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ABSTRACT

Schools are mandated to effectively provide access to the general education curriculum, and specific instructional support necessary to all students with disabilities. Administrators must find a way to create both an accepting social and learning environment, in addition to crafting programs that successfully work toward creating academic success. This literature review will discuss (a) a school's culture as an integral aspect of the implementation of inclusion, (b) techniques and methods for further exploration in implementing inclusion, and creating a collaborative culture, and (c) challenges administrators encounter that arise from implementing inclusion and creating a collaborative, inclusive culture. Recommendations for conducting qualitative research, and to further explore the topic with current school administrators, are also offered.

INTRODUCTION

Before 1975, many states had laws that explicitly excluded children with certain types of disabilities from attending public school; such exclusions affected children who were blind, deaf, and those labeled "emotionally disturbed" or "mentally retarded." These laws reflected society's perceptions, feelings, and beliefs, and had a direct effect on the culture of the school systems. The implementation of the Education for all Handicapped Children Act, now known as Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA),

helped transform the disability-phobic culture of the 1970s into a more inclusive and positive environment for students with disabilities in public school systems.

On a national level, this transformation has made a tremendous impact on educational law and policy. Laws were enacted to ensure that all children had a free and appropriate education, creating a national set of standards for every public school to follow. Since these policies passed, schools have had to determine how they can implement the IDEA's policies. Creating a fully accepting and successfully functioning culture for all students, regardless of their differences, is a challenge that must be tailored to each individual school community. Administrators must implement disability-friendly policies without alienating the staff, faculty, students, and families of that community. Each challenge administrators face, and the methods they take to create consensus, will be different.

In this paper, the term "culture" will refer to a specific ideal of a team and/or community, as defined by Edgar H. Schein (1992) in his book *Organizational Culture and Leadership*:

> A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (p. 37).

Culture is created through individuals' perceptions, feelings, and beliefs. These perceptions, feelings, and beliefs can have a negative or positive impact on the culture of a group or community. One school's culture has an impact on how the institution operates. A great deal of the accountability regarding Special Educational services has shifted to individual school sites. Not only are administrators in charge of these services, but they are also responsible for leading their staff in creating an acceptable and nurturing environment for Special Education students. Great leaders create environments where mem-

bers feel supported, open, and intrinsically motivated to work toward
the community's mission and goals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A system that once segregated Special Education and
general education students has now become a more integrated
system. According to Lewit and Baker (1996), "Over the past two
decades, efforts to provide an appropriate education for children
with disabilities in America—through a series of state statutes, fed-
eral court cases, and federal laws—have led to the development of a
large special education system to address the needs of these children"
(p.139). With this shift, most of the responsibility has been transferred
from the district office to individual schools. Presently, administra-
tors take on much of the responsibility of administering programs that
meet the needs of students with disabilities through state mandates and
laws. Administrators must create an effective culture with their staff
and students in order to create successful programs for this population
of students.

Academic culture has both a direct and indirect impact on the
successful implementation of inclusion of special education services.
There are three levels of culture defined by Schein: *artifacts, espoused
values,* and *basic underlying assumptions. Artifacts* are described as
visible organizational structures and processes. *Espoused values* the
strategies, goals, and philosophies. *Basic underlying assumptions* are
unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and
feelings. In order for inclusion to be effective, administrators must as-
sess, analyze, and evaluate the culture in their school. Administrators
will then re-evaluate what changes need to be made to ensure a com-
munal, social, and learning culture for all members of that community.
Cook, Cook, Landrum, and Tankersley (2000) stated that the "quality
of inclusive education is, then, a primary determinant of educational
outcomes for a large and rapidly growing group of students with dis-
abilities" (p. 115). The assessment of culture is an integral piece in the
implementation of inclusion.

Lorna Idol defines inclusion as a method "when a stu-
dent with special learning and/or behavioral needs is educated full

time in the general education program," or where students are in the general school program, in an appropriate class, one-hundred percent of the day (p. 77). Cook, Cook, Landrum and Tankersley (2000) assert that "Despite the lack of unequivocal empirical support, the prevalence of inclusion has increased consistently and substantially" (p. 115). With this current trend of inclusion in the K-12 academic setting comes the challenge of how to successfully implement such a method. This responsibility lies heavily on the school administrators.

