

6-27-2011

The Evolution of a Professional Path for Secondary Special Education Teachers Since the Inception of No Child Left Behind: A Qualitative Portrait

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THE EVOLUTION OF A PROFESSIONAL PATH FOR SECONDARY SPECIAL
EDUCATION TEACHERS
SINCE THE INCEPTION OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND:
A QUALITATIVE PORTRAIT

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Donna M. Messner

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August 2011

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With the implementation of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Legislation, Secondary Special Education Teachers have been subjected to many change initiatives resulting from high stakes testing. These teachers, as well as their students, have been scrutinized and required to implement new ideas presented by the administrators in their districts in order to raise achievement on tests.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the evolution of Secondary Special Education Teachers since the inception of NCLB through analysis of data, interviews, and observations. The research examined the effects of required changes on the level of teacher commitment, compassion, connection and confidence when working with students and administrators.

The research obtained indicated that even though teachers felt frustrated and betrayed by the government entities that created NCLB and its mandates, they still maintained high levels of commitment and compassion for their students and the field of Special Education. The teachers had mixed feelings about the connections they were able to form with students but did see an increase in peer connections formed by Special Education Students. The confidence they had related to helping students achieve on high stakes testing was influenced by the leaders within their buildings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people who deserve my thanks and gratitude for the support they have provided to me over the past few years. First, I am extremely grateful to Dr. Cathy Kaufman for the guidance, expertise, and encouragement that she provided to me while completing my educational requirements at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Next, I wish to thank Dr. Jennifer Rotigel for providing her expertise in the field of Special Education to my research. Furthermore, I would like to thank Dr. Valeri Helterbran for providing feedback regarding qualitative research.

Additionally, I would like to thank my family for their unending support of my educational pursuits. My father, Dan, who provided me encouragement to complete this project, my mother, Dolores, who was the ultimate example of an educator, and my siblings, Denise, Doreen, and Danell, who have always been there to provide encouragement and help to me through life's twists and turns. Finally, I would like to give my unending love and gratitude to my daughter, Kirsten. I am eternally grateful to you for your understanding and patience with putting up with the piles of books and papers that covered the kitchen table and counter top, your encouragement and understanding when I was attending classes, reading, and spending hours at the computer, and most of all for the hugs and smiles given when I needed them most. I hope that I have been a good role model for you and have been the type of person that makes you proud. You have my love forever.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM

One of the most influential forces guiding change in education today is the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110). This reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) set the bar high for all school districts throughout the United States of America. By the year 2014, it mandated that 100% of public school students would reach Proficient or Advanced levels on state assessments. (Pennsylvania's test was named the Pennsylvania State School Assessment (PSSA).) Hess and Petrilli (2007) indicated that NCLB referred to this as "universal proficiency". In Pennsylvania, the PSSA scores have been analyzed in various ways. One process of analysis involved calculating and reporting the performance for various subgroups of students. This was referred to as disaggregation. One of the disaggregate groups the state of Pennsylvania analyzed was the Special Education subgroup. Other subgroups included ethnic and racial groups, low-income students, and students with limited English proficiency. Thus, by 2014 all students, including members of all subgroups, were required to be Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA.

Table 1

AYP Proficiency Targets

Assessment Year	Mathematics	Reading
2002	35%	45%
2003	35%	45%
2004	35%	45%
2005	45%	54%
2006	45%	54%
2007	45%	54%
2008	56%	63%
2009	56%	63%
2010	56%	63%
2011	67%	72%
2012	78%	81%
2013	89%	91%
2014	100%	100%

Additionally, Pennsylvania had implemented two other forms of the PSSA. These were the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA) and the Pennsylvania State School Assessment-Modified (PSSA-M). Less than 2% of a school district's special education population was eligible to take the PASA. It was specifically for students with severe cognitive disabilities. The test was a videotape or narrative record that was made as a student performed each item indicated on the PASA. The PASA was often administered by teachers contracted by school districts through the Intermediate Units in Pennsylvania. This occurred because the Intermediate Units often provided classes for the low-incidence populations that smaller and middle sized school districts typically did

not have enough students to make it financially feasible to operate their own classrooms. The PSSA-M was only available, in 2009-2010 school year, for Math in grades 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11. Students had to meet requirements to take this grade level based skills test, which contained less items and distracters were removed from problems. Only 2% of the Grade Span Special Education Students could have their scores counted as Proficient or Advanced on the PSSA-M. If over 2% of the students qualified for the exam and received Proficient or Advanced, the scores of the students over the 2% mark were attributed to the district as Below Basic even if the scores were higher (PaTTAN, 2009).

In order to achieve the goals set forth by NCLB, school districts implemented numerous changes dealing with student curricula, evaluation, and achievement. Ruby Payne (2005), educator and speaker, cautioned that teachers needed to look at expectations of students to help guide decisions regarding instruction and changes that were implemented. Thus, educators needed to look at how the changes in classrooms today were affecting students and their instruction.

As school districts implemented educational reforms, an issue that needed to be analyzed was the evolution of Secondary Special Education Teachers as a result of No Child Left Behind mandates. The interactions these teachers had with their students may have changed as a result of the requirements of the legislation. Noddings (2005) proposed that high-stakes testing associated with NCLB had a demoralizing effect on teachers, students, and administrators. Lemme (2002) indicated that there was a need to see if the teachers of students

believed that the mandated goals were achievable. Thus, did Secondary Special Education Teachers perceive the importance of reaching the Proficient and Advanced levels on the PSSA for their students? Did they have a desire to want to reach the goals that the Federal Government had set? Schools needed to examine data and the effectiveness of their curricula in order to help students reach their maximum potential. There was a need to assist school principals in facilitating and providing resources to guide their teachers to promote high standards of achievement for all students. There appeared to be a paradox with the universal acceptance of differentiated instruction to meet the individual needs of students and the one size fits all testing programming implemented by the government. Additionally, schools needed to investigate how interactions between teachers and students had changed since the implementation of NCLB.

Background

Secondary Special Education Teachers faced many challenges and changes as a result of NCLB requirements. Not only were their credentials under review, but the subgroup that was created by their students placed school districts that would not otherwise be in trouble on the list of schools that were labeled in “warning” or “school improvement”. These teachers had multifaceted initiatives to implement within their classrooms in a relatively short period of time. This was of concern, as Heifetz (1994) warned that quick fixes can have long term consequences. Thus, schools were requiring Special Education Teachers to evolve in their interactions with students and in their teaching strategies and techniques.

No Child Left Behind significantly impacted on Secondary Special Education Teachers through the changes and strategies placed upon the shoulders of the teaching staff. These were perceived as positive or negative depending on how they were presented. Wheatley (2007) proposed the culture of high-stakes testing could be changed. She indicated that applying old theories would not be successful. Districts needed to look at system-wide changes. Leaders within these school systems needed to encourage experiments, to support beliefs and dynamics, and to sponsor faculty and staff to connect with outside entities. Secondary Special Education Teachers needed to be given the training and resources necessary to implement the changes required of them.

Purpose of the Study

As the deadline of 2014 drew near for 100% of students to be Proficient or Advanced on the Pennsylvania State School Assessment (PSSA), Secondary Special Education Teachers were challenged with change initiatives from school administrators. Pressure was placed on them to increase the test scores of their students so that school districts could avoid sanctions and being labeled as in “warning” or “school improvement”. This researcher proposed that this pressure was directly affecting the compassion, commitment, connection, and confidence that these teachers brought to their classrooms on a daily basis as the literature by Pace Marshall (2006) reports. This study specifically explored the evolution of a professional path for Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers and the challenges they faced in their relationships with students and school leaders as a result of NCLB.

Other researchers have looked into the relationship of compassion, commitment, connections, and confidence as it relates to teachers or organizations separately. O'Hara (2005) indicated that teachers must relate to special needs children, homeless children, and neglected and abused children with caring, trust, compassion, and high expectations. These students and their teachers needed to develop transcendent relationships which were characterized by caring, trust, mutual respect and love.

Ford (2007) discussed that teachers who worked with students who exhibited significantly challenging behaviors often felt that they had not been properly prepared or supported by administration. Despite this, these teachers indicated a strong commitment to assist students in achieving positive goals.

Wheatley (1999) looked at the quantum world and indicated that "relationship is the key determiner of everything" (p. 11). The connections that were formed within these relationships were "the fundamental ingredient of all creation" (p. 11). These connections were evident in schools with inclusive policies.

Jorgensen, Schuh, and Nisbet (2005) indicated that Special Education Staff needed to facilitate student relationships, foster class memberships and help develop social connections.

Nabors, Little, Akin-Little, and Iobst (2008) looked at Special Education Teachers and Regular Education Teachers when dealing with children with chronic medical conditions. They found that even though Special Education Teachers were more knowledgeable about conditions, they were not more

confident than other teachers in meeting academic needs of children. Therefore, this was an area that needed to be further explored.

Research Questions

The following research questions were built upon Pace Marshall's (2006) beliefs about high stakes testing with specific application to a population of Special Education Teachers.

1. How has the high stakes testing climate affected the confidence of Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers in relation to their ability to increase achievement in their students within the time restraints mandated by NCLB?
2. In what ways has NCLB affected the commitment exhibited by Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers to deliver instruction to their students?
3. How has the Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers' sense of compassion for students and others evolved since the implementation of NCLB?
4. How have NCLB changes affected the connection Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers form with their students and school leaders?
5. How has leadership in schools and their ideas for change affected the confidence, commitment, compassion, and connection Secondary Special Education Teachers have in their daily interactions with students and administrators?

History of No Child Left Behind

On January 23, 2001, President George W. Bush sent his No Child Left Behind plan for comprehensive education reform to Congress. His goal was to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers. His plan embodied four principles; stronger accountability for results, expanded flexibility and local control, an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work through scientifically based research, and expanded options for parents. It was viewed as the most sweeping reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act since its enactment in 1965 (NCLB Fact Sheet, 2003).

The first pillar, strong accountability for results, was based on high stakes testing. Its goal was to close the achievement gap and ensure that all students, including those who were disadvantaged, achieved academic proficiency. Schools that did not make progress needed to provide supplemental services, such as free tutoring or after-school assistance. Also, they had to take corrective actions to improve achievement on tests. If they were still not making adequate yearly progress after five years, a school would then be taken over by the government (Four Pillars of NCLB, 2004).

According to the government web site, states and school districts had “unprecedented flexibility” in how they utilized federal education funds. This “unprecedented flexibility” was the second pillar, which allowed for more freedom for states and communities. Thus, schools could use funds for particular needs,

such as hiring new teachers, increasing teacher pay, and improving teacher training and professional development (Four Pillars of NCLB, 2004).

The third pillar of No Child Left Behind was the promotion of proven educational methods. Educational programs needed to have evidence of effectiveness through rigorous scientific research. Federal funding was targeted to support these programs and teaching methods (Four Pillars of NCLB, 2004).

More options for parents was the fourth pillar. According to the government, parents of children in low-performing public schools would be provided the option to send their children to a better-performing public school when their own school had not met the state standards for at least two consecutive years. These schools would be within the district. The district would be responsible for transportation costs. Students that were in schools that failed to meet the state standards for at least three years were eligible to receive supplemental educational services, including tutoring, after-school services, and summer school. Also, students who attended a “persistently dangerous school” or those who were the victims of violent crimes in their schools were to be given the option to attend a safe school within their district (Four Pillars of NCLB, 2004).

The “Statement of Purpose” in the No Child Left Behind Act claimed that it was intended to ensure that all children reached “challenging” standards in reading and math and to close the academic achievement gap that existed by race and color. School districts would be held accountable for achieving this goal. President George W. Bush and his Secretary of Education, Rodney Paige, proposed that scores on standardized reading and math tests would be the sole

measure of student progress. This led to high stakes testing companies claiming that their tests measured what was most important for our youth to become successful members of society and the workplace. As Meier and Wood (2004) indicated, No Child Left Behind assumed that a well educated person was one who scored high on standardized math and reading tests.

Highly Qualified Status

Hess and Petrilli (2007) indicated that after the accountability and choice provisions listed in the Four Pillars of NCLB, the mandate that all children be instructed by a “highly qualified teacher” by the end of the 2005-06 school year was the next most important impetus for change in education. They pointed out that teachers had the greatest influence on student learning and thus all students deserved to have effective, well-prepared teachers. According to NCLB, all teachers of core subjects (English, Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Foreign Languages, Civics & Government, Economics, Art, History, and Geography) needed to hold a bachelor’s degree, obtain a state teaching certification or pass the state teacher licensing examination, and demonstrate knowledge of the subject that he or she taught.

All teachers, even veteran teachers, were to be highly qualified according to NCLB. Veteran teachers needed to have a bachelor’s degree, be licensed by the state, and demonstrate subject matter competency. This was achieved through completing a subject matter competency test or having a major in the subject that was instructed. However, veteran teachers could additionally demonstrate subject mastery through a “highly objective uniform state standard of evaluation”

(HOUSSE). States had the latitude to design their own HOUSSE model with a combination of college credits, advanced credentials, teaching experience, professional development, and student achievement. Teachers with a HOUSSE certified area could teach Special Education Students only in that subject.

Pennsylvania, in 2004, first developed a Bridge Certificate that lasted until June 30, 2008 to help Special Education Teachers gain Highly Qualified Status. The Bridge was a two-phase process in which teachers accumulated points based on their past and current educational experiences. The Bridge was limited to teachers who were teaching full-time who had Level I or II Instructional certificates issued prior to July 1, 2004. These teachers needed to be the teacher of record or the primary instructor of a core subject in one of the following areas within the prior 5 years:

1. Elementary certified and teaching in middle or junior high school 7th and 8th grade classrooms
2. ESL program specialist certified and teaching outside of instructional certification
3. Special education certified in self-contained classrooms and working with students performing at or above the 7th grade level
4. Teaching outside of instructional certification in a state approved Alternative Education program.

Teachers were required to submit transcripts to the designated school administrator and the PDE-approved form in order to get “on the Bridge”. Once in the program, teachers had until June 2008 to get all the necessary points to

become highly qualified in a given area (Navigating ESEA, 2004). Once given certification in a subject area in the Bridge system, a Special Education Teacher was able to instruct all students in both regular and special education, in the specific content area, and be the teacher of record for grades. Thus, many Special Education Teachers evolved in the area of certification since the implementation of NCLB to meet these requirements. The HOUSSSE and Bridge programs were completed and currently are not open to Special Education Teachers.

Special Education Teachers who did not reach the highly qualified status in subject areas that they previously taught needed to have a General Education Teacher with the proper credentials in the classroom with them. The General Education Teacher was counted as the teacher of record and assigned grades as per Pennsylvania State requirements. This created a demand for techniques such as co-teaching in classrooms, especially at the secondary level. Without proper training of teachers to implement this strategy, some Special Education Teachers may have felt their role in the classroom had become that of a “glorified aide”. They no longer had control over their own classrooms.

Theoretical Perspectives

This study was anchored in the framework of Stephanie Pace Marshall (2006) and her ideas regarding the changes teachers had endured since the implementation of NCLB. The researcher narrowed this down to examining Secondary Special Education Teachers in Pennsylvania. Additionally, the study relied on findings of Margaret Wheatley, William Bridges, Robert Evans, Peter

Senge, and Phillip Schlechty related to change theories and leadership. Chapter Two discussed these theories in more detail.

Change Theories

Due to the high stakes testing that resulted from the implementation of No Child Left Behind Legislation, many school organizations faced serious issues that resulted in substantial changes in all areas. As a result, school leaders needed to look at the institutions and identify and apply change theories to successfully implement the subsequent transitions and new ideas. Kotter and Cohen (2002) noted that leaders must model the trust and teamwork needed in the group to successfully implement a change. Educational leaders also needed to impart “visions that were so clear that they can be articulated in one minute or written up in one page” (p. 82). Evans (1996) supported this with his emphasis on clarity. He stated that “high performing systems show that their leaders provide direction that is clear, strong, and unambivalent” (p. 213). Additionally, Evans (1996) stated that this clarity would foster commitment and would garner attention.

On a daily basis, teachers and school administrators solved technical problems or changes. These were the problems that people had the necessary know-how and procedures to solve. According to Heifetz and Linsky (2002), the more difficult problems were adaptive challenges. These required experiments, new discoveries, and adjustments from numerous places in the organization or community in order to successfully implement these adaptive challenges. These adaptive changes affected attitudes, values, and behaviors. Thus, school

administrators focused on how staff participated and accepted the adaptive changes associated with PSSA and high-stakes testing.

In order for staffs to successfully implement changes, which are often classified as situational, they had to first go through a transition. According to Bridges (2003), transitions were psychological, three-phase processes that people went through as they internalized and came to terms with the details of a new situation that the change brought. The first phase of transition was an ending. It was the time when one gave up the old ways and any old identities. In this phase, people often needed help dealing with their losses, similar to a grieving process. The second stage was often known as the Neutral Zone. During this stage, the old had left but the new had not been fully implemented. According to Bridges, this was a critical time when psychological realignments and repatternings needed to take place. The last phase was referred to as the New Beginning. This was when people were ready to come out of the transition and make a new start. At this stage, one adopted a new identity. It was often accompanied with increased energy and a new sense of purpose that tended to allow the change to work. Therefore, Secondary Special Education Teachers should have experienced these stages as they evolved through No Child Left Behind mandates.

Considering this transition process, how were schools to implement necessary changes associated with No Child Left Behind? Change theories indicated that leadership guided educational staff through the transition phases, especially the Neutral Zone. Since educational leaders needed to lead staff

through stages of change, administrators required knowledge to assist teachers through these stages, so that they accepted and implemented new ideas associated with high-stakes testing. These included new teaching techniques as well as new curricula. Leaders needed to be clear in presenting their visions if buy in by staff was to occur.

Significance of the Study

There were many consequences in regards to the Federal and State government mandates relating to No Child Left Behind Legislation. If schools were in “warning” or “school improvement”, they needed to offer parents the option of sending their children to another public school within the district. The identified schools were required to develop or revise an existing school improvement plan which had to be approved by the district. If a school was in “school improvement” for a second year, supplemental educational services such as tutoring and after school programs had to be offered in addition to the opportunity to attend another school. During the third year, “corrective action” was implemented. “Corrective action” included removing relevant staff, implementing new curricula, decreasing management authority, appointing outside experts to advise the school, extending the length of the school day or year or restructuring the school’s internal organization.

Thus, “school improvement” was costly and time consuming for districts, and it was a consequence that school boards and administrators wanted to avoid. Therefore, districts wanted to find ways to improve PSSA scores for all sub-groups. Finding ways to improve scores was imperative, especially in schools

that were already in “school improvement”. Thus, this study utilized Pace Marshall’s (2006) work as a lens to explore the changes experienced by Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers as a result of high stakes testing in relation to school administrators and students. Research suggested that these relationships had a direct correlation to student achievement.

Methods

In this study, the researcher was utilizing document analysis, interviews, and observations to gain information regarding the change process as it related to the commitment, confidence, compassion, and connection experienced by Special Education Teachers as they evolved with NCLB mandates. It was a qualitative study involving four school districts in Central Pennsylvania.

Limitations of the Study

Movement of staff members during this study was an area of concern as it may have meant that teachers no longer met the requirements of the study if staff were to be moved to a lower grade or a more restrictive classroom that did not administer the PSSA during the time of research. Another variable that affected this study was increased inclusion due to the Gaskins’ Court Case and subsequent settlement with the Pennsylvania Department of Education. A greater number of students were included in taking the PSSA than were previously represented prior to the Gaskins’ Settlement. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Special Education Student numbers could have decreased as a result of Response to Intervention and Instruction. Additionally, a Special Education Subgroup might not have existed at a specific grade level that

previously led to an in “warning” or “school improvement” designation. The implementation of the Keystone Exams for Graduation was another issue that possibly could limit the findings of this study.

Definition of Terms

The following are the key terms that needed to be defined in order to fully understand the study.

Adequate Yearly Progress- the minimum level of improvement schools and school districts needed to make every year under NCLB.

Bridge Certificate - one of Pennsylvania’s methods of providing veteran special education teachers a means to become highly qualified under the HOUSSE requirements from 2004-08.

Commitment- dedication to a long-term course of action; engagement; involvement.

Compassion-sorrow for the sufferings or troubles of another or others, accompanied by an urge to help; deep sympathy.

Confidence- belief in one’s own abilities; the fact of being or feeling certain.

Connection- a relationship; association; the relation between things that depend on, involve, or follow each other.

ESEA- Elementary and Secondary Education Act: first enacted in 1965, the principle law affecting K-12 education.

Highly Qualified Teachers- Teachers who met the standards established by the No Child Left Behind Act, which included obtaining full state teacher certification or passing the state teacher licensing examination and holding

a license to teach in the state, holding a minimum of a bachelor's degree, and demonstrating subject area competence in each academic subject he or she taught. This did not necessarily reflect classroom success regarding students reaching set goals.

HOUSSE- "high objective uniform state standard of evaluation" - a method to assess teachers' qualifications as an alternative to traditional methods.

No Child Left Behind Act- The ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) reauthorization of 2001 that implemented testing requirements for accountability.

PASA- Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment for students with severe cognitive disabilities. It was given to students in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11. It was completed in either a videotape format or a written narrative by the teacher as the student performed required tasks.

PSSA- Pennsylvania State School Assessment: Achievement test required in the state of Pennsylvania to be taken in 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11th grades in Reading and Mathematics, 5, 8, and 11th grades in Writing, and 4, 8, and 11th grades for Science.

PSSA-M- Pennsylvania State School Assessment-Modified- Modified version of the grade level PSSA that was given to students identified under Chapter 14 regulations. The test had fewer questions with less distracters.

Subgroups- a group of students within a school population with a group-specific background or characteristics.

Summary

Chapter One had set forth the problem, background of the study, purpose of the study, the research questions, theoretical perspectives, the significance of the study, the limitations of the study, and the definition of terms. Karp (2007-08) quoted the Boston-based advocacy group FairTest stating, “The real problem is that the goal that all children will score proficient in 2014 is totally arbitrary, lacks any evidence of feasibility, and therefore produces educationally questionable and harmful responses by those who bear the brunt of the sanctions” (p. 2). This related to Secondary Special Education Teachers and the connection, compassion, commitment, and confidence they experienced in regard to students and school leaders when dealing with NCLB. Chapter Two presented the reader with additional background dealing with NCLB, Change Theories, and Leadership.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to examine the evolution of the professional path of Special Education Teachers since the inception of No Child Left Behind. It extended an inquiry begun by Pace Marshall (2006) and used various lenses of change and leadership theories to analyze the process of change experienced by this population of teachers and the impact on their instructional relationships with students and administrators. In the review of literature in Chapter Two, the topics of No Child Left Behind, Change Theories, and Leadership were explored to gain insight into historical as well as present day beliefs regarding these topics and how the categories affected the commitment, compassion, confidence, and connection of Secondary Special Education Teachers.

