL)
She'll provide us with all the support that we need.
She is very supportive, definitely open, and accessible when needed. (Orchid. TL)
she tells us during staff meetings if she can't do it herself, it will be through the vice principal, and if they can't help us, they definitely provide contact as who we should contact for help. That is typically done one on one. (Orchid. TA)

Thinking I was not going to like it, but he's allowed me to do my thing. I'm actually having the time of my life and he jokes about it all the time, like see I told you. (Enchanters. PA)

She gives us the freedom to design our own manipulatives and stuff that would be best for that group. (Magnolia. PA)

So, myself, the self-contained special educator, and the IEP chair go over how much money we have. We get to find the resources within the budget that we want to use, or we want to utilize. (Azalea. PA)
She gives us that freedom. So, she doesn't tell you no, or make decision for us. She lets us as the experts in the field tell her what resources we need, and then as long as it's in the budget, she provides that for us (Azalea. PA)