There are a number of different questions to explore in the discussion of implementing a collaborative and inclusive setting. Idol asks whether the school district developed a philosophical position on inclusion. This is one of the most disregarded, yet most important steps in building a collaborative and inclusive school culture (Idol, 1997). Idol offers an example of a school district's philosophical position on inclusion:

> The mission of the Nacogdoches Independent School District is to ensure that all children, regardless of disability, cultural background, or socioeconomic status, have available to them the resources, services, and support necessary to meet their unique individual and educational needs. The district will continually strive to provide the best educational services available. The school and community will function as a "family," to nurture and support the educational and social growth of everyone. (p. 387)

Such a position on inclusion helps build a base of support for a culture in which all students are welcome. Other questions about moving toward an inclusion model involve the ideas of parent support, the beliefs and attitudes of the teachers, financial support and ability, support for teachers, professional development, collaboration time for the implementation, knowledge of what is expected, disciplinary plans, student preparedness for the inclusive setting, and monitoring (Idol, 1997).

Four techniques have been developed for the creation of a positive culture for the entire school community through the process of inclusion: *consulting teacher models, cooperative teaching models, supportive resource programs model and instructional assistants model* (Idol, 2006, p. 78). The *consulting teacher model* is a method of indirect special education service delivery in which a special education teacher serves as a consultant to the classroom teacher. This consulting teacher also works indirectly with the targeted students by supporting the classroom teacher, sharing ideas and methods of how to help those students (Idol, 2006). The *cooperative teaching* model is a co-teaching model that involves making arrangements in the same classroom to provide educational programs for all students (Idol, 2006). The *supportive resource programs model* is a self-contained model in which students receive specific instruction outside the general education area. With this model, the general education and special education teacher collaborate to design the contents of a student's individualized program of instruction, with a resource room as a support system for what the students are already receiving in the general education classroom (Idol, 2006). With the *instruction assistant model,* a paraprofessional accompanies a special education student, who attends general education classes the entire day (Idol, 2006). The latter two models are becoming obsolete, because they are much more expensive to implement than the *consulting teacher* and *cooperative teacher* models. Models that require schools to have separate classrooms, as well as a personal teacher who attends to one individual student, are no longer cost-effective for many school districts. The *consulting teacher* and *cooperative teacher* models have become increasingly popular over time. The implementation of special education inclusion will have an impact on the cultural, social and learning environments of the entire school.

Lorna Idol's article, "Toward Inclusion of Special Education Students in General Education" (2006), describes a program evaluation of eight schools (four elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools), with two primary objectives. The first objective was to gauge the actual occurrence of students in special education being included in general education classes. The second objective was to comprehend the methods used by each

school that provided services for the students with disabilities in the "least restrictive environment" (LRE). Although "inclusion" refers to a method where students receive their entire academic curriculum as members of the general education population, Idol's rationale for this evaluation was to describe what happened in the schools as educators moved toward more inclusive methods. Both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered in this evaluation through the process of interviewing administrators, specialists and teachers in each of the schools. In total, eight schools were evaluated. Each was labeled A-H; the four primary schools were labeled A-D, and the four secondary schools (grades 6-12) labeled E-H.

For the purposes of this literature review, only the information gathered from the four secondary schools will be discussed. Of the four secondary schools, Middle School "E" had implemented a pilot program that included "flex teams." Students who were identified as struggling worked with aids to meet the statewide test objectives (Idol, 2006). Middle School "F" chose an inclusion approach that included services for general program teachers such as consulting teaching, cooperative teaching, and a curriculum and/or instructional coordinator (Idol, 2006). High school "G" implemented options of cooperative teaching, resource rooms and three self-contained rooms — two for children with emotional disturbances, and one for life skills (Idol, 2006). In high school "H," the goal was to "teach all students in the general education program and bring any student out of the classroom for assistance, whether they were or were not students with disabilities" (Idol, 2006, p. 86). The program implemented by high school "H" focused on individualized help for any student. By the end of the evaluation, Idol found that teachers prefer variations based upon all the models of inclusion. Teachers also see benefits for all students, both with and without special education needs.

Idol concluded that more professional development was necessary for each of the schools. The author found that all students benefited from inclusion, and noted that some of the methods and strategies could be useful for students with no special education needs or services. Teachers were asked about the impact of inclusion regarding seven variables: *academic skills, course*

grades, state-wide test scores, social behaviors, students' attitudes towards students with disabilities, students' attitudes towards inclusion, and *parents' attitude toward inclusion.* Data indicated that 24% of the teachers thought that the other students improved across the seven variables, 58% reported there was no impact, while 8% said they did not know whether the impact was negative or positive. The *consulting teacher* method was found useful and successful by teachers in this evaluation process.