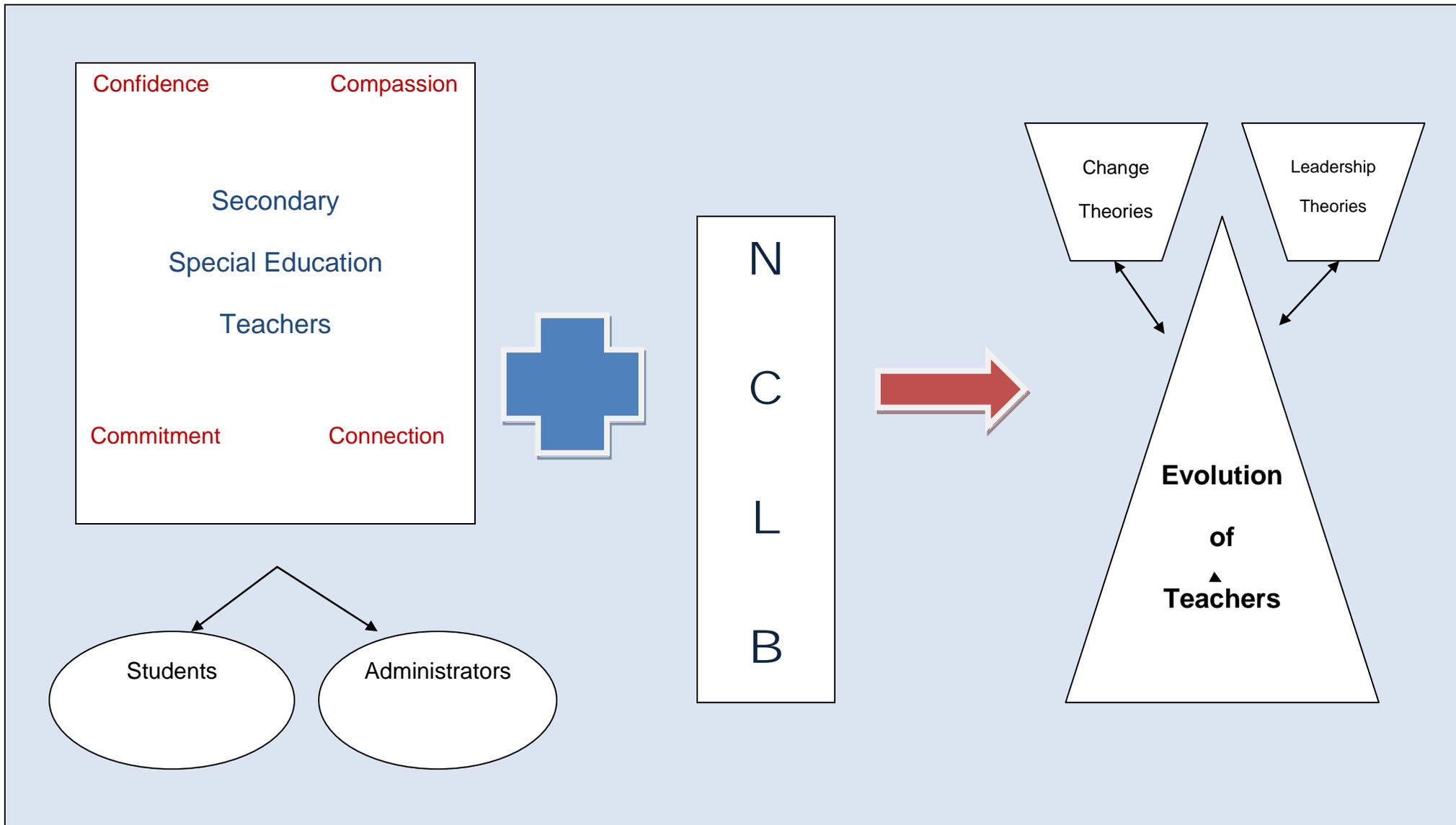


Figure 1 Evolution of Secondary Special Education Teachers since the inception of No Child Left Behind.

No Child Left Behind

Over the years, there have been many issues that have sparked controversy throughout the field of education. Few of these, though, have created the magnitude of emotions and conflict as the reenactment of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in the form of the No Child Left Behind Legislation. This Act stirred debate not only by educators but by politicians, parents, special interest groups, and community members. Proponents of the legislation claimed that there were many positive outcomes of this legislation. On the other hand, opponents of No Child Left Behind claimed the legislation had a negative impact on students.

Our nation's corporations and politicians claimed that there was a lack of qualified workers for our global economy. Teachers were an easy target to place the blame on for this problem as well as for what ailed our country. As Palmer (1998) indicated, teachers were held responsible for curing our social ills by implementing whatever solutions were concocted by national forces. Palmer proposed that these often took power away from the teachers. With teachers feeling alienated and powerless, changes were difficult to achieve. The public and the government forgot that "reform will never be achieved by renewing appropriations, restructuring schools, rewriting curricula, and revising texts if we continue to demean and dishearten the human resource called the teacher on whom so much depends" (Palmer, 1998, p. 3).

How have Americans reacted to the No Child Left Behind legislation? Kohn (1993) pointed out that few people have challenged our politicians' methods for

reforms. She indicated that the laws offered pay raises for educators who had students who were successful and threatened the jobs of those who did not have students showing success on tests. They assumed that high standardized test scores correlated to educational excellence.

Wheatley and Frieze (2007) reported that No Child Left Behind was a powerful force for change. It created a culture of high-stakes testing. This culture determined most decisions, methods, and behaviors in schools. The high-stakes testing culture had a direct influence over curricula, teacher preparation programs, textbooks, parent expectations and relationships with schools, student expectations about learning, and even real-estate values.

History of No Child Left Behind

In order to properly understand the impact of No Child Left Behind, it was necessary to understand the history of this legislation and its implications. First, though, one must understand the main influence on our present day educational organization. School systems were built around industrial-age ideas. Senge (2000) purported that a “school may be the starkest example in modern society of an entire institution modeled after the assembly line” (p. 30). The system was divided into stages called grades that segregated children by age. Supervisors, the teachers, were responsible for moving the students to the next stage. The school day ran uniformly, complete with bells and a rigid schedule. Teachers needed to cover a predetermined amount of information, in the form of curricula, in order to keep the assembly line moving. The industrialized schools were able to increase educational output, though at the expense of individual students. All

students were assumed to learn in the same way thus, slow students were often labeled and pushed off of the assembly line. Conformity was valued and expected. Senge (2000) indicated that this assembly line model was not successful. This was evidenced by increased stress felt by students, teachers, administrators, and parents and the increase in the numbers of haves and have nots in school settings. Therefore, the school assembly line was trying to correct itself by working harder, which was how improvements were made utilizing an industrialized model.

In another view of the history of the United States' educational system, Schlechty (2005) discussed the original goal for outcomes of students which he indicated had its roots in the common school movement:

When American's schools were created it was never intended that all students would learn at high levels. Educators, civic leaders, parents, and nonparents alike assumed that a relatively few students would learn at high levels, many students would learn a good deal, some students would learn a bit, and others would learn enough to know how to respond to authority in order to carry out tasks assigned to unskilled workers in a factory system of production (p. xi).

As a result of these assumptions, he proposed that schools were designed to produce compliance and attendance. This was in stark contrast to the present expectation of NCLB that all students would achieve at Proficient or Advanced levels within high-quality academic programs. In order to achieve this, Schlechty (2005) stressed that there was a need to engage students in their learning. He indicated that engaging students needed to include focusing the students' attention to the task and making sure the students were committed to utilizing resources in order to complete the task.

Thus, since schools were experiencing difficulties, educational reforms were adopted. In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed during the presidency of Lyndon Johnson. This initiative was part of his “War on Poverty” program and was the first and largest comprehensive federal education law that provided substantial monetary funds for kindergarten through twelfth grade education. This established funding for Title I, the Eisenhower Professional Development Program, Education Technology, Class Size Reduction, Safe and Drug Free Schools, Bilingual Education, Native American Education, Charter Schools, Head Start, and Community Learning Centers. One of the goals was to help raise the achievement of low socio-economic students. This bill has been reauthorized every five years since its enactment. (ESEA, 2002) As President Johnson stated, “The answer for all our national problems comes down to one single word: education” (Cuban, 2004, p. 52).

With the expansion and importance of a Global Economy in the 1980’s and 1990’s, politicians and business representatives questioned the effectiveness of the educational system. They felt that the United States was falling behind in Global Competitiveness and that one of the main causes was the educational system. Special interest groups, such as the moral majority, focused on issues of curricula and morality while pushing for changes such as school choice and prayer in the schools. Former Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H. Bush, and former Secretary of Education William Bennett attacked the schools of the 1980’s and pushed the movement for reforms in education. The three men utilized the report, “A Nation at Risk”, as a basis for their call for public school reform.

After almost twenty years of implementation of these changes, minority and poor students were still falling behind in achievement when compared to students in wealthier, white communities. As Meier and Wood (2004) suggested, schools were to be the “great equalizer” (p. viii). Thus, to the politicians, business representatives, parents, and the general public, the American system of schools was still failing our neediest students. This educational system failure, in turn, created a lack of qualified workers to keep up with the changing market place. Thus, a need for reform was created that led to the No Child Left Behind Legislation.

Special Education Background

Special Education services, as they were implemented in the public school system, had their roots in legislation and judicial court cases. In 1975, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (PL 94-142) was passed. The law ensured that all children with disabilities, age 3-21, would receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) and would not be discriminated against by public agencies. LaMorte (2008) reported that before this law was enacted “a million children with disabilities were entirely excluded from public school, and more than half of the children with disabilities in the United States were not receiving appropriate educational services” (p. 331). The law, which was updated in 2004, was known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). Following the enactment of PL 94-142, thirteen categories of exceptionalities were established including Autism, Deaf-blindness, Deafness, Emotional Disturbance, Hearing Impairment, Specific Learning

Disability, Mental Retardation, Multiple Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Speech or Language Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Visual Impairment.

IDEIA was based on six principles, which included Zero Reject/Child Find, Nondiscriminatory Testing, Individual Education Plan, Least Restrictive Environment, Procedural Due Process, and Parent Participation. Zero Reject meant that local school districts could not exclude students with disabilities from public schools due to the nature or degree of their disabilities. Child Find required that all states implement procedures to locate unserved children and to inform parents of available services and programs for children with disabilities.

Nondiscriminatory Testing stated that discrimination in assessment was not allowed. Assessments had to be valid, reliable, comprehensive and identify all of a child's educational needs. Rights of students and their parents had to be protected during assessment. Last, children with disabilities had to be included in general state and district wide assessments with appropriate accommodations.

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) was designed to ensure that all students received FAPE. At minimum, a Special Education Teacher, General Education Teacher, Local Education Agency Representative (LEA), a Parent, and the Student, if they would be 14 or older during the duration of the IEP, had to be in attendance for an IEP meeting unless written permission to excuse had been received. Some areas included in the IEP included Present Levels, Accommodations for State and Local Testing, Specially Designed Instruction,

Transition Plan for students who would be 14 or older during the duration of the IEP, Related Services, and Goals and Objectives.

The principle of Least Restrictive Environment included four areas. First, school districts had to include children with disabilities to the maximum extent possible with nondisabled children. Next, school districts had to provide a continuum of placements. Third, placements needed to be determined annually and based on the child's IEP. Additionally, the educational placement had to be as close to the child's home as possible. Last, students with disabilities were required to be included with nondisabled children to the maximum extent possible in nonacademic settings.

Procedural Due Process provided an avenue for parents or districts to challenge or dispute issues related to the IEP not agreed upon by the two parties. Two options for resolving disputes were identified as Mediation and/or Due Process.

The last area of IDEIA, the Principle of Parent Participation, stated that parents were required to give consent before a child was evaluated for initial placement. Parents were required to be invited to participate in meetings discussing evaluations, the IEP, and placement. According to Boyle & Weishaar (2001) the right of the parent to review records dealing with their child was also covered under this principle. Additionally, parents had the right to remove their children from Special Education Services even if the school district disagreed.

George W. Bush's Vision for Education

President George W. Bush made education one of his top domestic issues in 2001. On January 23, 2001, he sent his No Child Left Behind plan for comprehensive education reform to Congress. His goal was to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers. His plan embodied four principles; stronger accountability for results, expanded flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and an emphasis on teaching methods that had been proven to work. It was viewed to be the most sweeping reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act since its enactment in 1965 (NCLB Fact Sheet, 2003).

The "Statement of Purpose" in the No Child Left Behind Act claimed that it was intended to ensure that all children reached "challenging" standards in reading and math and to close the academic achievement gap that existed by race and color. George W. Bush and his Secretary of Education, Rodney Paige, proposed that scores on standardized reading and math tests would be the sole measure of student progress. This led to high stakes testing companies claiming that tests measure what was most important for youth today to become successful members of society and the workplace. As Meier and Wood (2004) proposed, No Child Left Behind assumed that a well educated person was one who scored high on standardized math and reading tests.

Four Pillars of No Child Left Behind

According to the Ed.gov web site, there were four pillars of the No Child Left Behind Act. These were stronger accountability for results, more freedom for

states and communities, proven education methods, and more choices for parents. The first pillar, strong accountability for results, was based on high stakes testing. The goal of NCLB was to close the achievement gap and make sure that all students, including those who were disadvantaged, achieved academic proficiency. Schools that did not make progress were required to provide supplemental services, such as free tutoring or after-school assistance. Furthermore, they had to take corrective actions to improve achievement on tests. If they were still not making adequate yearly progress after five years, a school would then be taken over by the government (Four Pillars of NCLB, 2004).

According to a government web site, states and school districts had “unprecedented flexibility” in how they utilized federal education funds. This flexibility was the basis for the second pillar of NCLB, more freedom for states and communities. Thus, schools could use funds for particular needs, such as hiring new teachers, increasing teacher pay, and improving teacher training and professional development (Four Pillars of NCLB, 2004).

The third pillar of No Child Left Behind was the promotion of proven educational methods. Educational programs were required to have evidence of effectiveness based on rigorous scientific research. Federal funding was targeted to support these programs and teaching methods. (Four Pillars of NCLB, 2004)

More choices for parents was the fourth pillar. According to the government, parents of children in low-performing public schools had the option to send their

children to a better-performing public school when their own school had not met the state standards for at least two consecutive years. These schools had to be within the district, and the district would be responsible for transportation costs. Students that were in schools that failed to meet the state standards for at least three years were eligible to receive supplemental educational services, including tutoring, after-school services, and summer school. Also, students who attended a “persistently dangerous school” or those who were the victims of violent crimes in their schools had the option to attend a safe school within their district (Four Pillars of NCLB, 2004).

No Child Left Behind Results

Has No Child Left Behind produced the results intended? The answer to this question has been open to debate. Reports and data were conveyed that could be interpreted to support either proponents or opponents of this legislation.

A May 2006 update of the government website indicated that No Child Left Behind initiatives were working. The long-term Nation’s Report Card released in July of 2005 indicated that elementary school students were showing achievement rates in reading and math at all-time highs. The report also indicated that the achievement gap was closing between minority and poor students and their wealthier peers. Reading and math scores for African American and Hispanic nine-year-olds were at an all-time high. Forty-three states and the District of Columbia either had shown improvement academically or were steady in all categories for 4th-8th grade reading and math (NCLB Act is Working, 2006).

On the other hand, Neill (2003) reported that a group of college admissions officers and published authors who reviewed the New York State Regents Examinations concluded, “If you want to know whether this test helps prepare students for college, the answer is no” (p. 225). Many people challenging the No Child Left Behind Act pushed for a need for accountability that supported improved student learning and better schools and that provided rich information to parents and communities. Those challenging NCLB promoted the practice of creating socially supportive and intellectually engaging environments for teachers and students, as well as helpful assessments that diagnosed needs of students and assessed their higher-order thinking skills. Neill (2003) indicated, “High quality learning does not require exactly the same curriculum and assessments for every student, but different cannot be less” (p. 227). Additionally, Neill (2003) argued that “Accountability must mean support first, not punishment first” (p. 228) which was contrary to the No Child Left Behind regulations (i.e. replacing staff, loss of funding, taking over schools, etc.).

Senge (2000) acknowledged that these efforts to make schools more accountable through the use of high-stakes testing were exacerbating the industrial-age thinking found at the core of our educational systems. Test scores had their place in education, but they needed to be integrated along with other forms of assessment in determining progress.

Additionally, Houston (2007) indicated that No Child Left Behind did not promote a systemic solution for the problems in our current educational system. He also agreed that our schools were still preparing students for an industrial-

age. He proposed that our mission had changed. He supported providing skills of collaboration, ingenuity, problem solving, and comfort with ambiguity to our students to help them compete in the global economy.

No Child Left Behind and Transitioning to the Workforce

Is No Child Left Behind really preparing our students for the transition to the workplace? It was believed that those with a higher level of education reaped more financial gains. Education created not only individual benefits but also collective beliefs in the assumption that higher test scores in school meant better performance later in college and the workplace. What was the real cash value of getting an education, and are these assumptions correct?

Going back to the days of Thomas Jefferson, society valued the social benefits that taxpayers and leaders attributed to the role of public schools in a democracy. These included common goods or public goods, such as building good citizens and preparing people for the workplace. During the 1910s the Vocational Education Movement began to take place. In the mid 1910s, the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 was passed, which allocated money for Vocational Education. Leaders seeking industrial training believed schooling urban boys in the industrial workplace would end a skills deficit among job applicants, thus decreasing youth unemployment and crime in poverty-stricken cities. It would improve worker productivity, raise standards of living, increase social stability, and increase the United States' role in a global competitive economy.

Since the 1970s, civic and business leaders had expressed a growing belief that public schools had to help the US economy do well in global competition.

These leaders espoused that public schools needed to train the future workforce for an information-based workplace. In the 1970s, Cuban (2004) indicated business leaders mobilized for reforms not through vocation education but with tough academic standards, testing, accountability and efficiency measures. The Nation at Risk report in 1983 was a marker of those beliefs. Additionally, Willis (2002) indicated that many believed there was a need to restore balance and prepare students for citizenship. Since the implementation of No Child Left Behind, there has been a lack of research to indicate whether the NCLB Act has had a positive effect on local, national, or global economies.

No Child Left Behind Implications for the Future

As the 2014 deadline approached for 100% of students to reach proficiency on high stakes tests, former U.S. Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings (2005) provided guidelines to assist students with disabilities. She indicated that approximately 2 percent of students with disabilities could make progress toward grade-level standards when they received high quality instruction and were assessed with alternate assessments based on modified achievement standards. States were able to make short-term adjustments to their adequate yearly progress decisions to reflect the need for alternate assessments based on modified achievement standards.

The Washington Post reported, in the May 18, 2006 edition, that Education Secretary Margaret Spellings was piloting a new program of assessing students in North Carolina and Tennessee. The new initiative would be a “growth model” assessment. It would allow schools to be in compliance with No Child Left

Behind by implementing the measurement of individual student's progress annually, instead of an entire grade of different students. Data-collection systems would become increasingly important if this model expanded to other states. States needed to meet the 2014 deadline for achievement as identified in No Child Left Behind and would be subject to fines if they were unable to meet their goals. Romano (2006) reported that Former Secretary of Education Spellings was quoted as stating, "I do want the world to know if there is a better way to calculate and show progress" (p. A6). Spellings also indicated that she was keeping an open mind about the process.

Through the years, many of our founders and leaders had questioned a reliance on testing and data. Albert Einstein once said, "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts" (Pace Marshall, 2006, p. 10). Political leaders appeared to be placing a disproportionate value on information that could be easily and quickly observed, quantified, counted, and used.

Effects of No Child Left Behind on Students and Teachers

Pace Marshall (2006) had identified a list of what our children had lost as a result of the emphasis on data and instruments. She said our children have lost:

- A sense of personal identity, meaning, and purpose.
- A passion for learning.
- A sense of wholeness, connectedness, and relatedness to the natural world and to one another.
- An understanding that we must bring all the ways we uniquely come to know into learning- the analytical and the intuitive, the objective and the experiential, the scientific and the aesthetic, the linear and the spiritual.
- The compassionate use of knowledge and a global concern for human and community prosperity and moral action in the world.

- A commitment to ecological sustainability and the embrace of nature as a sacred and healing dimension of our lives.
- The capacity for silence and solitude.
- The intimate connection and collaboration of youth and elders around shared purpose.
- The confidence to challenge current reality and create new possibilities (pp. 11-12).

She concluded that high stakes testing and the emphasis on data had taken the self, the heart, and the life out of teaching and teachers.

Gladwell (2005), in the book, *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, discussed the effects of an overload of information. Gladwell (2005) pointed out that “In short, when you write down your thoughts, your chances of having the flash of insight you need in order to come up with a solution are significantly impaired” (p. 121). An integral part of the Pennsylvania State School Assessment (PSSA) required students to explain how they came up with their answers. Are we asking students to complete a task that will ultimately decrease their ability to solve other problems?

Special Education Teachers were being confronted with many changes as a result of NCLB. Even without this legislation this group of teachers often experienced more stress than their regular education colleagues. Plash and Piotrowski (2006) indicated, that every year, 13.2% of Special Education Teachers left their special education teaching positions. Six percent left the profession entirely, while 7.2% transferred to general education. They proposed that the two most important criteria contributing to the decision to leave Special Education were excessive paperwork and the stress created by the demands of the job.

Additionally, Fore, Martin, and Bender (2002), stated that stress experienced by Special Education Teachers revolved around high student caseloads, building level support, and instructional assignments. In their article, "Teacher Burnout in Special Education: The Causes and Recommended Solutions", Fore, Martin, and Bender (2002) indicated that teacher burnout was often associated with increased paperwork loads, stress associated with job requirements, lack of planning time, lack of support from administrators, lack of proper staff development training, and the type of disabilities the teachers had to deal with in their classroom. Working with students with behavioral disabilities created the highest burnout in special education. They proposed that developing strong mentoring programs would reduce overall stress, emotional exhaustion, and increase overall job satisfaction.

Stephens (2007) reported on the effect of No Child Left Behind on teachers' sense of efficacy. The findings revealed that some teachers had utilized standardized test scores as the primary means of determining whether or not they were effective, while other teachers had not emphasized the scores as much. Teachers reported having utilized the data to help drive pedagogical decisions, though the teachers studied did not believe that the high stakes testing influenced how they taught.

The No Child Left Behind Act was a mandate that the majority of school districts attempted to meet. As the 2014 deadline drew nearer, more changes became necessary to avoid sanctions being assigned to school districts. Thus,

schools needed to enact successful changes related to the No Child Left Behind legislation that increased student achievement.

Change Theory

Due to high stakes testing associated with No Child Left Behind Legislation, many school organizations faced serious issues that resulted in substantial changes for administrators and instructional staff. As a result, leaders needed to look at their institutions and identify and apply change theories to successfully implement the subsequent transitions and new ideas.

Related to this topic, Christensen (1997) proposed that educators needed to analyze the type of change or innovation being implemented. He classified two types of innovations, ones that were sustaining and those that were disruptive. Sustaining innovations were somewhat congruent with existing social systems and had little impact on the structure or culture of those systems. In contrast to sustaining innovations, disruptive innovations incorporate dramatic changes in both structure and culture. Disruptive innovations, in turn, led to changes in beliefs, values, and commitments. This was supported by Schlechty (2005) who indicated that a disruptive change led to adaptations and modifications to the rules, roles, and relationships found within an organization. These changes allowed members of a system to perform necessary functions in dramatically different ways.

Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers (2004) purported that “most change initiatives that end up going nowhere don’t fail because they lack grand visions and noble intentions. They fail because people can’t see the reality they

face” (p. 29). Therefore, in order to achieve positive changes in education, leaders needed to thoroughly examine all aspects of proposed changes.

Along with facing reality, in order to have change successfully implemented, stakeholders needed to be included in decision making. Wheatley (2007) pointed out that:

As leaders we have no choice but to figure out how to invite in everybody who is going to be affected by change. Those that we fail to invite into the creation process will surely and always show up as resisters and saboteurs (p.79).

People would only support initiatives that they helped to create. On the bright side, Wheatley (2007) proposed that every living system was free to choose whether it changed and that living systems contained their own solutions.

No Child Left Behind legislation would appear to fall neatly into traditional change theories. Wheatley and Frieze (2007) indicated that these theories contained the following assumptions:

- change is top-down and requires top-level support
- change requires careful planning and good controls
- change happens step-by-step in a neat, incremental fashion
- behavior can be mandated
- rewards and punishment motivate people to change
- large-scale changes require large-scale efforts (p. 2).

Changes in Organizational Systems

How do schools incorporate change into our everyday experiences?

Wheatley and Frieze (2007) purported that in living organizational systems all changes were created through emergence. Emergence began as small, local

actions. When these ideas connected with others, through exchange of information and learning, these ideas then emerged into powerful changes that were able to influence larger systems.

Wheatley and Frieze (2007) stated that there were many forces that helped to create the culture of high-stakes testing, which included:

- Overwhelming diversity of needs, cultures, and problems in the classroom
 - A loss of confidence in public education and its professionals
 - Realization that America is falling behind other nations in the global economy
 - Students failing to achieve
 - Employers complaining that graduates lack basic skills
 - Hegemony of the corporate model: command and control leadership; focus on results; motivation through fear and rewards; only numbers count
 - Increasing use of simple metrics to describe complex phenomena
 - Development of computerized testing
 - Increasing reliance on testing to sort students
 - A culture that has difficulty with ambiguity and diversity
 - A culture that wants easy answers, quick fixes and silver bullets.
- (p. 3)

They purported that the culture of high-stakes testing was able to be changed. Fixes or applying old theories to changes were unsuccessful, however. System-wide changes needed to be implemented on local levels. Leaders needed to encourage experiments, support beliefs and dynamics, and sponsor faculty and staff to connect with outside entities.

Heifetz (1994) also warned that quick fixes, using one's own repertoire to restore equilibrium, often had long term consequences. He described three patterns of disequilibrium. In the first, a response from the current repertoire was able to restore equilibrium successfully. When there was no ready solution for a situation, the organization applied a quick fix, the second pattern, that had long-

term consequences. In the third pattern, society produced a new adaptation and learned a way to meet the challenge and restore equilibrium.

How Leaders can Promote Changes with High Stakes Testing

Wheatley and Frieze (2007) indicated that if educators wanted to successfully challenge the high stakes testing culture, educational leaders had to:

- Focus institutional resources in support of those efforts that developed more connections.
- Bring staff together more frequently to think together and to discern what we're learning.
- Seek difference-both people and ideas that offer new perspectives.
- Keep expanding the web, including new and different people in all activities.
- Support more local efforts and innovations, then insist that staff and faculty take them out into the world and connect with others.
- Offer financial support for practitioner gatherings that provided opportunities for real exchanges (p. 5).

Wheatley and Frieze supported the idea that people had a natural desire to work in the community. They indicated that humans needed to seek supportive relationships, and that learning was social and flourished in relationships.

Wheatley and Frieze (2007) also stated that there were American traditions that were the foundation upon which educational systems were built. These ideals included: all children deserve education; education is the route out of poverty; we want fairness, justice, and equality; America is the land of opportunity where anyone can succeed if they try.

Schlechty (2005) purported that leaders who were implementing disruptive innovations, like NCLB, had to understand and embrace the idea of continuous improvement. He indicated that people who did not promote this concept would

be more likely to engage in resistance and sabotage. Schlechty also pointed out that leaders often downplayed the fact that some people believed that the existing system already served their interests well. Thus, a leader had to guide one group of people, who were comfortable with the existing system, to redefine their interests, as well as the group that believed that the change would cause them to lose out in some way. He stated that leaders needed to invest heavily in social capital by writing, "Social capital consists of norms of reciprocity, trust, and feeling of common identity" (Schlechty, 2005, p. 59). A leader's responsibilities included addressing the personal and human needs of the members of the organization, along with the professional and technical needs. Schlechty (2005) stated technical needs included the "needs for positive recognition, a sense of involvement, feelings of support, and opportunities for collegiality" (p. 59).

Organizational Change and Mental Models

An advocate of looking at relationships to promote change was Peter Senge. *In Schools That Learn: A Fifth Discipline Fieldbook for Educators, Parents, and Everyone Who Cares About Education*, Senge (2000) reinforced the idea that schools and other organizations were influenced by the types of mental models and relationships found within the system. These included the interactions between teachers, students, and national political governing bodies that influenced schools. He proposed that if a member of a school system wanted to achieve improvements, the member needed to first look at the ways that people thought and interacted together.

Senge (2000) stated that our behaviors and attitudes were shaped by the images, assumptions, and stories that people carry in their minds of themselves, other people, institutions, and every aspect of the world. When looking at new ideas and changes, most people were drawn to take in and remember only the information that reinforced their existing mental models. Thus, the mental models that people held actually limited their ability to change.

Senge (2000) elaborated that these mental models, or self-generating beliefs, were often based on conclusions, which were inferred from what people observed in addition to past experiences. These often became obstacles in allowing us to experience new learning or to make changes. He indicated that people felt “our beliefs are the truth, the truth is obvious, our beliefs are based on real data, and the data we select are the real data” (p. 68). Thus, teachers and administrators in schools had to change some of the mental models that they had internalized in order to increase achievement of students on standardized tests.

This idea was also supported by Sarason (1990). He argued that effective school reform cannot happen until people move beyond superficial conceptions of educational systems and recognize the unseen values and attitudes about power, privilege, and knowledge that keep existing structures, regulations, and authority relationships in place.

Senge (2000) noted that there were multiple layers of leadership roles that were necessary for successful change in schools. There was a need for formal and informal leaders at the classroom, school, and community levels. These leaders provided various resources to promote change. Most importantly,

members of the system needed to become stewards of the children, the system, and one another, in order for change to occur.

Kotter and Cohen (2002) noted that leaders must model the trust and teamwork needed in the group to successfully implement a change. In order to impart successful change initiatives, educational leaders needed to be able to impart “visions that was so clear that they can be articulated in one minute or written up in one page” (Kotter and Cohen, 2002, p. 82). Evans (1996) supported this with his emphasis on clarity. Evans stated that “high performing systems show that their leaders provide direction that is clear, strong, and unambivalent” (p. 213). This clarity fostered commitment and garnered attention to the change initiative.

Phillips (1992) expanded on the need for clarity by a leader. He espoused that leaders gained credibility by being consistent and clear. Moreover, beyond being clear, leaders needed to be confident in what they said and then follow through with actions that were congruent with their words. He indicated that clarity, confidence, and follow-up actions that were congruent with words were some of the traits that made Abraham Lincoln an effective leader.

Langley and Jacobs (2006) challenged educators to explore what a leader was. They proposed that “any situation in which a person must make a decision that affects others defines that person as a leader” (p. 3). Thus, they summarized that everyone was a leader at one time or another in their lives. Langley and Jacobs (2006) elaborated that the success of a leader was demonstrated by the ability of a person to “motivate others to put their actions

into motions that benefit the whole, not just the individual” (p. 11). Additionally, Langley and Jacobs stated that successful leaders demonstrated five shared qualities or characteristics. These included the ability to be insightful, flexibility or resiliency, good interpersonal skills, continued personal and professional growth, and keeping in touch with the community. An important trait of effective leaders was being knowledgeable concerning the history, as well as the current direction, of the leaders’ domain.

Leading Staff through Changes

No Child Left Behind had required changes to our schools that could be categorized as disruptive innovations. Schlechty (2005) proposed that for these dramatic changes to be successfully implemented, schools must look at six critical systems:

“the way new members are recruited and inducted, the way knowledge is transmitted, the way power and authority are distributed, the way people and programs are evaluated, the way directions and goals are set, and the way boundaries that determine who is inside and who is outside the school are defined” (p. 65).

Schlechty (2005) purported that it was imperative that existing employees be given the support and encouragement they needed to implement changes from their leaders. The character of the leader was essential in helping members of the organization through the changes in the roles they held as a result of the innovation. Schlechty (2005) noted that there was “absolutely no substitute for honesty, and it is at this point that the integrity of leaders is the most important asset available to support the change effort” (pp. 84-85).

Routinely, teachers and school administrators had to solve technical problems or changes. These were the problems that people had the necessary know-how and procedures to solve. The more difficult problems to solve were the adaptive challenges. These required experiments, new discoveries, and adjustments from numerous places in the organization or community in order to successfully implement them. It was these changes that affected attitudes, values, and behaviors. Thus, school administrators needed to focus on how they were going to have staff participate and accept the adaptive changes associated with PSSA and high stakes testing (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

Malak (2002), in his survey of six schools in Southwestern Pennsylvania, concluded that in order to achieve successful changes and improvements, there needed to be an understanding of the interplay between teacher perceptions and attitudes within a school. Leaders who provided clear goals, involved staff in decision-making, and provided an orderly, caring environment tended to have higher rates of student achievement.

In order for changes to occur successfully, Langley and Jacobs (2006) stated that ownership was important. A person was more likely to embrace and implement a new concept if he or she had a vested interest in it. Furthermore, Langley and Jacobs indicated that leaders needed to recognize and work with the diverse qualities, motivations, and personalities found within their subordinates. Understanding and accepting these differences would help to bring about buy in by staff.

Kotter and Rathgeber (2005) proposed that there was an eight step process for successful change in their book, *Our Iceberg is Melting*. In the first two stages, leaders needed to set the stage for change by creating a sense of urgency and pulling together a team that would help guide the change. Next, leaders had to clarify the vision or strategy needed for the change. Steps four through seven involved making the change occur. In the fourth step, it was necessary for leaders to communicate, so that there was understanding and buy-in by the stakeholders. Leaders empowered others to act in the fifth step of successful change. Following this, it was important for leaders to help create some visible, short-term wins, remembering to keep persevering, and becoming more relentless in helping to achieve the new vision. Finally, Kotter and Rathgeber indicated that leaders needed to create the new culture and keep it from fading away.

Phases of Transitions

In order for staffs to successfully implement changes, which were often classified as situational, they needed to first go through a transition. According to Bridges (2003), transitions were psychological. They were “three-phase processes that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of a new situation that the change brings about” (p. 3). The first phase of transition was an ending. It was the time when one gives up the old ways and any old identities. In this phase, people often needed help dealing with their losses. It was similar to a grieving process. The second stage was often known as the Neutral Zone. During this stage, the old was left but the new had not been

fully implemented. According to Bridges this was a critical time when psychological realignments and repatternings needed to take place. The last phase was referred to as the New Beginning, which was when people were ready to come out of the transition and make a new start. At this stage, one adopted a new identity. It was often accompanied with increased energy and a new sense of purpose that tended to allow the change to work.

Goldring, Crowson, Laird, and Berk (2003) mirrored these phases in their study of Transition Leadership in schools. They identified three transition-leadership domains. The first dealt with recognizing that there was a substantial sense of loss due to a prior investment in success, in place, and in belonging. The second domain involved changing real and conceptual boundaries. This was the movement from assumptions to reality. The last phase involved providing a sense of direction, going “from” and moving “to”.

Considering this transition process, how were schools to implement necessary changes associated with No Child Left Behind? It was clear that there had to be strong leadership to guide educational staff through all of the transitional phases, especially the Neutral Zone. Educational leaders needed to be aware of the stages that staff must endure in order to truly accept and implement new ideas associated with high stakes testing. This included teaching techniques as well as new curricula. Leaders needed to be clear in presenting their visions if buy in by staff was to occur.

The Power of Storytelling

Pace Marshall (2006), in *The Power to Transform: Leadership that Brings Learning and Schooling to Life*, purported that stories have a powerful effect on change. She indicated that stories shape our consciousness and behavior by giving us images, symbols, and choices that we can either accept or shun. She proposed that “even in our data-driven culture, the power of story to crystallize an idea, mobilize behavior, and create momentum for often massive social change was disproportionate to the actual information it provides” (p. 5). The power of a story came from its meaning and wisdom. Stories evoked the spirit of people, inspired them, and gave them optimism for the future.

Wheatley (2007) supported this idea regarding the importance of stories. She proposed that it was processes, such as conversation and storytelling, that helped people to connect at a depth not available through charts and PowerPoint presentations. Expanding on this, Wheatley (2007) proposed that, “The organizations that people love to work in are those that have a sense of history, identity, and purpose” (p. 74).

Phillips (1992) supported Wheatley’s and Marshall’s idea that storytelling was a trait of a great leader. He pointed out that Abraham Lincoln was a master of the craft of storytelling. Phillips (1992) stated, “As a communicator, Abraham Lincoln liberally utilized stories and anecdotes, colloquial expressions, and symbols and imagery in order to influence and persuade his audience” (p. 159). Phillips also proposed that a reprimand could be softened by utilizing a story in such a way that negative emotions and feelings could be avoided.

Leadership

The Public Education System in the United States was being challenged to implement reforms or changes related to No Child Left Behind Legislation. Effective leadership was a priority to bring about successful changes that increase student achievement on high stakes tests. A majority of schools and businesses incorporated industrial aged thinking in their leadership styles. Our society was changing to the degree that this “old” thinking needed to be updated if leaders were going to implement positive long term changes.

Pink (2006) proposed that, in the 21st century, society entered a “Conceptual Age”. This was a result of affluence, technology, and globalization. In this new age, leaders felt empathy and sympathy for others, examined the viewpoint of others, and embraced the ethic of caring. Pink asserted that educators needed to move away from America’s test-happy system and look more at Emotional Intelligence in order to provide the necessary skills to be successful in the “Conceptual Age”.

Table 2

Pink’s Progression of Changes Due to Affluence, Technology, and Globalization

Conceptual Age	21 st Century	Creators and Empathizers
Information Age	20 th Century	Knowledge Workers
Industrial Age	19 th Century	Factory Workers
Agricultural Age	18 th Century	Farmers

The role of leadership in our schools was scrutinized as it pertained to student learning. White (2006) purported agreement with the Wallace Foundation that found that “leadership is second only to teaching in raising student achievement, especially in our lowest performing schools” (p. 8).

Leadership in Living Systems

Margaret Wheatley (2007) proposed that schools were “living systems” that were capable of self-organizing. In such a system, leaders needed to emphasize cooperation, caring, and generosity, not control, imposition, fear, or self-interest, which are foremost in organizations that were framed as machines. People in living systems had the ability to change, create, learn, and adapt. Members of a self-organizing living system created for themselves many of the roles that leaders had control over in hierarchical, bureaucratic organizations. Communities of practice were examples of these living systems.

Buckingham (2005) supported Wheatley’s belief that educational leaders needed to look at individual strengths of the members of the organization. Additionally, as Collins (2001) proposed, leaders needed to get the right people in the right seats of the bus. With high stakes testing, it was imperative that schools had teachers who were talented in Mathematics, Reading, and English, and who could instruct young students in their areas of expertise. Schools that were successful in improving their scores on tests needed to look at individual teachers. Palmer (1998) stated that “good teaching comes from the integrity and identity of the teacher” (p. 10), not methods and techniques. This was contrary to

the business/mechanical model that stressed processes being more important than individual workers.

Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers (2004) noted that the industrial age school design was inspired by the assembly line. The purpose of these schools was “producing a uniform, standardized product as efficiently as possible” (p. 9). Educators needed to look beyond training students for factory jobs and look at the realities of the society that today’s students were growing up in. Educators needed to expand beyond the level of reactive learning. Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers defined reactive learning as “habitual ways of thinking, of continuing to see the world within the familiar categories we’re comfortable with” (p. 10). This led to negative responses to actions that were different from those individuals knew and trusted.

Palmer (1998) went on to say that in education today there was an overemphasis on technique when leaders should be looking at a teacher’s identity and integrity. Instead of obsessing over objective knowledge, leaders should stress subjective engagement. And finally, instead of perseverating on the powers of intellect, schools needed to look at the power of emotions to expand the mind.

Once everyone was in the right place within the organization, Buckingham (2005) stated that leaders needed to make sure that their actions led to their employees knowing that they cared. Sloan practiced this idea of getting to know the members of the organization according to Gardner (1995). Wheatley (2007) believed that too often in today’s organizations and corporations, workers did not

feel that they contributed meaningfully or had a say in what was done. This led to widespread employee disengagement in organizations.

Phillips (1992) proposed that Abraham Lincoln spent a great deal of time developing strong relationships with his subordinates. He “listened, paid attention, and established trust” (p. 28) with the people who surrounded him. Leaders needed to show compassion and caring in their interactions to promote loyalty.

On the same lines, Kohn (1993) stated that an increased number of teachers and managers were recognizing that excellence was more likely to occur when there was a well-functioning team involved. When “resources are shared, skills and knowledge are exchanged, and each participant is encouraged and helped to do his or her best” (p. 54) then the background for success was created.

Vision

Glickman (2002) pointed out that successful schools had a common purpose. There needed to be a clear vision that was promoted by the leadership with ownership by the teaching staff. Buckingham (2005) also emphasized the importance of leaders being clear when presenting information to their followers. Additionally, Palmer (1998) stressed that leaders who called people toward a vision were necessary in successful organizations. Teachers needed to involve students actively in the learning process. Danielson (1996) included student participation as a Component of Professional Practice. Teachers needed to ensure that students saw a purpose to their learning. In order to achieve these

goals, administration needed to provide teachers with the necessary training, resources and support.

If educational leaders were going to be successful in improving student achievement, they needed to make sure that teachers had all the information necessary to have successful students. Wheatley (2007) said “only when information belongs to everyone can people organize rapidly and effectively around shifts in customers, competitors, or environments” (p. 40). She also indicated that people needed access to everyone at all levels in the organization to accomplish work. Not all educational organizations had this type of open communication channels.

Langley and Jacobs (2006) proposed that a vision needed to be shared by all members of an educational entity. Utilizing a play on Kennedy’s famous quote, they stated, “The successful leader should direct his or her colleagues to the point where they are not asking, ‘What can my school district do for me?’ but rather, ‘What can we do as a team to better our school or district?’” (p. 88).

Phillips (1992) supported this in his discussion of the leadership attributes of Abraham Lincoln. He proposed that Lincoln “delegated responsibility and authority, and empowered his subordinates to act on their own” (p. 42). Lincoln gained commitment from members of his organization by utilizing openness, empowerment, and coaching. This, in turn, led to loyalty and support for Lincoln by his followers.

Generative Learning Communities

Pace Marshall (2006) looked at schools as living organisms. If change was to occur, leaders needed to look at current systems as “generative learning communities”, systems that were life and soul affirming, and allow learning to thrive. Generative learning communities promoted continuous learning. Pace Marshall (2006) indicated these communities:

- Invite, develop, and nurture each child’s multiple learning potentials and natural predispositions for continuous learning- for meaning making, integration, exploration, discovery, invention, creation, and wisdom.
- Reconnect our children to the natural world; their communities; the human family; and the unity, wholeness, interdependence, diversity, novelty, and boundless creativity of life.
- Reengage our children’s rich interior lives-emotion, intuition, imagination, love, experience, and spirit- in learning.
- Nurture the potential of each child to wisely advance the human condition and co-create our future by developing their capacity to discern meaning from patterns, think systemically, take the long view, and act with moral purpose. (pp. 15-16.)

Historically, the ancient Chinese and Greeks stressed the importance of moral development in leadership. This was important so that leaders would not abuse their positions of powers. Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers (2004) promoted that today’s leaders, influenced by the technology-driven world, were more like technologists than philosophers. Present day leaders tended to be “focused on gaining and using power, driving change, influencing people, and maintaining an appearance of control” (p. 178). Today’s leaders were shortchanging the philosophical areas and not putting enough emphasis on personal interactions.

Transformational Leadership

Ross and Gray (2006) hypothesized that principals contributed to student achievement indirectly through teacher commitment and beliefs about their collective capacity. Their analysis of 205 elementary schools supported this hypothesis. They reported that schools with elevated collective teacher efficacy, greater teacher commitment to school mission, school-community partnerships, and higher student achievement had higher levels of transformational leadership. This leadership emphasized teacher empowerment, multiple stakeholder participation in decision making, and a reduced reliance on top-down change theories.

Estep (2000) reported on teachers in twenty rural districts in central Pennsylvania. His findings corroborated that teachers who felt empowered had leaders whom they perceived to have transformational leadership styles.