Another model specifically geared towards the creation of a collaborative culture is the *professional development* model. This model employs in-service teachers, but focuses on the end results that administrators consider when implementing an inclusion model. This model has seen widespread growth, with more than 46% of the country's teacher preparation institutions aligning with over 600 Professional Development Schools (PDS) (Votlz, 2001, p. 288). This model appeals to the reform efforts designed to improve teacher education and professional practice (p.288). Voltz (2001) prefers Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, and Cobb's description of PDS relationships, which states that Professional Development School relationships are "collaborations between schools and universities that have been created to support the learning of prospective and experienced teachers, while simultaneously restructuring schools and schools of education" (Voltz, 2001, p. 288). Such professional development allows teachers to collaborate with graduate school students and their faculty members, providing fresh and new research methods to implement into the classroom. A PDS model also allows graduate students to gain experience before they are placed into the field. Votlz asserts that studies of the PDS model "sought to expand the knowledge base in this area by examining the perceptions of special educators in professional development schools regarding their contributions to the preparation of preservice general educators, as well as their perceptions of how the PDS relationship has enhanced their own professional growth" (2001, p. 288).

The PDS is geared more towards general education teachers with little to no participation of inservice or preservice special educators. In response to this gap, the study conducted by Voltz (2001), consisted of interviews from 22 special educators

who discussed the role that special education professionals play in the PDS context. If this model were implemented in a way to successfully include special educators in a purposeful manner, it could potentially assist administrators in creating a positive climate for learning.

A model of the social climate of learning environments could have a significant impact on how to implement an inclusive and collaborative culture. Mara Westling Allodi describes and evaluates the culture of schools in her article "Goals and values in school: a model developed for describing, evaluating and changing the social climate of learning environments" (2010). Allodi states that, "the social climate in educational settings is shaped by the relationships between teachers and students and between students" (p. 207). The purpose of Allodi's research is to define the concept of social climate, building upon a general theory of learning environments. The aim is to describe, relate, and show the relevance of the theoretical model of social climate in learning environments. The goals of a learning environment included creativity, stimulation, achievement, efficacy, safety, control, helpfulness, participation, responsibility and influence. Allodi's research used findings from empirical studies; each goal was discussed in terms of its importance in creating a positive social climate and learning environment. The evaluation took the goals and placed them into educational practice, providing examples illustrating that "high quality inclusive settings are associated with gain in pro-social behavior, social cognition and empathy" (2010, p. 220). The discussion of cooperative learning and inclusion determined that, "perceptions of support, help and friendship and acceptance of diversity among [students] are affected by the experience of cooperative learning in the education setting" (2010, p. 220). This idea supports the positive effect of inclusion on the social climate and learning environment in schools. These relationships between teacher and student are vital for a successful inclusion model to be implemented.

Administrators play an important role in creating effective schools. According to DiPaola and Walther-Thomas (2003), there are five instructional leadership priorities of effective principals: "(a) defining and communicating the school's educational mission, (b) managing curriculum and instruction, (c) supporting

and supervising teaching, (d) monitoring student progress, and (e) promoting a learning climate" (p. 8). Administrators must be knowledgeable, consistent and effective when creating and implementing any program at a school. "These leaders see themselves as stewardesses and coaches in the development of a school culture of inclusiveness" (DiPaola & Walther, 2003, p. 7). The ability to recognize the culture within a school building, how that culture is created, and finally how it is implemented, is fundamental in understanding how students with special education needs are integrated within the general education atmosphere.

Challenges arise when implementing such programs because there is a need for cultural reformation in schools. This cultural reformation is intertwined with the thoughts, perceptions, and feelings of the members within the school community, influencing how teachers teach, students learn, and how administrators organize, create, and implement specific programs for optimal learning for all students. Another challenge is the lack of professional development necessary for both teachers and administrators to successfully implement the pedagogy of inclusion. Through these challenges, a critical question has evolved: "to what extent do beliefs lead to changes in education practice?" (Cook, Cook, Landrum & Tankersley p. 116). These beliefs inevitably have an impact on how a culture is presented and perceived by its members. Whether those beliefs are negative or positive, there is an impact on the entire community involved in that culture.

The attitudes of teachers toward their students, especially those students with special education needs, have a significant impact on the challenges that administrators experience when implementing inclusion. Ensuring that faculty and staff agree with the mission and purpose of the school's culture is one of the major responsibilities that an administrator has in implementing a collaborative, inclusive culture. Teachers need a professional atmosphere in which they can share, explore, recognize, challenge, and restructure their beliefs and attitudes. Without it, teachers are "kept under repression, negative attitudes can be corrosive to efforts to include all students, as well as spread in a contagious fashion among the rest of the staff" (Idol, 2006, p. 387).