Qualities of transformational leaders were also reviewed by Haehsy (2002) in his study of Mr. Daniel Mack Gable, head wrestling coach at the University of Iowa. He concluded that transformational leaders exemplified high expectations, provided examples for modeling, and encouraged competition. Thus, a transformational leadership style seemed to promote teacher collective efficacy.

Teacher Efficacy

This being the case, what was meant by the term collective teacher efficacy? Manthey (2006), referred to Hoy's definition which clarified that collective efficacy was "the perceptions of teachers in a specific school that the faculty as a whole can execute courses of actions required to positively affect student achievement"

(p. 23). Leaders needed to provide adequate resources and time to develop skills for their teachers. This included opportunities for coaching, mentoring, and modeling. Manthey (2006) supported Hoy's summarization that "the consequences of high collective efficacy will be the acceptance of challenging goals, strong effort by teachers, and persistence in effort to overcome difficulties and succeed" (p. 23).

LoGerfo (2006) examined first graders and their teachers to determine if a teacher's own sense of responsibility made a difference in student achievement and how that sense of responsibility was nurtured in staff. She concluded that a teacher's sense of responsibility did make a difference in a student's reading achievement. LoGerfo indicated that those in leadership roles needed to set and support clear goals for teachers.

Along with clear goals, leaders needed to provide opportunities for empowerment of teachers when working to meet the goals of their students. Berry-Rickert (2007) proposed that without strong teacher preparation, mentoring, and induction programs that address teacher efficacy, attrition will continue to plague reforms. Building on this, Fisher (2000), from her study of three beginning female secondary teachers, indicated that mentoring programs should focus on the uniqueness of new teachers, that teacher beliefs needed to be examined prior to hiring, and that experience needed to be emphasized in teacher preparation programs.

Additionally, Azodi (2006) in her study of principals and public school teachers from all 50 states, reported that principals' support for student learning

and teachers greatly influenced teacher efficacy. Again, she found that creating and maintaining a vision was of utmost importance. Her results also stressed the importance of communication and collaboration in school systems.

Contrary to these findings, Howell (2006) indicated that he found no correlation between self-reported teacher self-efficacy and student performance. He purported a significant negative correlation between teacher's years of experience and student performance in mathematics.

Conclusion

Few educators have proposed that schools do not need to implement changes in order to help students achieve to their highest potential. It was how these changes were promoted that was controversial. Pace Marshall (2006) stated it eloquently when she stated,

“Many of our children have become schooling disabled in a learning-abundant universe. Our schools must be transformed. Adding wings to caterpillars does not create butterflies; it creates awkward and dysfunctional caterpillars. Butterflies emerge through transformation. So it is with our system of schooling, and so it is with our schools. It is my belief that there is no place in the future for a school in the traditional sense of the word” (p. 9).

In order for schools to meet the challenges of the No Child Left Behind legislation, school personnel needed to advance beyond their comfort zones and develop new mental models that exemplified what the schools of the future would look like. Strong, effective leadership would be instrumental in guiding staff through the necessary transitions.

As Schlechty (2005) indicated, educators needed to remember the following during times of disruptive innovations associated with NCLB:

Every Teacher a Leader

Every Leader a Teacher

Every Child a Success (p. 106).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2001 required schools to implement numerous changes that directly affected the teaching staff at all levels. The reauthorization, known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), mandated changes in the areas of teacher education and certification, as well as teacher performance in the classroom. With the deadline of 2014 looming for 100% of students to be Proficient or Advanced on state assessment tests, teachers faced the challenge of raising test scores of their students.

Secondary Special Education Teachers were affected by the changes required by NCLB. Their credentials were scrutinized to meet set standards and the subgroup of Special Education Students they worked with was at times, placing their school districts, that would not otherwise be in trouble, on the list of schools in “warning” or “school improvement”. These teachers had multifaceted initiatives to implement within their classrooms in a relatively short period of time. This was of concern as Heifetz (1994) warned that quick fixes may have long term consequences.

No Child Left Behind impacted Secondary Special Education Teachers through the changes and strategies that they were required to implement on a daily basis. Wheatley (2007) proposed the culture of high-stakes testing had numerous causes but could be changed. She indicated that applying old theories would not be successful. Districts needed to look at system-wide

changes. Leaders within these school systems needed to encourage experiments, support beliefs and dynamics, and sponsor faculty and staff to connect with outside entities. Secondary Special Education Teachers needed training and resources to implement the changes required of them.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the evolution of a professional path for Secondary Special Education Teachers since the inception of the No Child Left Behind Act. The researcher examined the relationships these teachers had with their students and administrators within their school districts. The study followed the Portraiture format as Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot proposed. The researcher told the story of the challenges Secondary Special Education Teachers faced with NCLB as it related to the commitment, confidence, compassion, and connection these teachers had with their students and administrators. The research investigated the changes Secondary Special Education Teachers faced in today's public schools as they evolved in educational practices and relationships.

Statement of the Problem

As the deadline of 2014 drew nearer for 100% of students to be Proficient or Advanced on the Pennsylvania State School Assessment (PSSA), Secondary Special Education Teachers had many change initiatives and ideas by school administrators to implement in order to increase the scores of students on the PSSA. The researcher proposed that this was directly affecting the compassion, commitment, connection, and confidence that Secondary Special Education

Teachers were experiencing in the workplace as Pace Marshall (2006) proposed in her book, *The Power to Transform: Leadership that Brings Learning and Schooling to Life*. This study explored the evolution of Secondary Special Education Teachers and the challenges they faced in their relationships with students and school leaders as a result of NCLB.

Setting of the Study

The setting of this qualitative study comprised four school districts within Central Pennsylvania. Central Pennsylvania was selected to meet the schedule and time constraints of the researcher, who resided in that area. The school district selection process utilized theoretical sampling. Two districts were selected that had Special Education Subgroups and two districts that did not have Special Education Subgroups. In order to have a Special Education Subgroup, a district had to have at least 40 identified students within the 13 categories of disabilities listed in the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEIA). The researcher used public data, available through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, to identify school districts that had Special Education Subgroups in either eighth or eleventh grades.

By selecting the setting for this research, the researcher met Holliday's (2007) criteria for research settings which allowed for boundedness, a variety of relevant, interconnected data, sufficient richness, small setting, and access to the setting.

Participant Selection

Interview Sample

Two teachers from each district were interviewed in this study, totaling eight teachers. The researcher reviewed the list of possible Secondary Special Education Teachers with a school administrator from the selected districts and chose two teachers based on who was willing to participate, who met the established criteria, and who offered some diversity as compared to other selected interviewees. Each teacher selected participated in a face to face, in-depth interview and a short, follow-up phone interview for clarification of any answers. The initial interview was highly structured, whereas the follow-up interview was semi-structured to allow for a richer flow of information. At an agreed upon time following the interview, the researcher shadowed the teacher for a three hour time period to observe the teacher interacting with peers, students, and administrators in the school setting. The names of the school districts and teachers remained anonymous within the report of findings resulting from the study and at all other times during this study. Data gathered from the interviews and other sources were secured in locked areas within the researcher's home at all times and will be kept for a five year time period before being destroyed.

Methods of Collecting Data

Creswell (1998) indicated that common techniques utilized to collect information in a case study included documents and records, interviews, observations, and physical artifacts. Initially, the researcher utilized document

analysis to gain information from the Pennsylvania Department of Education to form the two categories of school districts that had Special Education Subgroups in either eighth or eleventh grades. The districts were narrowed down to those within Central Pennsylvania. Next, two school districts were randomly selected from each category.

Purposeful sampling was utilized to select the teachers from each school district. A purposeful sampling occurs when the researcher determines the nature of the participants prior to the research interview process. In this study the teachers met the following requirements:

1. Participants were currently teaching full time within their school districts.
2. Participants were special education teachers.
3. Participants taught students in grades 7-12 who took the PSSA.
4. Participants had to have taught for at least 3 years.
5. Participants had to be willing to be interviewed twice and be shadowed within their school setting.

After selection of the teachers, interview times and a shadowing schedule were established between the researcher and teachers. The researcher used an audio-recorder during the interview of each teacher and took field notes. Yin's (1994) skills for a researcher in a case study were utilized:

1. able to ask good questions
2. be a good listener
3. be adaptive and flexible

4. have a firm grip of issues being studied
5. unbiased by preconceived notions.

Following the interviews, the tapes were transcribed. The transcriptions were then analyzed for common threads. The researcher utilized open coding to categorize the information into the four areas of confidence, commitment, compassion, and connection. Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul (1997) defined coding as reading and rereading a portion of data and providing labels that identify a meaning unit. These were then sorted into categories or “bins”. Next, relationships among the categories were analyzed, arranged, and organized into a meaningful form. Creswell (1998) proposed analyzing the information by utilizing axial coding to arrange the data in new ways based on the patterns of data collected.

This researcher utilized a cross-interview analysis for the interview questions as Patton proposed (1990). Thus, topics were able to be grouped from the answers even if it was not found in the same place in each interview. Additionally, Miles and Huberman (1994) indicated that a cross-case analysis would allow for greater generalizability. Thus, the researcher had a greater chance to apply relevance or applicability of findings to other similar settings. Additionally, a cross-case analysis allowed for a more sophisticated description with stronger explanations.

Research Questions

The following research questions were utilized to frame the study

within Pace Marshall's theory dealing with the effects of high stakes testing on teachers:

1. How has the high stakes testing climate affected the confidence of Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers in relation to their ability to increase achievement in their students within the time restraints mandated by NCLB?
2. In what ways has NCLB affected the commitment exhibited by Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers to deliver instruction to their students?
3. How has the Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers' sense of compassion for students and others evolved since the implementation of NCLB?
4. How have NCLB changes affected the connection Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers form with their students and school leaders?
5. How has leadership in schools and their ideas for change affected the confidence, commitment, compassion, and connection Secondary Special Education Teachers have in their daily interactions with students and administrators?

Interview Questions

The following questions were utilized during the initial interviews of the eight teachers selected. Follow-up questions were asked during the second interview to clarify answers given and to expand on areas that had become reoccurring

themes throughout the responses elicited by the interviewees. Questions were open-ended to allow the researcher to gather in-depth, rich information.

1. How has your certification or highly qualified status changed as a result of NCLB regulations?
2. Describe how you feel about the Bridge and the HOUSSE requirements.
3. Explain how the commitment, in other words the dedication to a long-term course of action, engagement, and involvement that Special Education Teachers have regarding Special Education Students in your school, has evolved since the implementation of No Child Left Behind if at all.
4. In what ways can Special Education Teachers increase the scores of their students on the PSSA to help them achieve proficiency?
5. Compare the teaching of Special Education Students in your school now compared to a few years ago. Are these students better prepared for standardized tests now? Why?
6. Describe how interactions or connections, meaning the relationships and associations, between you and other teachers and special education students have changed over the last five years.
7. Districts have implemented numerous curricular changes to increase scores on the PSSA. Explain how these changes have affected Special Education Students in your building.

8. List ways in which your district has helped Special Education Teachers to be more effective in increasing test scores of their Special Education Students.
9. Give examples of how your building principal or special education supervisor influenced your confidence, belief in your own ability, that students can achieve the goal of 100% proficient or advanced scores on the PSSA with your instruction. Do you feel they have been successful?
10. What changes as a result of PSSA have you and your colleagues observed in your Special Education Students throughout the last five years?
11. Why or why not would teachers in your building recommend a relative who is about to enter college go into the field of Special Education?
12. Describe the relationship Special Education Teachers in your building have with Special Education Students and their knowledge of Special Education Students' needs and concerns since the implementation of NCLB.
13. In what ways has the school climate and interactions with students evolved since the implementation of NCLB initiatives in your building?
14. Explain how your building principal reacts to concerns in your building regarding NCLB.
15. How has the compassion, the urge to help and concern for the troubles of students, and commitment to students by the Special Education Teachers in your building changed since NCLB was enacted?

16. What control do Special Education Teachers in your building have in regards to student achievement, including all ability levels of students?
17. What do Special Education Teachers in your building and you see as the positive and negative effects of NCLB in your school?
18. Are there times when you have questioned the purpose of your teaching role in which you have felt more like a glorified aide in the classroom setting?
19. Is there anything about the evolution of Special Education Teachers since the inception of No Child Left Behind and related issues that I have not asked that you feel would be pertinent to my research?

Table 3

Matrix for Research Questions

Research Questions	Interview Questions
1. How has the high stakes testing climate affected the confidence of Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers in relation to their ability to increase achievement in their students within the time restraints mandated by NCLB?	4, 5, 8, 9, 16,17
2. In what ways has NCLB affected the commitment exhibited by Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers to deliver instruction to their students?	1, 2, 3, 11,17
3. How has the Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers' sense of compassion for students and others evolved since the implementation of NCLB?	10, 15,17
4. How have NCLB changes affected the connection Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers form with their students and school leaders?	6,12, 16, 17, 18
5. How has leadership in schools and their ideas for change affected the confidence, commitment, compassion, and connection Secondary Special Education Teachers have in their daily interactions with students and administrators?	7, 13, 14, 17

Research Design

In this study, the researcher utilized a qualitative case study research technique. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) indicated, a qualitative format fits this study since it “attempts to uncover the nature of persons’ experiences” (p. 19). Patton (1990) supported that the nature of a qualitative study, with its open-ended questions, allowed the researcher to see the world as viewed by the

respondents. Thus, the researcher was able to “understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories” (Patton, 1990, p. 24). Additionally, Miles and Huberman (1994) proposed that the study would focus on “naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings” (p. 10). This allowed the researcher to get a clear picture as to what was actually happening within the research setting. Although, Strauss and Corbin (1990) indicated that this information should be “abstract enough and include sufficient variation to make it applicable to a variety of contexts related to that phenomenon” (p. 23).

While engaged in this study, the researcher applied the principles of qualitative research as outlined by Tesch (1990). Tesch upheld the following tenets dealing with qualitative research:

1. Analysis is not the last phase in the research process: it is concurrent with collection or cyclic.
2. The analysis process is systematic and comprehensive, but not rigid.
3. Attending to data includes a reflective activity that results in a set of analytical notes that guide the process.
4. Data are “segmented,” i.e., divided into relevant and meaningful “units,” yet the connection to the whole is maintained.
5. The data segments are categorized according to an organizing system that is predominantly derived from the data themselves.
6. The main intellectual tool is comparison.
7. Categories for sorting segments are tentative and preliminary in the beginning; they remain flexible.
8. Manipulating qualitative data during analysis is an eclectic activity; there is no one “right” way.
9. The procedures are neither “scientific” nor “mechanistic”; qualitative analysis is “intellectual craftsmanship.”
10. The result of the analysis is some type of higher-level synthesis (pp. 95-97).

The study was triangulated based on information obtained through interviews, document collection, and participant observations to increase validity.

An expert panel of public school administrators, including three cabinet level members of administration, reviewed the research questions and established initial reliability through a review as it related to the purpose of the study. The interviews were in-depth, with the initial interview running approximately one hour in length and the second interview lasting approximately 10 to 15 minutes in length. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed to ensure that all details were available for analysis. Additionally, the interviews followed the features given by Wengraf (2006). He indicated that interviews for qualitative research should have the following characteristics:

1. Designed for the purpose of improving knowledge
2. Contain a special type of conversational interaction
3. Has to be planned and prepared for like other forms of research activity but what is planned is a deliberate half-scripted or quarter – scripted interview allowing for improvisation by the interviewer
4. Must be in-depth.

After the interviews, each teacher was shadowed by the observer for a half day in order to see the observee interacting with peers, students, and administrators throughout a normal school day.

The study followed the “portraiture” design of Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983). The researcher intended to tell the story of Secondary Special Education Teachers in light of NCLB mandates. This was accomplished, as Lawrence-Lightfoot promoted, by exploring and describing the competing and dissonant perspectives and searching for their connections to other phenomena in order to piece together the story line. As Weltly (1983) pointed out, as a portraitist, the researcher listened for a story, compared to the ethnographer, who listened to a story. The rich text painted a picture of what was happening to Special

Education Teachers today. As Merriam (1988) stated, “research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education” (p. 3).

As Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) pointed out, “Portraiture is a method of qualitative research that blurs the boundaries of aesthetics and empiricism in an effort to capture the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience and organizational life” (p. xv). The researcher intended to document and analyze the perspectives and experiences of Secondary Special Education teachers in light of NCLB mandates to create a narrative that was authentic and compelling in nature. The narrative explored the five features of portraiture: Context (setting), Voice, Relationship, Emergent Themes, and Aesthetic Whole. In the narrative, portraits were developed of the teachers through the reporting of the dialogue between the researcher and the subjects. As Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) pointed out, the authenticity of the narrative required richness and resonance in the analysis and had to be designed to capture the “richness, complexity, and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, conveying the perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experiences” (p. 3).

The overarching goal of this research was to develop new understandings and insights into the effects of NCLB on Secondary Special Education Teachers and shed some light on changes that were warranted. It was the hope of the researcher that the narrative would encourage and inspire readers to think more

deeply into the evolution of Secondary Special Education Teachers delving into the interaction of values, personality, structure, and history related to NCLB and the teachers it affected. In summary, this researcher intended to follow the research style of Wierzbowski (2008) who utilized portraiture and indicated, “motivations guiding portraiture are to inform and inspire, to document and transform, and to speak to the head and the heart” (p. 63).

Data Analysis

Framework

The work of Pace Marshall (2006) was utilized to develop the framework for this study. In her writings, she analyzed the effects of high stakes testing and the emphasis on data on teaching and teachers. She concluded that society had taken the self, the heart, and the life out of educators. This resulted from the loss of compassion, commitment, connection, and confidence experienced by teachers in the climate of high stakes testing.

Pilot

After the researcher obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board and the Administration and Leadership Studies Department at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, a pilot study was conducted. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine if the interview questions would allow the researcher to gain the data needed to answer the research questions. During the pilot study, the researcher interviewed two special education teachers who met the requirements in a central Pennsylvania school district. The researcher taped the two interviews in order to practice her skills at conducting this type of qualitative

research. The researcher then analyzed the answers received from the interviewees to determine if she needed to revise or add additional questions to obtain the rich descriptions necessary to complete a case study.

Upon analysis of results, the researcher surmised that there needed to be a clarification of the definitions for compassion, commitment, connection, and confidence with the interviewees before beginning to ask the research questions. The researcher added some wording to questions to help promote clarity to the interviewees. There was a concern by the interviewees that their answers be kept confidential. They were assured that their identities would remain anonymous.

Summary of Chapter

In this chapter, the researcher reviewed the aspects of a qualitative research case study that was utilized to answer the research questions. It included how the researcher selected research participants and sites, conducted the interviews, analyzed the data, and reported findings. The researcher established that validity came from triangulation of data collection, interviews, and observation of participants. Initially, reliability of questions was established through expert panel reviews and subsequently the Pilot Study.

The researcher intended to utilize the Portraiture Qualitative Research style of Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) to authentically tell the story of how Secondary Special Education Teachers had evolved since the inception of NCLB mandates in the confidence, commitment, compassion, and connections they had in regards to their students and school administrators. The researcher told the

story of these teachers as it emerged from the interviews and observations obtained in the school settings.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA AND ANALYSIS

The goal of this qualitative case study was to tell the story of the changes in the professional path of Secondary Special Education Teachers since the inception of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). In order to reveal the evolution of the path of these educators, the researcher interviewed eight Secondary Special Education Teachers within Central Pennsylvania. Four of these teachers were from school districts that had Special Education Subgroups related to the Pennsylvania State School Assessment (PSSA) and the other four instructors were located in districts that did not have Special Education Subgroups based on the PSSA. The districts of five Central Pennsylvania counties were analyzed to select four districts that met the aforementioned requirements.

In addition to the interviews, each teacher was observed in their school setting to gain information regarding their interactions with peers, students, and administrators. As Stake (1999) indicated, qualitative researchers “try to observe the ordinary, and they try to observe it long enough to comprehend what, for this case, ordinary means. For them, naturalistic observation has been the primary medium of acquaintance” (p. 44). This process allows the researcher to sift through the information and provide the thick description that is expected of qualitative studies.

The analysis of the data was presented utilizing the portraiture style of Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot. The researcher was not satisfied with gathering data, but instead desired to shape a portrait or story in an effort to interpret and analyze

information and convey this to others. Additionally, the researcher uncovered discordant threads or themes that provided for greater, in-depth descriptions and analysis.

Stake (1999) proposed that “all research is a search for patterns, for consistencies” (p. 44). In order to reveal these common threads, qualitative data were collected to answer the research questions:

1. How has the high stakes testing climate affected the confidence of Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers in relation to their ability to increase achievement in their students within the time restraints mandated by NCLB?
2. In what ways has NCLB affected the commitment exhibited by Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers to deliver instruction to their students?
3. How has the Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers' sense of compassion for students and others evolved since the implementation of NCLB?
4. How have NCLB changes affected the connection Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers form with their students and school leaders?
5. How has leadership in schools and their ideas for change affected the confidence, commitment, compassion, and connection Secondary Special Education Teachers have in their daily interactions with students and administrators?

Chapter Four is divided into two sections. First, the stories of the eight teachers are created based on the interviews and observations. The stories are anecdotal, as Slavin (2007) surmises, in that “they often contain quotations and try to describe what a particular situation or view of the world is like in a narrative form” (p. 123). The interviews are reported with summaries of the responses to the interview questions within the framework of *commitment, confidence, compassion, and connections*. Secondly, the observation field notes are conveyed. Next, the data are analyzed for the common or discordant threads or patterns. These patterns will become rich sources to help the researcher complete the portraits or stories.

The research findings are first divided into the four districts utilized for the study. Each section begins with a description of the district to set the background or setting. Next, the information gathered from the interviews of the individual teachers is divided into four sections based on Pace-Marshall’s (2006) theory of *connection, confidence, compassion, and commitment* of educators as it relates to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and high stakes testing. The theory provides a framework to analyze the “data for similarities and patterns to develop coding categories so that they can make sense of the data” (Slavin, 2007, p. 127). Following this, the field notes from the observations are reported to provide the rich, thick description found in qualitative studies. Lastly, the information is sorted into common and discordant themes.

Establishing the Setting and Reporting the Data in District A

Located in an urban setting in central Pennsylvania, District A consisted of nearly 8,000 students and encompassed 60 square miles. The District was the second largest employer in the county where it was located. A large portion of the community work force consisted of medical and retail establishments. District A was comprised of one senior high, one junior high, ten elementary schools, a secondary alternative education school, and a community education center. The district was one of the largest employers in the county in which it was located. District A's population consisted of 20% Special Education Students. It had a 67% graduation rate with a 33% drop out rate (Penn Data, 2010). The Free and Reduced Lunch numbers for District A were at 50% (portal.state.pa, 2010). The district promoted itself as being "innovative". Even with its high percentage of Special Education Students, 5% above the Pennsylvania State average, the District consistently scored near the top of the county in PSSA scores for Writing and was in the middle range in the county for scores in Reading and Math. The District had been in "warning" and "school improvement" during the past five years due to its Special Education Subgroup, at both the Elementary and Secondary Levels, not making AYP (paayp, 2010). The primary mission of the District A is to "deliver the written curriculum in a thorough and efficient manner to every school-age student, and measure said delivery to its purported effect."

Conceptual Framework of the Interview Questions in District A: Lucy

The researcher began gathering data in District A with an interview of Lucy, a Special Education Teacher who had been teaching almost thirty years. The two

met on a Saturday morning at the home of the researcher, and sat at the kitchen table as streams of sunlight showered the room with warmth. Lucy smiled often throughout the questions and answers that were peppered with her natural laughter. Lucy indicated that she had received a dual degree in Special Education and Elementary Education K-8 during her undergraduate education. Thus, she was not affected as much as other teachers with the “highly qualified status”. One of the requirements of NCLB was that all teachers of record had to be “highly qualified” in the subject area in which they were instructing students. Her tone became serious when she emphasized that “it was rather insulting that you had to go and prove that you could teach this when you had been doing this for years and all of the sudden you’re not qualified!”, when she answered Interview Question 2.

Commitment. The discussion continued with Interview Question 3, dealing with the commitment that Special Education Teachers and Lucy had for their students. She claimed that she and other teachers still had commitment to their students and wanted them to achieve. She was concerned that schools today are “trying to mold them (Special Education Students) to become more regular ed. [education] so called students than actually addressing their needs.” Lucy proposed a return to the “old ways,” but realized that it was not going to happen due to the laws guiding education.

District A implemented new programs such as Systems 180 and Power Teaching to promote achievement in students. Lucy reported that she did not believe that “any child was going to be left way behind.” With the changes

implemented following NCLB, she was able to help all students, not just Special Education Students.

Confidence. Confidence by both the teacher and student were important in order for learning to occur. Lucy remarked that District A had provided useful in-services to help the teachers gain knowledge to be more successful in the classroom. She felt supported by the administration in her building, as evidenced by her responses to Interview Questions 8 and 9. Even with these in-services, Lucy stated that she had not felt that having 100% of students reaching proficient or advanced scores on the PSSA was attainable.

I always said that when you're playing with play dough, it's not going to change to marble and that's exactly the kind of student that we have. You know I can't turn it to marble. You know I'm sculpting with play dough. It's going to get hard and it's going to, but it's not going to become marble.

She went on to emphasize that "In every basket of apples there's going to be bruises on some and some are going to be shiny. But we don't see that anymore. Everybody has to fit into the same mold."

When dealing with student confidence as examined in Interview Questions 4 and 5, Lucy commented that she has seen the confidence level of students increase due to exposure to regular education curricular materials and not having instruction "scaled down as much." She also observed the confidence of students increase in the math class that she co-teaches that utilized the Power Teaching Math Model.

Compassion. Compassion and caring are traits often utilized to describe Special Education Teachers. Lucy contended that these traits had changed since the inception of NCLB, when she replied to Interview Question 15. She

noted that younger teachers seemed to be more concerned with the curriculum and not as concerned about the individual students. Part of this was due to the fact that there were fewer opportunities to work in small groups and make connections with students. Lucy stated that as a result of NCLB, teachers were “so concerned with tests, tasks, and the content that have to be taught, that they don’t think about what this child is bringing to the table.” Telling students that “I’m glad you’re here today” or “that’s a really nice shirt you have on today” was still important to Lucy.

The lack of a strong bond between teacher and student had an effect on achievement, according to Lucy when she responded to Interview Question 10. In the past, students had a greater desire to make the teacher proud of their work. Additionally, the teacher was able to stay on top of students and pay close attention to their classroom work, ensuring that assignments were completed correctly.

Connections. Connections between teachers and students, as well as those between students and their peers, had changed since NCLB. When responding to Interview Question 12, Lucy observed that Special Education Students were more connected to other students in the school. They had joined more activities both in school and after school hours. They were not as segregated as they once were. Lucy maintained that this had been a positive outcome.

The same could not be said, according to Lucy, about the connections that were evident between Special Education Teachers and their Special Education Students. She alleged that the “focus is all academics, it’s not the whole child.”

Additionally, Lucy voiced concern that educators are neglecting the area of “what they (the students) bring to the table.”

Observations and Field Notes in District A: Lucy

Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) proposed when doing research, “A snapshot is taken at a moment in time and judgments are made about the success or worth of the school” (p. 24). Thus, the researcher conducted observations in District A to substantiate information obtained in the interviews and to refine the clarity of the narrative that was being created.

On a crisp, cool morning in late October, the researcher arrived at one of the secondary buildings in District A. After walking the city block from the parking lot to the unlocked entrance, the researcher was greeted by the security person for the building. After signing in, she was instructed to go to the office to check in and then return to be assigned a visitor badge to wear while in the building. The secretaries in the office were friendly and gave a map of the building to the researcher, pointing out the location of the elevator and the location of the fourth floor classroom in which the first teacher would be located. Upon returning to the security guard desk, a color coded visitor pass was given to be worn throughout the morning. Walking down the hall, it was evident that cleanliness and management were stressed in this new building. The floors, walls, and ceilings were immaculate. The hallways almost gave the impression of a ghost town since there was not any movement in them. There were no papers in the hallways, no lockers left ajar, no scuff marks on the floor, and no adults or students in sight. It was only as classroom doors were passed that a glimpse of

activity could be caught through the rectangular glass openings located above the door handles.

Upon entering the classroom identified by the secretaries, the researcher was greeted by Lucy. In her 50s, Lucy had taught in the District for just short of thirty years, working in both Elementary and Secondary settings. This particular class was a co-taught Math class with twelve students. It was explained that the remaining members of the classroom were attending a movie, *Ghostbusters*. This was the reward for a School Wide Behavioral Support Plan that was posted in each classroom. Lucy led the class in a review of rules for working with positive and negative integers while Mr. M., the Regular Education Teacher, set up the Smart Board. The students then proceeded to obtain Acti-votes out of a case at the side of the room to begin a review. Mr. M., a male teacher in his late 20's, kept the students on task throughout the lesson activities. He conducted the review, giving math problems, having students solve them on paper or in their heads, and then indicating their choice for the correct answer with the Acti-votes. While this instruction was proceeding, Lucy was circulating around the room helping individual students who were experiencing difficulties. At one point in the lesson, Mr. M. clarified to the class that he and Lucy were going to be looking at the results together. This reinforced the significance of the role that Lucy played within that co-taught setting.

When the bell rang, Lucy and the researcher walked down the hallway to the next math class. Again, it was a co-taught class with Mrs. D. being the regular education instructor. This class was somewhat different in that they implemented

the Power Teaching Math curriculum. As in the previous class, the number of students present was reduced due to the reward movie. Seven students were in attendance for this review of integers. This review consisted of a contest between two teams covering addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of positive and negative integers. The students seemed much more involved in the review and excited about their ability to solve the problems than the previous class. They offered each other support and praise when solving problems. The students' desks were arranged in clusters of 4 or 5 desks while the previous class was divided in half with fifteen desks on one side of the room and the other fifteen desks facing these on the far side of the room. Both classrooms had a homey feel with carpeting on the floor and various positive bulletin boards scattered throughout each setting.

During third period, Lucy returned to Mr. M.'s classroom for another math class. Again, the class was reviewing working with positive and negative integers. Initially, there were six students in the classroom, but halfway through the period, the other sixteen students returned from the movie. Accompanying the students were three paraprofessionals. Again, as in period one, Mr. M. conducted the review utilizing the Smart Board and Acti-votes as Lucy circulated around the room. In all three classes, it was evident that Lucy cared about the students and that they respected her as a teacher. Additionally, students were actively engaged during each period with Lucy taking an active role in each classroom situation. This supported the information from her interview with the researcher.

Conceptual Framing of the Interview Questions in District A: Joe

The second teacher interviewed in District A was Joe, a Senior High Work Experience Coordinator in his fifties who worked with Special Education Students. Joe chose to be interviewed within the work office of the researcher. When asked interview questions 1 and 2, he explained that he moved to Pennsylvania from Michigan to begin his teaching career. When he moved from Michigan he was able to transfer a Special Education Certificate from K-12. Over the years, he worked with numerous students with Homebound Instruction or Instruction-in-the-Home situations along with the Work Experience Program. Thus, he was able to become highly qualified to teach Special Education Students in all core subjects (Math, Science, Social Studies, and English). A concern of his was the number of teachers, who when passing Praxis tests, were then qualified to teach all students in core subjects and then would abandon ship and opt to become regular education teachers. One of the main reasons for doing so, according to Joe, was not being “responsible for all the litigated materials” anymore.

Commitment. As far as commitment of Special Education Teachers to work with their students, Joe felt it had always been there but Progress Monitoring was changing this. When discussing Interview Question 3, he viewed the commitment as “a legal commitment and it’s not really a matter of personal choice so I would say it’s not quite the way it was when they had their contained classroom.”

According to Joe, an area of concern for Special Education Teachers was the sense of not being in control of their domain. At times they felt like a second wheel in the classroom setting when in co-teaching situations. This had an effect on the commitment these teachers had for students and their overall teaching experience.

Confidence. Even though District A had gone through changes in the positions of Director of Special Education and Senior High School Principal recently, Joe stated that the District had provided “very effective in-services” and programs to help develop the skills of their students in regards to the PSSA. The District had utilized Systems 180 and Study Island to help develop mastery of eligible content. Within his responses to Interview Questions 4, 8, and 9, he affirmed that the administration always did “what’s in the best interest of the student.” He viewed it as a “very student centered philosophy by both administrators to make this work.” The in-services and the student centered philosophy had led to greater confidence in teachers.

Expanding on this, Joe indicated that many of the new initiatives were for both Regular and Special Education Students. Thus, all teachers worked together to implement strategies. This teamwork approach helped to create confidence in the staff.

Compassion. Being a Work Experience Coordinator gave Joe a unique experience with students. He viewed his work as addressing the “abilities” of students more so than the “disabilities” of students in his everyday interactions. Joe expressed care and concern regarding all of his students as well as his

peers, both Regular Education and Special Education Teachers, within his answer to Interview Question 15.

In his response to Interview Question 10, he admitted there was a concern by Special Education Teachers regarding meeting the emotional needs of students. Teachers felt they had to be engaged with students and therefore did not take the time to discuss personal issues with students. They tended to “issue them a pass to go talk to a guidance counselor where we used to take care of some of that.”

Connections. Connections, within District A, had changed “dramatically” between the Special Education Teaching Staff and the Regular Education Teaching Staff since NCLB. Previously, Joe indicated the Special Education Staff was a “separate entity to the school”. With the implementation of NCLB mandates and co-teaching, there was more “unity” within the staff. In response to Interview Question 18, he admitted that a few problems developed when the Special Education Teachers felt like they were an “inferior person in that class, more of a teacher’s assistant than a co-teacher”.

Throughout his discussion of Interview Question 12, Joe indicated that connections with students have evolved since NCLB. In his role as the Work Experience Coordinator, he continued to believe he had strong connections to his students. He admitted other teachers have ended up referring students more to Guidance Counselors for issues that they would have once handled themselves.

Observations and Field Notes in District A: Joe

The researcher gathered field notes by observing Joe in a secondary school in District A. The building, a renovated older building was spotless and orderly. It still maintained many of its original architectural designs but they were intertwined with updates, many to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Joe, a Work Experience Instructor in his mid-fifties, was on the phone talking with a parent about difficulties a student was having in school and giving information about an upcoming job interview when the researcher arrived. The office was crowded with three teacher desks, one for the Transition Coordinator, one for the Work Experience Secretary and another for Joe. Pictures, books, and sports paraphernalia covered the room. An older orange carpet covered the floor with a brown area rug in the center of the room. Two students were in the outer area of the office and were the designated office runners for that class period. A refrigerator was located in the outer office area that various teachers visited throughout the time to get lunches and drinks. They all stopped in to exchange pleasantries with Joe and the other staff in the room.

When he completed his call, Joe greeted the researcher and proceeded down the stairway to the In-School Suspension/Behavioral Intervention Room to talk with a student and the teacher covering the classroom. Walking at a brisk pace, we reached the room and Joe talked to the student about the conversation he had just completed with his father and how he was to practice mock interviews later that day. The next stop was the office to check for mail. After gathering

candy from the secretaries and joking with them, he headed back to his office. Earlier in the day, he had been proctoring PSSA retakes for Seniors who did not score proficient or advanced in eleventh grade. When in his office, Joe spotted the teacher who he wanted to conduct the mock interview with the student, and he beckoned him to come into his office to discuss what needed to be accomplished and why. While all of this was going on, the Transition Coordinator was interviewing students to develop the Transition section of their IEPs and the secretary was meeting with a student for whom she had arranged to purchase a pair of non-skid shoes needed for his work site. It was non-stop action in the small room. This was not surprising since Joe was servicing 80 students in his Work Experience Program, overseeing two Special Education Assistants (SEAs), and had 22 students on his roster for which he was responsible for writing IEPs. The secretary reminded Joe that he needed to sign the ACCESS papers that needed to be submitted for reimbursement for SEA services with students.

Joe met with several students to discuss various issues from work hours, to grades, to attendance in classes and at work sites. In every interaction, Joe took the time to ask students about their families or about the extra activities in which they were involved. It was evident during the observation that Joe exhibited compassion and commitment to the students with whom he interacted. Beyond this, he appeared to be well liked by his teaching peers as well as support staff in the building. Again, the observation supported details reported by Joe in his interview.

Establishing the Setting and Reporting Data in District B

District B, found among the rolling hills of Central Pennsylvania, is located in a small, rural town with a population of approximately 2,200 people. On average, the district graduates 100 students yearly. “Success is the only option” is the motto of District B, which is posted on its website. The community is proud of the academic and extracurricular achievements of its students. Members of the community strongly support the high school football team as well as the Music Department. The poverty rate for District B, based on Free and Reduced Lunches, is at 27% (portal.state.pa, 2010). According to the latest Special Education Data Report (Penn Data, 2010), their Special Education Student population is just short of eight percent of their total enrollment. Neither a graduation rate or drop-out rate was reported on the LEA Performance on State Performance Plan Targets due to a small group size. The District scores on the PSSA for 2009 were all above the State average and the highest in its county for 5th grade Math and 6th, 7th, and 11th grade Reading (paayp, 2010).

Conceptual Framing of the Interview Questions in District B: Hillary

Research gathering in District B began with an interview of Hillary, a Secondary Special Education Teacher who worked with Ninth through Twelfth graders. She added rich information with her thoughts and opinions regarding changes in education as a result of NCLB, when interviewed before the start of her school day in District B. When asked Interview Questions 1 and 2, Hillary explained how she became Bridged (see explanation of Bridge in Chapter 1) in

English as a result of the requirements of NCLB and the highly qualified status. At the time of the interview, her teaching certificate reflected English 7-12 as well as her Special Education and Elementary Education Certifications. Hillary indicated that she would like to pursue an administrative position and had been encouraged by the Director of Special Education in this area.

“Upset” was the word that Hillary utilized to express her feelings concerning the Bridge and HOUSSE (see explanation of HOUSSE in Chapter 1) requirements. She stated that her Pennsylvania Teaching Certificate indicated “99 Years” as the length of duration, yet she and other Special Education Teachers were told this was “null and void”. She indicated she and her colleagues were made to feel like their undergraduate degree in Special Education had no significance at all. Hillary explained that gaining the highly qualified status in English did not “enlighten her” to change teaching strategies utilized in the classroom. To Hillary, looking at the success of her students as they transitioned into regular education classrooms was a greater indicator of success and of her teaching abilities than the highly qualified status.

Commitment. As far as commitment, Hillary did not believe that hers had changed as result of NCLB. “I have always thought of the child first”. She and other teachers differentiate instruction for their students and provide for individualization through the IEPs. Hillary noted that the “parameters set up with the NCLB” are different and require more differentiation for all students.

Hillary indicated, when answering Interview Question 3, that she struggled with her commitment to the field of education. She admitted to reaching a low

point when NCLB was initially implemented. She explained that “both of us (Susan, another Special Education Teacher, and herself) got really depressed when we had to make that transition”. Hillary affirmed it was difficult to come to work and that she had considered a career change. It took soul searching and “I just kind of self-evaluated and said this is the situation presented to me and no one is going to be able to make it better but me. If I want things to improve, it’s gotta start with me.” She indicated that she tried to “lead by example”.

Confidence. Hillary chuckled when asked how Special Education Teachers could increase scores of their students on the PSSA to reach proficient or advanced levels (Interview Question 4). In District B, the teachers looked at the test scores to see where the areas of weakness were for students and gave them instruction to provide remediation. She noted that having students in regular education classes had set “high standards” for all students. A positive was having two instructors in the classroom which allowed her to do “mini lessons to try to make sure that they (students) are brushed up on that skill”. Beaming like a pleased parent, Hillary acknowledged “you know a lot of our kids have scored proficient on the PSSA and we’re proud of that”.

Additionally, she credited the district’s involvement with the Pennsylvania Literacy Network (PLN) as improving the overall education of all students, when responding to Interview Question 8. “The strategies that worked with our kids are finally coming into the regular education classroom because the strategies that worked with our kids can actually help the regular ed. [education] kids”.

Compassion. Hillary emphatically stated that she had “always been passionate about children” and that NCLB had not changed that, as she answered Interview Question 15. Additionally, she indicated that she had always wanted “to see them be successful in the classroom and out of the classroom.” As a result of this, she was pursuing administrative positions so that she could “have a greater impact with some of those kids.”

Expanding on this, it was obvious that Hillary had a positive effect on her students and that learning was occurring. This would support Reeves’ (2009) assumption that, “Of all the variables that influence student achievement, the two that have the most profound influence are teacher quality and leadership quality” (p. 67). Hillary demonstrated and wanted to build on her leadership skills to help students achieve and be successful.

Connections. When analyzing the relationship or connection that Hillary had with students and staff during Interview Questions 12, 17, and 18, she indicated NCLB had not changed the fact that she wanted to “help them” and that the students knew “she put them first.” However, she admitted that the “personal contact” with them had decreased since the implementation of NCLB. Hillary felt this just created a challenge that she needed to “go out and find them and make sure what they’re doing, or that I have that personal contact with them”.

When dealing with connections between regular education and special education teachers, Hillary indicated that “in the beginning it was really difficult”. In the school it appeared to be “those are your kids, these are my kids”. Additionally, she indicated that they needed to “educate them [teachers]” on IEPs

and Specially Designed Instruction. It was extremely helpful when the District allotted one of the beginning of the year in-service dates for Special Education and Regular Education staff to meet and discuss students and to view IEPs that were online. Research on best practices supported the need for shared planning time if co-teaching was to be successful with one option being for districts to utilize summer hours or in-service time. Hillary went on to express that it had evolved to the point where “a lot of the teachers are seeing that our kids can make it in the classroom either with or without our help”.

Observations and Field Notes in District B: Hillary

The researcher arrived at District B on a cool, foggy, fall morning as the sun was beginning to rise. After parking in a visitor space close to the entrance of the combination Middle School/Senior High School and entering the building, a teacher approached and asked if directions were needed for the office. The researcher was escorted to the office where Hillary was introduced. A warm welcome was extended by Hillary, a female in her early thirties. The classroom appeared to be an extension of Hillary, professional, but warm and encouraging. There were eight student desks, two teacher desks, a television on a movable cart, a small refrigerator, a small table with a tablecloth, and four computers on a rectangular table which bordered the back wall. Colored leaves dangled from the ceiling to add to the positive sayings posted around the room which included, “This is a positive thinking area”, “Success is the only option”, and “Success is a journey, not a destination”. On a large bulletin board on a side wall, all of the students’ schedules were listed with each of their names.

Following an interview session, the day started off with Hillary covering the In-School-Suspension room for another teacher who was at a meeting. There were two students in the room, one male and one female. They politely talked to Hillary about why they were there. After this, Hillary returned to her room where she assisted two boys as they prepared to leave for their Community Based Vocational Training (CBVT) at a local distribution center. The classroom assistant acted as the Job Coach at the work site with the students. Hillary explained that some students also participated in Community Based Vocational Training (CBVT) at an amusement park to develop the soft skills, such as proper dress, ways to talk to employers, and being on time, that are often difficult for students to master. After the two boys and the classroom assistant left, a third boy entered the room to report about what he had done so far for his vocational training. He had assisted the custodians in the school by mopping one of the hallways. Next, Hillary and the student proceeded to restack the free notebooks located outside of the Senior High Library. Upon completion of this task, they headed to the custodial office where they checked to see what was needed to be done next. Hillary and the student checked and changed the garbage bags in containers located around the outside perimeter of the school building.

When the bell rang, Hillary returned to the classroom where she taught a Career Exploration Class. The students were talking about apprenticeships. Hillary utilized a Know and Learn (K-L) technique to cover the vocabulary. A Jigsaw approach was utilized dividing students into groups to cover information regarding the day's topics. An Exit Card technique was utilized at the end of the

class to gain knowledge regarding the students' mastery of the subject matter covered in class. The last class was a resource period in which Hillary assisted students with tests and homework. All of the students that she worked with treated her with respect and participated in class. They appeared to enjoy being in the classroom with Hillary. The field notes obtained in this observation supported information provided by Hillary in the interview.

Conceptual Framing of the Interview Questions in District B: Susan

The next instructor adding to the rich description was Susan, a Secondary Special Education Teacher in District B, who instructed students in grades seven through twelve in the area of Mathematics. A teacher in her late forties, she became highly qualified in the area of Math when the Bridge certification was offered. At times during the interview, Susan became very emotional, her eyes filled with tears and her voice wavered between disbelief and cynicism. Frustration was obvious when she stated "I can understand why a lot of teachers just said you know what - I'm done. I'll get my certification in something else and I'll transfer to another field", when answering Interview Questions 1 and 2. Additionally, she added after twenty years of teaching she did not understand how she could be told that "I don't know what I'm doing".