Cook, Cook, Landrum and Tankersley (2000), conducted research to address general educators attitudes toward special education students, entitled "Teachers' Attitudes Toward Their Included Students with Disabilities." Seventy general education teachers with inclusive elementary classrooms were instructed to analyze three of their students, using prompts that separated the students into attitudinal categories of *attachment, concern, indifferent,* and *rejection*. Through this research, it was found that students with disabilities were underrepresented in the category of *attachment*, and overrepresented in the categories of *concern* and *rejection*. The study found that "The teachers' attitudes toward their included students, rather than their opinions regarding the abstract concept of 'inclusion' represent a more potent and parsimonious predictor of quality of education for included students with disabilities" (Cook, Cook, Landrum & Tankersley, 2000, p. 116). This illustrates the constructed culture of schools. The classrooms that students with disabilities are being placed in often have teachers who hold different attitudes towards disabled students, in relation to their non-disabled classmates. Despite general education teachers' optimistic attitudes towards the idea of inclusion, clear separation and specific attitudes quickly change their initial positive attitudes toward inclusion, when put into practice (Cook, Cook, Landrum, & Tankersley, 2000). This is unintentional, and relates to the unconscious categorization of students by teachers. This is something that administrators must address.

Other significant challenges that have arisen from implementing inclusion are those related to knowledge and training. Diane Montieth writes that "most principals...do not have the knowledge of the instructional and programmatic needs of disabled children" (1998, p. 391). Monteith examines the missing knowledge and lack of experience administrators have in relation to the needs of special education students. She reports data from a grant project funded for the purpose of providing and investigating instruction, organization, and administrative issues related to educating students with disabilities in the general education classroom. Over 40% of principals had never had any special education courses, 85% found training and courses in special education were necessary for them to be an effective building principal, and 80% had interest in receiv-

ing such training (1998, p. 391). Despite the lack of experience and knowledge, 75% of principals have exclusive or shared responsibility for the supervision and evaluation of special education teachers and services in their schools (1998, p. 391). This shows that there is a troubling disconnect between principals' lack of knowledge, and an increase in their responsibilities for evaluating and supervising special education programs and educators.

Monteith (1998) states that principals are aware of the deficit of their knowledge and often hope to attain the training necessary to successfully supervise special education inclusion. This is significant, especially if the current trend of educating the majority of students with special education needs is through inclusion. Monteith also identifies training programs and courses that are essential to provide administrators with the knowledge, experience, and tools to understand special education in both theory and practice. Such courses included competencies in four areas: *core competencies*, *assessment*, *special problems/topics*, and *internship/practicum* (1998). Five courses were developed to address these administrative competencies. These courses were integrated into a grant that the United States Department of Education (DOE) funded for five years. Each year, the grant would allot up to 15 students to be a part of each teaching cohort.

These courses were available to practicing, certified administrators in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Ed.S/Ed.D. students in the Department of Educational Administration program at South Carolina State University (Monteith, 1998). The five courses were *Introduction to Exceptional Children and Youth, Educating Exceptional Children and Youth, Assessment in Special Education, Special Topics in Educational Administration and Internship* (Monteith, 1998). These courses were developed by the DOE in an effort to help bridge the gap between theory and practical application. Each course had a field experience component to give students the opportunity to immediately be involved with disabled students. This course of study, along with the field experience, could help identify specific knowledge and skills, enabling principals to more effectively perform job tasks related to special education, while creating a collaborative and inclusive culture.

DISCUSSION

This review has shown a consistent and positive correlation between the culture of a community and the impact that culture has on the implementation of programs, such as inclusion, within that community. With the shift of administrators' roles from building manager and disciplinarian to *instructional leader*, the new set of responsibilities address many of the workplace needs of successful teachers. Due to many administrators' lack of training and knowledge, issues arise that challenge schools in implementing a successful inclusion plan. This occurs despite the responsibility that administrators have in implementing such programs.

There is a gap in the literature when it comes to the voice of current administrators and their candid insights, struggles, successes, and opinions about inclusive environments. Knowledge of such administrator accounts could enhance awareness about how to best implement ideal practices of inclusion. These could also confront realities that challenge such efforts.

Principals are key to shaping a positive culture within a school. The literature underscores the important role principals play in supporting effective instructional leaders; "effective principals skillfully engage stakeholders, e.g., students, teachers, specialists, paraprofessionals, other support personnel, families, business partner" (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003, p.7). Lip states, "Together [stakeholders] develop child-centered communities that are based on shared values and beliefs, a coherent vision of the future, and a mission to educate all students well" (cited in DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003, p.7). Preparing administrators for creating a communal and effective learning environment where inclusion is the end result is no easy task. To achieve such a goal, effective leadership preparation is essential.

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