Commitment. Commitment to students had changed according to Susan, during her response to Interview Question 3. She preferred having a self-contained classroom that provided continuity of instruction and interactions with students and parents. For example, Susan indicated that "before when I called a parent in ninth grade it was 'this is Mrs. P.'. In tenth grade it would be 'this is

Susan P.'. Then, in eleventh grade it would be 'Mrs. P. or Sue P.' By the time a student reached twelfth grade it was 'this is Sue'". That level of familiarity with parents and students was gone from Susan's viewpoint.

The pressure that administrators had placed on teachers to have students achieve proficient or advanced scores on the PSSA also affected commitment. Teachers were more focused on scores than on students. Thus, the level of commitment had decreased.

Confidence. In the discussion with Susan pertaining to Interview Questions 4, 5, and 8, it was apparent that she did not believe it was possible for her students to be proficient or advanced on the PSSA. She indicated that students should be able to take tests at their instructional levels, not grade levels. She stated the "PSSA is a joke" based on the fact that "you force them to take a test" and then "when they fail you say, oh I'm sorry you failed so you have to take it again. So, not only are we going to frustrate you once, we're going to frustrate you again." Expanding on this, she concluded that students may have to take it a third time and they adopt the attitude of "why bother." Susan proposed that we are doing a "disservice" to our students with the PSSAs and the curriculum we expect of them.

In the same line, she indicated that the administration had not done much to help increase confidence in her ability to help students achieve proficient or advanced scores on the PSSA. She stated that the in-services offered in District B did not include anything concrete, which Susan proposed would have made them more useful and helpful for teachers.

Compassion. Compassion was lost when dealing with Special Education Students in Susan's opinion, when responding to Interview Question 15. She related a scenario of a student's hamster dying. In the past, Susan would have discussed the situation with the student and they might have even had a little memorial service. In schools today "it's just oh well, I'm sorry". The teacher then goes on with academics, according to Susan.

Expanding on this, when dealing with academics, Susan proposed teachers are continually frustrating students by forcing them to take the PSSA. Students are so overwhelmed with the demands that they often just give up. Thus, some teachers become detached from students as a coping strategy to deal with student frustration.

Connections. Answers to Interview Questions 12 and 17, regarding connections to students and other teachers, revealed that Susan believed they had changed in many ways since the implementation of NCLB. She claimed that teachers worry too much about "covering what is going to be on this test" than about the students. Teachers are concerned about "if my kids don't pass, how does that reflect on me?" Administration and others have said or may say that "the Special Education kids drag our scores down again."

As far as the connection to other teachers, Susan related the story of an interaction that occurred in the faculty room at one time. Before she began, she closed the door to the classroom so that nobody would hear her telling the story. A school librarian, who ate lunch with her, "actually asked me if I needed to have a degree, did I go to college to do what I do?" As a result of this, Susan

suggested that some people do not view what she does as teaching or that she is not “as smart” as some of the content teachers. In another situation, an older male teacher once responded to her in the following way when she asked about his notes. She contended he said, “Well, you can read can’t you? And he’s like any moron can follow those notes!” These negative experiences added support to her view that the self-contained rooms were a better teaching situation than the more inclusive co-teaching models.

Observations and Field Notes in District B: Susan

The second teacher shadowed in School District B was Susan. During the walk to Susan’s classroom it was explained that all of the Senior High hallways had blue tiles in a square shape whereas the Junior High hallways had gold tiles in the same shape. Upon entering a classroom, a staff member introduced the researcher to Susan. A woman in her late forties, Susan was interviewed and then observed in her classroom. Her demeanor in the classroom was very serious. The first class observed consisted of four students, three boys and one girl. The classroom contained a Smart board, two computers, one teacher desk, twelve student desks, and a small rectangular table with chairs around it. The school motto, “Success is the Only Option”, which was observed in Hillary’s room, was posted on a bulletin board in this classroom as well. The lesson focused on multiplication of numbers containing decimals. Significant contrasts in the teaching styles of Hillary and Susan were immediately observable. Susan utilized a stern voice to give directions to the students to solve problems and pay attention. Two students talked continually throughout the lesson. The students

completed their work and Susan told them to “have a nice rest of your day” as the students exited the classroom.

The next class was a Consumer Math class. Susan handed out paper and set a timer. She gave students one minute to solve a problem that was listed on the board. There were three boys in the classroom. One of the students said, “Were you timing us? That’s disrespect.” She ignored the comments made by the student. Next, Susan had the students provide the solutions to problems on the wipe board. As she checked the student work she commented with a somewhat insincere, “Yea, Yippie!” and placed a smiley face next to their work on the board. The students did not respond positively or negatively to this reinforcement. Following this, Susan directed one student to work on an individual assignment while the other two reviewed various ways to write amounts of money. One boy would not follow directions and made off task comments about the work. She stayed with him, guiding him to complete the work, but she appeared to be somewhat upset with his behaviors. At the end of class, she assigned work for the next day and the students exited. Following this class, Susan had a planning period. It was evident to the researcher that Susan did not have the same level of connections to her students as Hillary. Frustration was noted in the field notes regarding Susan, which supported her interview responses.

Establishing the Setting and Reporting Data in District C

District C was located in a small town in Central Pennsylvania. An indication of the size of the community was the reflection that there was only one stop light

located in the town. The student enrollment of roughly 900 students in grades kindergarten through twelve consisted of students from two bordering counties. Athletics, especially wrestling for boys and softball for girls, was an area of great pride for the community. The free and reduced lunch numbers for the district were at 53% of the overall student population (portal.state.pa, 2010). Approximately 14% of the total school population was made up of Special Education Students. As with District B, graduation rates and dropout rates were not reported due to the small number of students (Penn Data, 2010). On the PSSA, District C had the lowest scores in the county for 5th, 7th, and 8th grade Math and in 3rd and 7th grade Reading (paayp, 2010).

Conceptual Framing of the Interview Questions in District C: Betty

The data gathering in school District C began taking form with the interview of Betty, a Secondary Special Education Teacher in her late forties. Betty had spent the majority of her teaching career working with Special Education Students at an Itinerant level (less than 21% of the student school day). She indicated she did not have much to do with the Bridge or HOUSS requirements because she did not qualify for them due to not having taught specific courses to students. During the discussion of Interview Question 2, she expanded on this, adding that it “did bother me. Just because I don’t have this paper, or go through that process, I’m no longer qualified?”

Being a resource room teacher, Betty spent most of her day helping students with classwork, homework, or giving quizzes or tests. She was not the teacher of record, who gave grades to students. In her role, she did not teach new material

to students, but reviewed information presented in class with students to help with retention and mastery of skills.

Commitment. When looking at commitment to students, Betty stated that “it is more difficult.” The students are more frustrated and “that’s what’s hardest for me to see the kids go through” explained Betty. She wanted to help them develop positive self-esteem but did not have the time for this. The focus was on academics, according to her answer to Interview Question 3.

As a result of NCLB, Betty stated that teachers are “looking closely at the achievement of all students instead of a few.” Thus, “the average kids are getting more attention now than before.” Therefore, teachers are committed to all students now, not just a small group of students. She had mixed feelings regarding this, since she felt a strong responsibility to her special needs students.

Confidence. As far as having the confidence to be able to have students achieve proficient or advanced on the PSSA, dealing with Interview Question 4, Betty was unsure. “I don’t know how we can do that.” Another factor that kept students from being proficient was “test anxiety.” Betty explained, “I think some of them read well, but they don’t do well on the test. They’re going to be able to read, I think, enough to get by as you know workers, civilians, responsible citizens.”

District C had provided in-services dealing with test scores and skills that needed improvement. This was conveyed in Betty’s reply to Interview Questions 8 and 9. Additionally, administration had allowed Betty to set her schedule for

testing so that as many students as possible could be with her during the PSSA testing windows.

Compassion. Compassion was an area that has been altered by NCLB in Betty's responses to Interview Questions 6, 10, and 15. "There's not as much time to do that anymore." She elaborated that she did not want to pull them out of classes, "I don't want them to miss what they are having. So, yea, I think that is a drawback. Because once again we are focusing all on academics and not their basic needs."

Additionally, Betty alluded to the compassion she had for students when she said, "It just breaks my heart to see them think that they're stupid because they can't get the level they need on that test." She continued that it bothered her when we made "these kids feel inadequate when they already have trouble with their self-esteem because of the learning disability."

Connections. When looking at the connection she had with students, Betty indicated that this had not changed as a result of NCLB. She stated that she has "kids [in grades] seventh through twelfth, so we get to know each other really well." She indicated that students "feel comfortable" in her classroom when answering Interview Question 12. Betty surmised this may be due to her personality and not have anything to do with NCLB.

As far as connections with other teachers, Betty relayed that communication is great. Staff members e-mail back and forth regarding students. Betty explained that teachers come and see her if there are any problems with students and they work around her schedule if she is not in the resource room.

She is not involved in co-teaching due to covering grade levels from seven through twelve.

Observations and Field Notes in District C: Betty

When the researcher arrived at District C's secondary school, she found easy access for parking in the front of the building along the street. When entering the main office, the doors were unlocked at 7:15 in the morning and one secretary was on the phone. Several ceramic and stuffed bulldogs, the school mascot, adorned the office. Later, the researcher would see these throughout the classrooms, hallways, and offices throughout the building. When the secretary ended her call, she greeted the researcher with a warm smile and was anxious to help in any way possible. The Director of Special Education then arrived and escorted the researcher to the itinerant Learning Support Teacher, Betty. The hallways were inviting with hardwood floors and blue lockers, representing one of the team colors. The lockers had signs on them indicating if one was a Bulldog football player, cheerleader, band member, etc.

Betty was the veteran Special Education Teacher at school District C with nineteen years of service as an Itinerant Learning Support Teacher. Prior to this time, she taught for 2 years in a Multi-handicapped classroom in an alternative school in another location in Pennsylvania. Currently, she was responsible for thirty-two students in grades seven through twelve. It was obvious that Betty was nervous and she was assured that there was no reason to be anxious. She indicated that she considered District C a good place to work and that the kids were very nice. She liked her work but was not thrilled with the paperwork.

Betty's classroom was warm and inviting. The room was clean and orderly, down to the shiny blue tiling that covered the floor. Live plants lined the two windowsills adding to the homey atmosphere. Large posters of two Pittsburgh Steeler's Football Players, Hines Ward and Troy Polamalu, covered one bulletin board. The athletic theme permeated the room on an additional bulletin board which contained a bulldogs' banner, school athletic schedule, and the Penn State Football schedule. A world map and an encouragement poster rounded out the wall coverings in the classroom. On her desk was a quote from Helen Keller, "I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. I will not refuse to do the something I can do". The interview was conducted and then the observation occurred.

During the first period, three students came to the resource room, two girls and a boy. They worked on completing a math test dealing with absolute value. Upon entering, the male student asked how Betty was. After her response, she indicated, with sincerity, that she was glad that he was there today. This was the first of many positive, caring interactions observed throughout the morning. Betty circulated between the students, distributing calculators when requested, and providing encouragement and helpful hints to students to aid in the completion of the test. When the male student finished his test, he got up to leave and said, "Thanks, see ya." She responded with "If I don't see you later, enjoy your day off tomorrow and have a good weekend!" Later, when one of the girls left, the student again said "Thank you Mrs. B." It appeared very natural and not staged for the observer.

Following this period, two students, one girl and one boy, came in to the classroom to finish a science activity. Betty guided the students to utilize their texts and a worksheet to complete the assignment. A third student entered, exchanged greetings with Betty, and began working on a math assignment. When he indicated that he was having difficulties, Betty helped him by pulling out index cards that she used to assist with decimals. When the first two students completed their work, they left and another student entered the room. The new student claimed she was in the resource room for help because her teacher did not teach it to her right.

During the next class, several students were working on tests. Betty wrote choices for answers on the board, limiting choices to two on multiple choice and five options for matching problems. She read parts of the test to one student, who asked for help. Again, several students thanked Betty for her help. She mentioned to one boy that she had not seen him for awhile. She asked him how things were going and discussed the College Prep class that he was taking at the Vocational Technical School.

It was obvious that the students held Betty in high esteem. They waited patiently for her to help them, never nagging or complaining if they had to wait. The observation supported the information obtained in the interview with Betty.

Conceptual Framing of the Interview Question in District C: Mary

Next, the researcher interviewed Mary, a Secondary Special Education Teacher, in a primarily supplemental level (21-80% of the student school day) classroom. Interview Questions 1 and 2 revealed that prior to NCLB, Mary had

her certification in Special Education and Elementary Education. With NCLB, she became highly qualified to teach Social Studies to all students and all other content areas to Special Education Students. In her sixteenth year of teaching, Mary felt the Bridge was “pretty stupid.” She stated it did not make sense for her to get additional certifications since most of her students were lower functioning and covered by her Elementary Certification.

Commitment. When discussing commitment to students related to Interview Question 3, Mary emphatically stated that her commitment had not changed since the implementation of NCLB. “I have always been committed to kids, helping them do what they need to do.” Refining her statement, she indicated that what students were required to do had changed but not her commitment.

District C provided in-services on analysis of PSSA scores. Mary indicated that Regular Education Teachers looked at areas of weakness to identify areas that needed strengthened, but she did not. This was due to the fact that most of her students were below basic.

Confidence. District C had an increase in Special Education scores on the PSSA during the past year. Mary contributed that increase to several new initiatives when talking about district support during Interview Questions 8 and 9. The District implemented Corrective Reading along with the Lexia Computer Program. In math, they started a new program called ALEX. Mary indicated she did not believe that she could make much of a difference on PSSA scores and achievement, though, because the students were so far below. She had some control over classroom achievement, but not achievement on the PSSA.

Administrators in District C had been supportive and had not put pressure on the Special Education Teachers to have students score proficient, according to Mary. “They know who’s in this room,” she stated. She also said “it’s going to be magic wand time in 2012.” Not having enough Special Education Students to have a subgroup helped the Special Education Teachers avoid pressure from administrators to raise scores of their students.

Compassion. When speaking regarding the compassion teachers have for students, as covered in Interview Question 15, Mary stated that this had not changed for her as a result of NCLB. She voiced that, “Maybe a few teachers feel the pressure so much that they are pushing so hard that they’re not as compassionate. That’s my job to help them (the students) through those things.”

Mary indicated that she did wonder what would happen in the next few years. She did not want her students being singled out as failures when the number of proficient scores rose and they were unable to meet the higher achievement levels on the PSSA. She queried, “Where are we going to be?”

Connections. Connections formed with students depend on the students was an idea formulated by Mary when responding to Interview Question 6. Mary purported that, “Most of the students are my kids, that’s the way it is looked at. Therefore, I deal with them.” Students with better developed social skills tended to blend in better in the regular classrooms, though, and did not rely on her as much. She admitted that she did have stronger bonds with the students that she had in her classroom for longer periods during the school day.

Mary stated that her room was a 'safety zone' for her students, thus, they are very comfortable with her. She indicated that this sometimes leads to behaviors that nobody else observes, but that does not happen very often.

Observations and Field Notes in District C: Mary

The second teacher that was observed in District C was Mary. This teacher was in her thirties and was instructing in a Supplemental Learning Support Classroom. She appeared to be very serious about her job. The classroom was located in the lower (basement) level, but once again was very clean with the same shiny blue tiles on the floor that were located in the Resource Room. It was a very large room with five computers, nine student desks, two teacher desks, and two crescent shaped tables with stools. The room also contained a washing machine and dryer, which were running during the observation, a refrigerator, stove, toaster, and microwave. The appliances would be used to develop independent living skills. Posters with safety tips for the kitchen area were located around the room. A classroom aide was present in the room at the beginning of the observation. When it was time for her to leave for the day, the resource room assistant arrived to aid Mary with her students, all of whom were boys.

The first activities taking place in the classroom included one student working on the seasons with the classroom assistant, a second student reading a book, and a third student working with Mary on a math assignment. When the student reading the book completed his task he began to look at a rock kit that Mary retrieved from a cabinet. The assistant then worked with two of the boys on the

rocks while Mary worked with a student on science. A great deal of time was spent looking at the rocks. One of the boys looking at rocks had a question about how rocks were formed. He was directed to look on the computer for the answer to the question. A fourth student entered the room who began complaining about one of his teachers. Mary pulled the student to the side of the room to discuss the incident. The student walked out of the room and ignored Mary's redirection to come back to the class.

At the change of class, four students entered the room and began to work on various tasks. Two students worked independently at the computers on the Lexia reading program. Another student worked on a direct reading lesson with Mary. The fourth student worked with the classroom assistant on a science test. Two students, wearing their Bulldog football jerseys, entered the room and removed the recycling bins. Another student entered the room and needed help with an assignment dealing with the periodic table. Later, the teacher assistant was helping students to complete a worksheet on the differences between biotic and abiotic items. The assistant and teacher were unsure about the assignment and the assistant asked the researcher for clarification.

The students then proceeded to gather their books and papers into their backpacks and to clean up the room. They left for the last period class from which they would be called to the pep rally that was going to be held for homecoming. Once again, the field notes from the observation of Mary supported information she provided in the interview.

Establishing the Setting and Reporting Data in District D

A suburb of a medium sized city, District D was one of the wealthiest districts in its county. Realtors in the county promoted housing in the District due to its school system. The total student enrollment was around 3600 in grades kindergarten through twelve. The Special Education population was 13% of the total enrollment (Penn Data, 2010). Twenty-seven percent of the students qualified for the Free and Reduced Lunch program (portal.state.pa, 2010). The graduation rate was at 92% with a dropout rate not being reported due to the small group size. District D scored the highest PSSA scores in its county in 6th, 7th, 8th, and 11th grade Math and in 5th grade Reading (paayp, 2010).

Conceptual Framing of the Interview Questions in District D: Leslie

The researcher continued to look through the “phenomenological lens”, as identified by Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman-Davis (1997), by interviewing Leslie, a Secondary Special Education Teacher from District D. Leslie, a teacher in her forties, began her career as a Paraprofessional in District D. She had personal experience working with special needs students due to the fact that she had a son with a disability. Later, she made the decision to attend college to obtain her degree as a Special Education Teacher. Her beginning teaching experiences were in self-contained classrooms.

After the passage of NCLB, she explained when answering Interview Questions 1 and 2, Leslie took a few English classes so that she would be Bridged in Secondary English. She expressed that she felt her Bridge in English was a “farce.” “It almost embarrasses me to think that any regular ed. teacher in

secondary English or any principal would think that I am as qualified as them.” On the same note, she indicated that “I would feel like any regular ed. teacher would not be qualified to do what I do.”

Commitment. When looking at the topic of commitment to students addressed through Interview Question 3, Leslie stated that she felt her commitment had changed in a positive direction. It had actually increased from just Special Education Students to include all students that she encountered in her classes. “I feel personally responsible for every single student in each class, not just IEP students, and I feel the regular ed. teachers that I work with also feel that way.”

Leslie indicated that in an average class, it was about a 50/50 split between Regular Education and Special Education Students. In some classes, there were more Regular Education than Special Education Students. As such, her role had expanded to include a larger number of students that she felt committed to and provided specially designed instruction to in various classes.

Confidence. When asked if teachers were able to help Special Education Students increase their scores on the PSSA (Interview Question 8), Leslie replied that she was not confident that they could. “Students who are coming through for the next several years have been self-contained for many, many years so they have never been exposed to that content or the depth of that content.” She admitted that, “Students who were in self-contained classes and came out, they are better prepared for the PSSA.” In other words, students who would be coming to her classes in the future, who have had several years of being

instructed in the regular classroom setting in the general curriculum, would be able to achieve at higher levels than the students who came to her from self-contained settings.

Regarding the question of whether administration had helped to improve teacher confidence that they can help students to increase test scores (Interview Question 9), Leslie had mixed feelings. She responded that District D had provided in-services that discussed scores and areas of strengths and weaknesses dealing with anchors. These training sessions were helpful to the teachers, although, she stressed that she was “used to hearing the subgroups held us back.” Presently, Leslie conceded that “we don’t hear that too much.”

Compassion. When she discussed the topic of compassion with Interview Question 15, Leslie pointed out that too much time was spent on “trying to assimilate regular education to the content that we are in”, which left little time to get to know all of the students. Teachers still had compassion, they just did not have the time to get to know their students well, according to Leslie.

On the other hand, Leslie explained that the community as a whole has always provided positive interactions for Special Education Students. It was her opinion that “most teachers here feel personally responsible for taking care of students socially, trying just be kind to them.” This provided a model for the students to follow.

Connections. Since NCLB was implemented, Leslie had noted changes in connections with other educators and students, when responding to Interview Question 6. Before NCLB, she stated that “Special Education Teachers had

interactions with Regular Ed. Teachers only when there was a problem or a concern.” Now, she contended “we interact with Regular Ed. [Education] Teachers on a daily basis and it’s not only like when we are in the classroom teaching, but non-teaching concerns come up.” Leslie viewed this as a positive effect of NCLB.

Contrary to these positive, daily communications between Regular and Special Education Teachers, there were negative aspects of the connections formed between these two groups of adults as well. Mainly, the negativity occurred when the Special Educators were treated as paraprofessionals in co-taught classrooms. “I didn’t go back to school to become a paraprofessional,” emphasized Leslie when answering Interview Question 18. Additionally, she expressed, “I get paid great money to be a paraprofessional.” She and other teachers do not like having to be responsible for taking attendance, filling out bathroom passes, or making photo copies.

When looking at student and teacher connections, Leslie indicated that students “can’t get away from us because there is one [Special Education Teacher] in every single class.” This was due to the implementation of co-teaching in all of the core content subject areas in the Senior High School. This led to an increase in interactions “which is a great thing because we are able to truly see how they are performing in the classroom versus just reading off of Progress Book what their scores are.”

Observations and Field Notes in District D: Leslie

The researcher continued to gather rich information when field notes were obtained through observations in District D. The notes incorporated Stake's (1995) thought that, "We use ordinary language and narratives to describe the case" (p.134).

Leslie was observed on a rainy, chilly day in September. The Senior High School presented with striking contrasts due to a renovation project taking place. The newly constructed entrance way consisted of gleaming white tiles and newly painted walls, but the sidewalk leading up to it was surrounded by orange, plastic construction fences. Following an interview the researcher observed Leslie in one of the computer labs where she and another teacher were co-teaching a twelfth grade communications or English class. There were sixteen students, two teachers and a personal care assistant in the lab. The regular education teacher and Leslie were circulating around the room helping students with their Senior Projects. Later, the researcher would follow Leslie to another co-taught Senior Communications Class, a Self-contained Emotional Support Class and a third co-taught Senior Communications Class.

Nurturing and caring were appropriate words to describe Leslie's interactions with the students. In the first classroom, she corrected several boys who were off task only to have them brush her off. She persisted in helping all of the students and guiding them with their projects. In the other two co-taught classes, Leslie taught with a different teacher. In contrast to the previous class, she began the lesson and team taught for the first part of class followed by a

structure that resembled Friend's (2008) parallel teaching model. It would have been difficult for a stranger visiting the classroom to tell the difference between the regular education teacher and the special education teacher in these classes, except for the fact that the sample Title Page for the Senior Project listed the Regular Education Teacher as the only instructor. The students in the last two co-taught classes were on task a greater amount of time than the first classroom. They were more respectful towards Leslie and responded very positively to her suggestions and instruction. Interestingly, Leslie had reported the first co-teacher wants to be in charge whereas the other co-teacher works in a more collaborative role. At one point in the interview, Leslie had stated she understood why one of the Special Education Teachers had requested a move to the Elementary Level after co-teaching with the first teacher the previous year. The field notes collected in this setting supported and confirmed Leslie's interview responses.

One period was spent covering the Emotional Support Classroom while the teacher went to lunch. There were two girls in the classroom communicating with each other. They greeted Leslie as she entered the room in a positive, enthusiastic manner. It was evident that the teenage girls felt very comfortable with Leslie. Another student from one of the Communications classes arrived to have Leslie help her catch up on materials she had missed due to a recent absence. After the two girls completed their assigned activities they asked if Leslie would play the game, Uno, with them. She agreed, though they changed their minds and decided on the card game, Rummy. As the card game

proceeded, the girls interacted with Leslie sharing their concerns about school and home situations. Leslie discussed how to handle the situations with different positive options. She played the role of the counselor, providing guidance to the girls, who appeared eager to hear her suggestions. Leslie was relaxed and seemed to relish her interactions with the girls. The observation of Leslie supported the information reported by her during her interview with the researcher.

Conceptual Framing of the Interview Questions in District D: Dave

The researcher continued to gather data with the interview of Dave, a Secondary Special Education Teacher in his forties. Similar to Leslie, teaching was not Dave's first career. Initially, he worked in the business field, but decided to go back to school to obtain a degree in Special Education. When he began his teaching career he taught in a self-contained classroom. With the NCLB requirements and the Bridge and HOUSSE initiatives, Dave just missed becoming highly qualified in Mathematics. He was able to obtain the HOUSSE certification in Mathematics, though, to enable him to teach Special Education Students in that area. He blamed this on the "guys uptown", who did not know what they were doing with the certification programs.

Commitment. When teacher commitment to students was discussed as part of Interview Question 3, Dave expressed that NCLB had not made a difference about how he and other teachers felt about students. He indicated that in some ways, "It has probably gotten better because we are more cognizant of their needs." Dave stated that teachers in District D are pushing students further.

An area of concern for Dave was that some students felt lost in regular education settings. The students were intimidated and afraid to try to answer questions. He admitted that they were getting “better subject matter.” Thus, the co-teachers needed to show more commitment for these students.

Confidence. When asked whether or not teachers could help students achieve proficient or advanced scores on the PSSA (Interview Question 4), Dave alleged the main obstacle was his students’ lack of retention. Another obstacle to success on high stakes tests, according to Dave, was student attention spans when working in the classrooms. He claimed some students had a very difficult time sustaining attention (time on task) within the classroom setting.

District D added a PSSA Math class to help students achieve higher scores on the PSSA. Dave stated that student achievement increased when the students completed activities at which they were successful. It increased their motivation to tackle challenging assignments in the future.

The implementation of co-teaching increased the achievement of students, but it varied depending upon the two teachers who were matched up. In his experience, veteran teachers had greater success at co-teaching because they were better organized and were more familiar with the curriculum. Additionally, they tended to know the students better, according to Dave’s answers to Interview Questions 8 and 9.

Dave expressed concern with the support given to teachers by the building principal, specifically Special Education Teachers, who he indicated were often ignored. For instance, with the renovation project in the building, the Special

Education Teachers no longer had a room in which they could work. Conversely, he stated that “when something goes wrong with the students or the parent comes in, then we’re called down.” According to Dave, “Special Education isn’t a priority right now” to the building principal.

Compassion. Dave was emphatic when he discussed compassion for students changing since NCLB (Interview Question 15). He indicated that “If you have to change, then you’re in the wrong business.” He stressed that, “The minute you walk through the doors, as a teacher, you have to have it.” If a teacher lacks compassion for students, then a teaching career would be extremely long because students would fight him/her everyday.

When looking at students, Dave explained they are all different. Often there were twenty-five different personalities sitting in a classroom. Dave stated that a teacher needed to meet all of their individual needs. To achieve this, instructors needed to be able to “react on the fly.”

Connections. Dave’s responses, to Interview Question 6, indicated that the connections between Regular Education and Special Education Teachers had evolved since the inception of NCLB. Originally, Dave indicated that Regular Education Teachers were unsure of what to do with Special Education Students. Since then, though, the teachers have adapted to working with these students and their assigned co-teachers.

When discussing the connection between Special Education Teachers and Students, Dave stated that “sometimes, I’ll just talk during the class period.” He indicated that there is not time to sit down and talk to students as much as was

done in the past. Finding what students are interested in and talking to them about that has been key to Dave developing relationships with his students. “I just try to talk their talk and be like them,” he explained. Additionally, he indicated “you can have a good relationship with kids, you just have to be fair with them.”

Observations and Field Notes in District D: Dave

Dave and Leslie are both teachers in the same building within the school district. On the day of the observation of Dave, the researcher arrived at his 6th period class, United States History. He had been interviewed at the school prior to the observation. The class composition included 12 students, the regular education teacher, and Dave, the Special Education Co-teacher. The classroom was sterile, with a single poster on two bulletin boards without any other backgrounds or borders. This seemed odd to the researcher, a former Elementary Teacher, who changed all bulletin boards on a monthly basis and never had a blank board during the school year. Dave was walking around the classroom, talking to students in a voice that the portraitist observed to be distracting to others, as they tried to listen to the regular education teacher present the lesson. The teacher read from the textbook as students followed along. As she progressed, Dave wrote notes on the board for students to copy. During the lesson, Dave and the regular education teacher debated about state’s rights. He had the students star important aspects in their notes. He collected the test of a student who was making up a previously missed test. The class ended with Dave collecting papers as students left the classroom.

While walking to the next class, Dave explained that he was assigned to teach with all new teachers this year. He contended that he had become the disciplinarian in the classrooms due to his experience. The researcher and Dave arrived at the emotional support classroom in which Dave instructed a student in Math. The classroom was in stark contrast to the previous one. A cloth butterfly wall hanging adorned one wall. An incandescent lamp on the desk and a fish tank gave the room a cozy, home-like atmosphere. Posters, school notices, athletic schedules, jack-o-lanterns, acorns, and leaves covered the cabinets on the far wall. Seven desks were clustered into a 'T' shape. A Mental Health Counselor was working on a computer in a corner of the room. The student that Dave was working with was placing math problems on the board that were given by Dave as a review for an upcoming exam. He joked with the student and appeared to have a good relationship with her. Judging by the smiles and jovial conversation, the observer concluded that Dave appeared to be enjoying this teaching situation.

After the bell rang, Dave headed for an integrated math class. Again, a new teacher was leading the class, which was comprised of eight students. She relied on Dave to help a student finish an exam and to circulate around the room to provide individual help to students. A student, walking by in the hallway, waved and verbally greeted Dave, while the regular education teacher was instructing the class. As in the first classroom, the researcher found the volume of Dave's voice during his individual conversations with students distracting. As Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) indicated, the voice distraction may be due to the

fact that classroom images that the researcher had from when she was in school have become indelible images in her mind and were second nature to her. This included images of straight rows of students with raised hands asking permission to talk in a quiet room with only the teacher verbalizing instruction. Minimal verbal interactions occurred between Dave and his co-teacher. He was not given the opportunity to add to the classroom instruction nor did he take the initiative to do so.

We concluded the day in a ninth period math class working on Geometry. Dave collected a worksheet from the previous day and circulated around this class, which consisted of nine students. Again, a new, young, female teacher was the regular education instructor. As in the former classrooms, Dave circulated around helping individuals. Again, his voice was distracting to the observer and other students. It was obvious that the students relied on Dave to provide help when they did not understand the presented concepts. He was their first choice for help. Again, the field notes collected during this observation affirmed the content of the interview answers given by Dave.

The Common and Discordant Emergent Themes

Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) described the need to examine the data in a qualitative study in her statement, "The creative and analytic task of portraiture lies in exploring and describing these competing and dissonant perspectives, searching for their connections to other phenomena, and selecting the primary pieces of the story line for display" (p. 15). The researcher in this qualitative case study identified four common threads that rose through the analysis of the

interviews, observations, and field notes. These included confusion and anger, frustration, uncontrollable academic factors, and commitment.

Confusion and Anger

All of the teachers that participated in the study expressed some level of confusion, mixed with anger, regarding the Federal and State Governments' micromanaging of Public Education through legislation. The confusion and anger were evident in their responses to questions regarding highly qualified status and the requirement for all students to be proficient or advanced on high stakes tests by 2014.

All the Secondary Special Educators expressed confusion and anger concerning the Bridge and HOUSSE processes for becoming highly qualified. The anger was evident in their intonation, body language, and gestures as they responded to the questions. Many pointed out the insinuation that their post secondary training held little significance. Susan questioned if the government was saying, "that I went to college for four years and learned absolutely nothing?" She was treated "like I didn't know what I was doing." Additionally, Lucy expressed that it was "almost insulting that you had to go and prove that you could teach this when you had been doing this for years." They were upset that their college education meant nothing in the government's eye, even though they had received a teaching certificate that was good for "99 years" from the state of Pennsylvania. Betty indicated that "my degree was apparently not good enough anymore." While Hillary stated that "we were made to feel like the four years we went to school for was for naught."

As to whether or not the highly qualified status had any impact on them resulting in changes, Dave proposed that he was “still doing the same job.” On the other hand, Mary said, “I don’t think it is necessary for me to be highly qualified in all subject areas.” Susan delved into other career possibilities and stated she thought about transferring to another field. Lucy questioned the effectiveness of the Bridge and HOUSSE requirements and proposed that “I just don’t know how much more qualified it made me.” She claimed “there was no difference when you went from one thing to the other.” This was supported by Hillary’s statement that it “did not change anything I do in the classroom.”

Other comments made regarding the Bridge and HOUSSE included “upset by it,” “very intimidating,” and “pretty stupid.” Dave felt he was given the “short end of the stick” because the administrators in his district did not really understand the entire process. Betty was confused and questioned why “just because I don’t have this paper, or go through that process, I’m no longer qualified?”

Leslie expressed that it “embarrasses me to think that any Regular Education Teacher in secondary English or any principal would think that I am as qualified as them.” In the same line of reasoning, she stated, “I would feel like any regular ed. teacher would not be qualified to do what I do.”

Frustration

The teachers all expressed some level of frustration regarding their changing classroom roles as a result of NCLB legislation. This same emotion was expressed in the form of helplessness when the teachers discussed the effect of

NCLB on their students in regards to the frustration the students felt with the increase in High Stakes Testing.

Six out of the eight teachers interviewed indicated they have felt frustration in their teaching role. In most cases this had occurred in co-teaching situations in which their Regular Education Co-teacher had treated them as a teacher aide. Susan recalled specific incidences in which teachers questioned her qualifications and intellectual ability. It appeared to her that just because she was not a specific content area teacher that it “obviously means you’re not as smart” in the eyes of her peers. Leslie, whose first job in the field of education was that of a Special Education Paraprofessional stated, “I know what my duties were then and I can a lot of times compare them to duties now.” Dave questioned the fact that the Special Education Teachers were often asked to record all the grades and correct papers. He also reported an incident in which a co-teacher had corrected him in front of the entire class regarding a solution to a problem. This made him hesitant to work on academic skills in that classroom.

Hillary indicated there had been conflicts between teachers in Co-teaching situations due to unclear directives from administration. The Special Education Director had given the directive of what she wanted without telling the teachers how they should implement this. Hillary stated that this “led to clashes and neither one of us was happy.” In this same line, Joe revealed that it had helped when the administration listened to

some of the issues from both the regular ed. side and the special ed. side to make better combinations because we have had regular ed. staff that basically used the special ed. staff as assistants and made it real clear,

and the teachers were very dissatisfied with those types of assignments, and many of them have been changed because of that.

Joe surmised that it was better to be what he termed a 'rubber person,' which is someone who goes with the flow. He stated, "It's kind of the best attitude to have."

Contrary to this, Lucy frankly stated that she would not let herself become a glorified aide. She recalled being in classrooms in which she was not wanted by the Regular Education Teachers. Unlike some other teachers, she handled these situations by "gradually doing more, taking over more, asking to do more, trying not to be intrusive, but being a part of it." Additionally, she had experienced some Special Education Teachers who were content to be in the position of an aide in the classroom. She expressed the attitude of these teachers as "that's the job they gave me, this is what they want me to do, then you know what they are paying me still." Lucy felt this occurred more with the younger people. She stated that, "they sit back and let it happen."

Mary, the only teacher still remaining in a self-contained classroom, indicated that she always felt like the teacher. She did indicate that, "people who are pushed into the classroom would feel differently."

When looking at the frustration of the students in regards to the PSSA, Mary cited examples of students crying when taking the exams. She expressed concern about the students and stated, "What does that do to a kid when they cry over this?" In the same line of thought, Lucy explained that, "I think it is asking them to do something that some of them are just not capable of doing." Betty added that,

I just think that's not fair. That's what's hardest for me, to see the kids go through that. It just breaks my heart to see them think that they're stupid because they can't get the level they need to get on that test.

Another concern related to the frustration of students is the 'heightened anxiety' some of these students experienced. Hillary indicated that,

Not every kid is going to college. We do need kids who go right into the work force. We need to train those kids, not just train them to take high stakes tests. They actually need those work skills, those employability skills.

Even though the teachers all expressed concern over student frustration, half of the teachers identified a discordant theme to this related to the positive aspects of the PSSA. Susan expressed that students were being challenged to do academics skills that teachers would never have considered before. Leslie supported this idea, "We thought oh my gosh, wow, they could have been out in regular ed. for years." Additionally, she indicated that "we are reaching [educating] more students because the ratios are smaller, not just students with IEPs, students who don't have IEPs." Mary viewed students getting out into regular classes as a positive. Adding to this, Lucy voiced that, "socially, everyone is more accepted. There's more tolerance between the regular ed. students and the special needs students."

Uncontrollable Academic Factors

A common thread that was woven into the portrait by the teachers was their lack of total control over the academic achievement of their students. One of the uncontrollable factors affecting the academic achievement of students was retention. Dave and Susan stated that many of their students had difficulty retaining information. Often, the students were not able to recall all the steps to

solving problems or recalling steps to solve problems after a few days let alone weeks later. Betty observed students having difficulty with the PSSA because they could not utilize all the accommodations that they normally would on daily quizzes and tests. She expressed concern that we do not have time to teach them functional math skills that they will need in life.

Also, Leslie revealed that students, who previously were in self-contained classes, were not exposed to the content or the depth of content on which they were tested. Because of this, they did not have the skills necessary to be successful on the test due to their academic backgrounds. Mary supported that students were not successful on the PSSA due to being “so far below.”

Home life and genetic makeup were factors Lucy indicated that obstructed the ability of students to be successful on high stakes testing. She explained that students had a difficult time achieving when they moved from one district to another. To add to this, Betty observed students who just did not like school, and thus, it was hard to motivate them to do well on the PSSA.

Commitment

Even with all of the external pressures placed on them due to NCLB, all of the teachers expressed a strong commitment to their students and surprisingly the majority of the teachers supported others to enter the field of education, when asked Interview Question 11. Their commitment to their students had not wavered as a result of NCLB.

Leslie’s commitment to her students had expanded since the implementation of NCLB to include both Regular Education and Special Education Students.

Dave proposed that “we’ve maintained our commitment, probably gotten even better at it.” Betty felt it was more difficult to maintain her commitment to students, but it was still there, which was obvious to the researcher when she observed Betty. Mary indicated she had “always been committed to kids, helping them do what they need to do.” Supporting the commitment of the other teachers to their students, Hillary voiced, “I have always thought of the child first.” Lucy affirmed that “the Special Education Educator still is committed to the Special Education Student.” Joe summed the issue of commitment up with the statement, “the commitment has always, always been there.”

Only one teacher indicated that the level of commitment has been negatively impacted by NCLB. Susan felt her level of commitment had decreased because she did not have the opportunity to interact with the students as much as before the implementation of high stakes testing.

The teachers were asked if they would recommend a relative or friend to go into the field of Special Education to see how this reflected on their commitment to education. Of the eight teachers interviewed, five had children or siblings currently enrolled as Education Majors in college or in their initial years of teaching. Joe had a son who was in his first year teaching Special Education in Colorado. Lucy had two daughters in their first few years of teaching Special Education, and Hillary had a brother who was currently working on a Special Education degree. Furthermore, Betty had a daughter who was a teacher. Betty stated that “I would tell them that it is still rewarding to work with the kids but the paperwork is just bogging me down.” Lucy indicated if “you have a desire to

make a connection to a student also that you are not so content oriented but thinking of a student as a total learner then I think that is the way to go for Special Education.” Mary felt that it was a calling and if “you really like kids and you can deal with the issues that they’re bringing to you, do it.” Tomlinson (2010-11) concurred with this expressing “a calling becomes a way of life, offering us the opportunity to affect individuals in a profound, enduring way” (p. 24). Dave expressed that if a choice was given, he wanted to continue to teach Special Education Students and would recommend it to others.

The only two teachers not supportive of a relative going into the field of education were Susan and Leslie. Susan’s daughter, a math teacher, was considering obtaining a Master’s Degree in Special Education. She indicated that she told her daughter “don’t expect me to be a help to you.” Interestingly, Susan was the only teacher who felt the level of commitment to students had decreased since the implementation of NCLB. Along with Susan, Leslie stated that “I would not talk somebody into going in until more things become consistent and our duties are more defined.” Overall, the majority of teachers supported friends and relatives to enter the field of education, specifically Special Education.

Chapter Summary

In Chapter Four, the data gathered from the research of the eight teachers that participated in this study were presented utilizing interviews, observations, and field notes. The information collected was then analyzed for common and discordant threads, as revealed by the analysis of the Interview Questions within

the conceptual framework and the observation field notes. The researcher conveyed the story of the evolution of a professional path for these Secondary Special Education Teachers since the inception of NCLB, utilizing a qualitative study. As Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983) proposed, “In these portraits they can see themselves (or people with similar habits, inclinations, and values with whom they can identify) in relation to a broader frame; as individuals within a complex network of personalities, social groups, structures, and cultures” (p. 22). In Chapter V, the five research questions and analyzed data were discussed.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2001, commonly referred to as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), set many goals for public school systems to meet regarding student achievement and teacher qualifications. Secondary Special Education Teachers were a group of educators that were directly influenced by the changes implemented by the legislation. Not only were their credentials and qualifications questioned and examined meticulously, but the students they were responsible for were often the target of school districts, due to the Special Education Subgroups placing the school districts in “warning” or in “school improvement”, as a result of not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). A subgroup is defined as forty or more students that qualify for services under IDEIA for a given grade span. Thus, the Secondary Special Education Teachers not only had their own certifications scrutinized by Federal and State Education officials, but their students were told they needed to be included in the 100% of students reaching proficient or advanced scores by the year 2014. These were the same students who they had been so protective of for many years in the public school systems. Secondary Special Education Teachers were thrown into fast moving change initiatives that forced them to evolve to keep up with requirements. The situation was summed up by Hess and Petrilli (2007) when they proposed that, “The high-stakes testing associated with the law seems to be demoralizing teachers, students, and administrators” (p. 5). These teachers felt betrayed by the

government agencies overseeing education that expressed they no longer were qualified to teach students with whom they had worked with for years.

As the deadline for 100% of students to be proficient or advanced on the Pennsylvania State School Assessment (PSSA) drew nearer, greater pressure was placed on administrators, teachers, and students to reach the set goal. School principals, teachers, and students were subjected to changes that required them to respond quickly with initiatives to increase achievement of all students. As Kotter and Rathgeber (2005) maintained, leaders needed to create a sense of urgency, pull together a team, clarify the vision, gain buy-in by the stakeholders, empower others, and help create short-term wins if the change initiatives were to be cultivated. Kotter and Rathgeber's change strategy, along with the sense of urgency and the clarity of vision as identified by Glickman (2002), Buckingham (2005), and Evans (1996), provided the filters for analyzing the data in this qualitative study.

The works of Pace-Marshall (2006), Wheatley (2007), and Schlechty (2005) provided additional lenses through which to identify the beliefs and actions related to the commitment, confidence, compassion, and connections that Secondary Special Education Teachers exhibited through interactions with students, other teachers, and administrators. The findings of this research were reported in the portraiture style of Lawrence-Lightfoot (1983). In this qualitative case study, the portraits are those of Secondary Special Education Teachers within four districts in Central Pennsylvania who have been part of the change initiatives implemented as a result of NCLB.

Chapter Five begins by answering the questions that guided this study. Next, conclusions and recommendations for further study are examined. Last, a chapter summary concludes the presentation of information in the final chapter of this qualitative case study.

Summary of Research

Research Question Number One: How Has the High Stakes Testing Climate Affected the Confidence of Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers in Relation to Their Ability to Increase Achievement in Their Students Within the Time Restraints Mandated by NCLB?

In this study, confidence was defined as a belief in one's own abilities, or the fact of being or feeling certain. With the implementation of high stakes testing and highly qualified status for teachers, as a result of the passage of NCLB, the confidence of Secondary Special Education Teachers in their ability to help students increase academic achievement may have changed dramatically. Part of this was due to the expectation of 100% of students to score proficient or advanced on the PSSA in 2014, which many educators felt was impossible to achieve.

The data in this research found that teachers' confidence to increase scores mirrored the administrations' expectations for student achievement. If school administrators' expectations were low, then teachers believed that they did not have control over student achievement and their students' scores were low. The students met the expectations of both the teachers and the administrators. Furthermore, if administrators held high expectations for student achievement,

teachers had greater confidence that their interventions made a difference and the students they taught tended to score higher on the PSSA. The connection between high expectations of administrators, teachers, and students and increased achievement by students is supported by Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010). Tomlinson and Imbeau proposed that “when a student has a positive affect regarding learning and himself or herself as a learner, it opens the door to academic growth. Conversely, a student’s negative affect regarding learning or his or her own abilities as a learner shuts the door” (p. 16).

The relationship between expectations and results was evident in the data that the researcher collected. One would assume that the districts with the highest special education populations would have the lowest rankings in the county for scores on the PSSA. It is often assumed that Special Education Subgroup scores lower a district’s overall achievement scores on the PSSA. Higher numbers of Special Education Students would correlate with lower overall scores. The results of this study indicated District A, whose Special Education population comprised 20% of their overall school population, scored second in the county on eleventh grade math scores, fourth in the county on eleventh grade reading scores, third in the county for eleventh grade writing scores, and second in the county in eleventh grade science scores on the PSSA.

District C, with an overall Special Education population of 14.2%, placed sixth in the county for eleventh grade math and reading scores and last in the county for eleventh grade writing and science scores. District C was the only district not implementing co-teaching and the district in which both teachers interviewed

indicated their administrators had stated that they did not believe that the special education students could do well on the PSSA tests.

Table 4

Rankings of County Schools for 11th Grade Scores in Math, Reading, Writing, and Science and Special Education Population Percentages

School Districts/ Special Education Population Percentage	11 th Grade Math Ranking in the County	11 th Grade Reading Ranking in the County	11 th Grade Writing Ranking in the County	11 th Grade Science Ranking in the County
District A 20%	2/7	4/7	3/7	2/7
District B 7.8%	3/7	1/7	2/7	1/7
District C 14.2%	6/7	6/7	7/7	7/7
District D 13.0%	1/7	2/7	4/7	3/7

Additionally, the level of confidence that teachers could increase test scores of students was influenced by professional development and programs adopted by school districts. If teachers perceived the district to be providing professional development activities that were meaningful and helpful to them, the teachers had a greater sense of confidence that their students would improve their scores. One teacher stated “we are included in all of the regular education in-services.” Another indicated that “every one of us got trained.” The training offered consistency in the strategies being utilized for all students. Providing effective professional development, which included best practices, helped increase teacher confidence and student scores. The practice of offering pertinent

professional development supported Wheatley's (2007) belief that teachers need to have all necessary information in order to have positive growth in student achievement.

Teachers also reflected that having students with disabilities in regular classrooms had raised the bar for student achievement. One educator stated, "You're only as good as your competition and I think being put into the regular classroom has raised the standard." Another teacher indicated "putting them [Secondary Special Education Students] in the regular classroom has forced them to a higher level." In the co-taught classrooms, all students were exposed to the general curriculum, which would be considered rigorous compared to the instruction that often took place in self-contained Learning Support Classrooms. Self-contained Learning Support teachers often utilized materials for teaching that did not coincide with the general curriculum for the grade level being instructed.

Furthermore, in order to raise the achievement scores of their students in math and reading, all of the districts had added PSSA Math and Reading remedial classes. These classes provided remedial instruction to meet the individual needs of students. One teacher stated that student achievement increased when the students completed activities in which they experienced success. The students' accomplishments increased their motivation to tackle challenging assignments in the future. The tendency for positive increases in achievement to lead to more successful outcomes was supported by Danielson (2002) who contended that

There is a circular relationship between success and self-confidence: students succeed in school, they learn that they are capable of success, and are willing in turn to take on additional challenges. The reverse is also true: when students begin to fail, their school behavior becomes increasingly motivated by avoidance- they disappear into the back of the room or sink down into their chairs, hoping to hide (p. 13).

In this study, the school district with the overall lowest scores on the PSSA had Special Education Teachers who did not support having Special Education Students in the general curriculum. Both teachers from this district felt their students should be in functional curricula, often found in Life Skills Classes, and not be taught by Regular Education Teachers. One teacher stated that the new initiatives would never apply to her students because the students were so low functioning. The teachers believed that the students could not receive proficient or advanced scores on the PSSA.

Research Question Number Two: In What Ways Has NCLB Affected the Commitment Exhibited by Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers to Deliver Instruction to Their Students?

Even though teacher qualifications were questioned by NCLB and many schools have targeted the Special Education Subgroup because of a failure to meet AYP, Secondary Special Education Teachers have maintained a high level of commitment to their students and to the field of Special Education.

Commitment in this research was defined as dedication to a long term course of action, engagement or involvement. The commitment exhibited by these teachers remained strong even though these teachers had felt personally attacked by highly qualified teacher requirements. All of the teachers in this study felt particularly confused and angered when told their Pennsylvania

teaching certificates were no longer valid and that they had to participate in the Bridge or HOUSSE programs, as outlined in NCLB and by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The Secondary Special Education Teachers could not understand why one year they were qualified to teach a group of Special Education Students, but by the next year they no longer were allowed to teach that same class.

Even though all of the teachers interviewed were confused and angered by the federal and state governments questioning their qualifications and felt a lack of control over their students' achievement, the teachers still reported that they would recommend a relative or friend to go into the field of Special Education. Of the eight teachers interviewed, six would recommend a friend or relative to enter the field of Special Education. Two had daughters, one had a son, and another had a brother enrolled in Special Education programs in colleges. The teachers indicated that having a calling to work with students with special needs and enjoying being with children were reasons to pursue teaching as a career. Over half of the teachers indicated the paperwork was an area of concern for them. The two teachers who would not recommend a relative to enter the field of education wanted a return to self-contained classrooms for learning support students instead of co-taught classes with other regular education students.

Teachers responded to feeling frustrated about factors they could not control with their students. For instance, one teacher explained there were so many outside influences directly affecting Special Education Students, including their home life, genetic makeup, transient life styles where students and their families

moved from one school or district to another, and just the life that the students led. There were factors that could not be controlled when working with human beings. Thus, a business model for running schools promoted by many politicians was almost impossible to implement. Students were not widgets that could be mass produced as Pennsylvania politicians have purported.

The Secondary Special Education Teachers, in this case study, all continued to have a strong commitment for education and their students after the implementation of NCLB. The teachers felt conflicted, however, in that they were unable to have the time to instruct students on skills that they felt were necessary for everyday living after graduation. These skills included utilizing a check book, making household budgets, and completing job applications. The majority of teachers in the study felt strongly that the students were not going to need to know trigonometry or calculus skills upon graduation, some of the skills tested on the Eleventh Grade PSSA.

Research Question Number Three: How Has the Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers' Sense of Compassion for Students and Others Evolved Since the Implementation of NCLB?

In the study, compassion was defined as sorrow for the sufferings or troubles of another or others, accompanied by an urge to help or deep sympathy. The Secondary Special Education Teachers who were interviewed in this study all stated that compassion was a necessary trait for anyone who wanted to pursue a career in Special Education. Two teachers indicated their compassion was not at all affected by NCLB. One considered it her job to have compassion for

students. Another teacher was emphatic when he discussed compassion for students changing since NCLB. He indicated “If you have to change, then you’re in the wrong business.” He stressed, “The minute you walk through the doors, as a teacher, you have to have it [compassion]. If a teacher lacks compassion for students, then a teaching career would be extremely long because students would fight him/her every day.” His statements mirrored Tomlinson and Imbeau’s (2010) thoughts that

Our best hope for classrooms that work effectively for each student is to cultivate teachers who care deeply about teaching and the young people they teach; who believe teaching is a calling, not just a job; and who understand that they will become self-actualized professionals (to the degree that they are able) who pave the way for their students to also become self-actualized (p. 26).

Although all of the interviewees agreed Special Education Teachers must have compassion, several indicated there is not time in the school day to create relationships with students that demonstrate compassion. At one time in their careers, the teachers would have discussed students’ problems with them and helped them to arrive at solutions. Since the implementation of NCLB the educators expressed they have ended up sending students to the guidance counselors or the Dean of Students to discuss issues. The personal bond that was once prevalent between Special Education Teachers and their students was gone. One teacher pointed out that from her view point, younger teachers did not have the same sense of compassion as the veteran teachers. The same teachers who stated compassion was a necessary trait for an educator were conflicted because they were unable to display that attribute with students due to changes implemented as a result of NCLB.

Research Question Number Four: How Have NCLB Changes Affected the Connection Pennsylvania Secondary Special Education Teachers Form with Their students and School Leaders?

The connections formed between Secondary Special Education Teachers and their students, as well as with other teachers, have evolved since the implementation of NCLB. Connections in this study were defined as relationships, associations, or relations between things that depend on, involve, or follow each other. Some of the changes in connections reported in this study have been positive and others negative. When looking at student and teacher connections, one educator indicated that students “can’t get away from us because there is one [Special Education Teacher] in every single class.” The presence of a Special Education Teacher throughout the school day was due to the implementation of co-teaching in all of the core content subject areas in the senior high school, which was a direct result of the highly qualified status requirements in NCLB. This increased presence of Special Education Teachers led to an increase in interactions, which one teacher indicated, “is a great thing because we are able to truly see how they [students] are performing in the classroom versus just reading off of Progress Book (a computer generated grading system) what their scores are” and the ability to individualize instruction for students. The increase in the ability to provide proper instruction based on informal and formal assessments in the classroom was supportive of ideas shared by Iervolino and Hanson in *Differentiated Instruction: A Focus on the Gifted* (2003). The authors proposed student achievement increased as a result

of teachers presenting lessons that accommodate students at their individual levels. The teachers interviewed in this study who were co-teaching, reported they had more opportunities to differentiate instruction for all students and meet the students' individual needs.

Additionally, all of the teachers interviewed indicated that the connections Special Education Students have formed with their peers have changed for the positive as a result of changes brought about by NCLB. This was a direct result of the integration of Special Education Students into Regular Education Classes, which were often co-taught due to the highly qualified teacher requirement in NCLB. Teachers observed that Special Education Students interacted more with Regular Education Students both during the school day and in extracurricular activities outside of the normal school day. Special Education Students felt more like an integral part of the student body in their schools.

Connections the Special Education Teachers formed with Regular Education Teachers and Regular Education Students had changed since the implementation of NCLB. Being included by all staff members in their buildings was reported by the Special Education Teachers. Increased connections occurred during professional development activities as well as in the faculty rooms and hallways. The Special Education Teachers also remarked that they knew more of the Regular Education Students that were in the co-taught classes. Thus, all students were more likely to say hello to them in the hallways and ask them for help in classes when needed. Getting to know more students and staff

created a greater sense of belonging to the school community for the Secondary Special Education Teachers.

Research Question Number Five: How Has Leadership in Schools and Their Ideas for Change Affected the Confidence, Commitment, Compassion, and Connection Secondary Special Education Teachers Have in Their Daily Interactions with Students and Administrators?

Since the implementation of NCLB, school administrators have utilized various change initiatives to increase teacher effectiveness and raise the level of achievement of the students they instruct. The data, collected in this study, indicated some examples of change initiatives included implementing remedial courses, utilizing the co-teaching strategy, including Special Education Students with Regular Education Students in the general curriculum, and providing professional development to all teachers, especially those involving analysis of PSSA data. Thus, the building administrators in the districts participating in the study not only needed to introduce the change initiatives, but, they needed to gain support from their staff members. In order to motivate teachers to incorporate changes, Reeves (2009) indicated leaders must “gain buy-in through getting results that demonstrate that the effect of the change is in the best interests of all stakeholders” (pp. 86-87). One teacher reported this same concept when dealing with students. He indicated, “If they [students] do something and they’re successful at it, they are gung-ho the next time around.”

One teacher elaborated that it was important for administrators to “make them [Special Education Teachers] feel they are a part of the decision making and not

just say this is the way it is going to be.” In the same line of thought, another instructor stated it was important for administration to ask for input when developing new programs. It was greatly appreciated when administration said, “You’re the ones in the classroom. How do you think we should do it?” As Buckingham (2005) espoused, great leaders draw on the needs that people have for security, community, clarity, authority, and respect.

Several teachers relayed their administrators had provided effective professional development for staff that stressed best practices and implementation of these strategies. The Special Education Teachers also reported that including them in sessions that reviewed data from the PSSA regarding their students was important in order to increase student achievement. Reeves (2009) cautioned that “implementation precedes buy-in; it does not follow it” (p. 44). One teacher indicated that administrators in his district always acted in the best interest of the students. This was viewed as important in order to gain support by teachers for new initiatives.

Teachers reported various levels of perceived support from their administrators. One teacher observed that it felt like “no one was advocating for Special Ed. (education).” Contrary to this, another teacher pointed out that, “I’ve not felt a lot of pressure from them to be proficient because they [administrators] know who’s in this room. So, there’s nothing been really directed at me towards the scores.” Additionally, a teacher proposed, “He [the administrator] understands that we are doing what we can” and did not put pressure on staff. Moreover, a fourth teacher explained that “pressure is put on everybody not

individuals regarding test scores.” As Schlechty (2005) pointed out, it is important for employees not only to feel supported by administrators, but also encouraged to reach the proposed goals. It appeared to the researcher that the teachers in the study felt supported by their respective administrators, but were not consistently encouraged that they could increase student achievement of all students.

Summary of Conceptual Framing of the Participants’ Interview

Question Responses

This qualitative study included eight Secondary Special Education Teachers within central Pennsylvania. These participants were asked 19 interview questions that were framed by *commitment, confidence, compassion, and connections* (See Table 3). In this section, summaries of the responses of the individuals are presented.

Lucy

A strong commitment to education was evident in Lucy’s Interview Question responses. She continued to look at the students individual needs, but indicated it was difficult to find the time within the school day. Two of Lucy’s daughters recently obtained teaching positions in Special Education. In her view, she saw new, younger teachers as not having as much compassion for students. Lucy believed this lack of compassion was due to the fact that academics were being pushed more than looking at “the whole student.”

The administration in Lucy's district had provided professional development and support to help students achieve. The implementation of "Power Teaching" in math had increased her confidence to help students increase achievement.

As far as connections with peers and students, Lucy missed the relationships she used to have with students when she had a self-contained class. Finding the time to interact with students was more difficult now, but Lucy made an effort to do so. She had seen growth in Special Education Students' interactions with their peers since co-teaching had been implemented. The students were accepted more by their peers and were participating in greater numbers during after school activities. Lucy stated she had not allowed herself to be treated as a paraprofessional in the classroom setting. She took the initiative to work with other staff members to promote the best learning environment for her students.

Joe

The interview and observation of Joe indicated that he is an individual with high levels of commitment and compassion for students and other teachers. As a work experience coordinator, he had the opportunity to work individually with students and get to know them personally. His level of commitment and compassion had not changed since the implementation of NCLB, though, he admitted he and other teachers had to refer students to the guidance counselors more to handle situations. Two of his sons were recent graduates in the field of education.

Joe commented his district provided professional development opportunities that increased his confidence when preparing students for the PSSA. He had

observed gains in academic achievement of students and stated “this is truly a positive.”

A strength area for Joe was forming connections with students, parents, teachers, and other school staff. These connections had not changed as a result of NCLB. Joe noted Special Education Students’ connections with other students within the school environment had increased as a result of co-teaching and other inclusive practices. He viewed this as positive.

Hillary

Responses to the Interview Questions revealed that Hillary was a teacher who had adapted to the changes implemented by NCLB. Commitment to students and the field of education was important to her. As a result, she was planning to pursue an administrative certificate.

The professional development available in her district had enabled Hillary to gain confidence in her teaching abilities. She was positive when discussing the district’s involvement with the Pennsylvania Literacy Network (PLN) and expressed optimism that the strategies promoted would help all students.

Hillary considered herself to have compassion for her students and others, which was not influenced by NCLB. Establishing a good rapport with her students, which promoted connections, was important to Hillary. She explained, “I come across as wanting to help them.” Hillary’s level of commitment, confidence, compassion, and connections continued to grow throughout the changes implemented by NCLB.

Susan

Susan's commitment to the field of education had changed since NCLB was implemented. She considered leaving education and would not recommend that her daughter enter the field of Special Education. Susan had experienced some negative interactions with her peers in the school setting. One teacher had questioned whether she needed a teaching certificate to work with special needs students. Even with her commitment wavering, Susan expressed compassion for her students. She missed having the time to develop strong relationships with her pupils and their parents.

When looking at confidence, Susan acknowledged the district had provided professional development to help increase student achievement. Her conviction was that Pennsylvania was forcing students "to take a test on something that they can't do." Students were becoming frustrated, giving up on learning, and questioning why they were even at school.

Susan noted there was not enough time to develop the connections to students that she used to have before NCLB. At times, she mentioned she had been treated like an assistant within the regular classroom setting. Most of her experiences dealing with connections formed with other teachers and students since NCLB had not been positive.

Betty

Answers to Interview Questions affirmed that Betty is committed to her students and education in spite of NCLB mandates. She was confused by certification requirements and did not see how they pertained to her position.

Betty admitted it “really bothered me to think that I was not qualified to teach subjects.” Even with this, she encouraged her daughter to enter the field of education.

Compassion for students and connections developed with them were important to Betty. She expressed that it upsets her when she sees her students struggling with the PSSA. In her role, she was able to develop connections with students when they were in her resource room. The classroom observation reinforced that Betty and her students had positive relationships and mutual respect.

The administration in her district had not provided Betty with professional development to build her confidence to increase student achievement. She expressed, “I don’t think we have much control at all” when it comes to increasing scores on the PSSA.

Mary

One of the few teachers still in a self-contained classroom setting, Mary’s responses indicated she had strong commitment to education and her students. Since students were in her room for several class periods, she was able to develop connections with them. She indicated the connections students formed with others outside of her classroom usually depended on their level of social skill development.

District C had provided some professional development activities, but Mary conceded it did not build her confidence to help her students achieve

academically. She struggled with the frustration students exhibited when taking the PSSA.

“That’s my job,” summed up Mary’s view when talking about compassion of teachers. She wanted to be there for her students when they were frustrated with academics or just needed someone to talk to. The answers to the Interview Questions did not reveal any major changes in Mary’s commitment, confidence, compassion, or connections since the implementation of NCLB.

Leslie

Interview responses, by Leslie, indicated she had a strong sense of compassion for all students that she interacted with in the school environment. Leslie began her career in education as a paraprofessional and went on to obtain a teaching degree. At times, she revealed she had been treated like a paraprofessional instead of as an equal co-teacher within the classroom. This affected the commitment she had for the field of education. Leslie affirmed she would not recommend that a relative or friend become a teacher.

Connections formed with students and other staff members were important to Leslie. She contended that she had observed an increase in connections made between Regular Education and Special Education Students as well as the teachers from both areas since NCLB was implemented.

Confidence in Leslie’s ability to help students achieve had grown since the implementation of NCLB. She expressed that “it was a wow moment” when they saw the benefits of the regular education curricula for their students. District D

had provided professional development that had been helpful in building confidence of teachers to increase achievement.

Dave

Dave's answers to Interview Questions revealed a man with strong compassion for helping Special Education Students. He wanted to develop connections with his students and enjoyed communicating with them in the school environment. His enthusiasm for positive communications with students was confirmed within the classroom observations, as well.

The professional path of Dave had changed since the implementation of NCLB. He indicated that he is in the "process of trying to find my niche in those (co-taught) classes." As a teacher, his confidence within the new settings had grown. He believed this confidence increased his ability to positively influence the learning of his students.

The mandate of being highly qualified and how it was handled by his district bothered Dave. Confusion about the requirements and anger about how everything was handled were indicated by his responses. He stated that "I sort of got the short end of the deal on the Bridge." Even though this occurred, Dave showed commitment to education and his students. He affirmed that he wanted to remain in the field of education regardless of the PSSA and government mandates.

Conclusion

Data collected by the researcher affirmed what authors such as Glickman (2002), Buckingham (2005), Evans (1996) and Palmer (1998) wrote about the

importance of clarity of vision that educational leaders presented to their staffs. Clear vision in itself, however, was not enough in this study. The goals that educational leaders presented not only needed to be clear and concise, but they needed to promote that the increases in student achievement were expected and achievable. Giving staff the impression that increased achievement for Special Education Students was not possible became a self-fulfilling prophesy. As Henderson and Milstein (2003) proposed, “deficit labels on students have become self-fulfilling prophecies for students rather than a path to resiliency” (p. 19).

A powerful way to promote student achievement by leaders would be by telling the story of increased achievement and social gains of Special Education Students in co-taught classes. Pace-Marshall (2006), Wheatley (2007), and Phillips (1992) all concluded that storytelling was a powerful medium that leaders could utilize to create momentum to implement changes, in this case increased achievement of all students.

Senge (2000) proposed, if improvements were to be made in school systems, interactions between administrators, teachers and students needed to be examined. This researcher found the relationships between Secondary Special Education Teachers and other teachers, administrators, and students had changed since the implementation of NCLB. In the process of including Special Education Students in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) with regular education peers, Special Education Teachers had also been included to a greater extent with all teachers and students. The teachers interviewed in this

case study indicated that when walking down the halls, more students recognized them and greeted them. Both non-identified and identified special needs students asked for their help in the classrooms, making the Secondary Special Education Teachers feel as if they were an integral part of the classroom. Furthermore, the teachers were asked to participate in professional development activities regarding students that they previously were not asked to attend. Thus, the majority of the teachers interviewed felt a greater sense of belonging to the school community.

The same sense of acceptance by the school community was mirrored in the relationships observed by teachers regarding their students. Special Education Students were participating more in school activities both during and after school hours. Special Education Students were engaged more in conversations with all students, not just other identified students. This was reported as a positive by all of the interviewed teachers. Even though the teachers indicated that taking the PSSA was stressful for students when it was first initiated, the teachers admitted that students were better prepared for the test now and were not as stressed as they once had been.

The relationship between Secondary Special Education Teachers and their Special Education Students had changed significantly since the implementation of NCLB according to all of the interviewed teachers. Educators reported less time to get to know students personally as well as to help them deal with problems. Several teachers indicated they ended up sending students to guidance counselors to talk about issues that surfaced in their lives. The

teachers appeared to miss the counseling aspect of their job duties. The researcher observed one teacher dealing with one student's personal issues, in a self-contained classroom, and subsequently, instructional time was lost for all of the remaining students in the room. The researcher would propose that a guidance counselor would have more training to handle personal problems of a student than a teacher. Thus, the student would get the help he/she needed from the guidance counselor, while the other students in the classroom would be given the instructional time, by the teacher, necessary to achieve their academic goals.

The majority of the teachers interviewed reported initial hesitation to perform changes that had been assigned to them as a result of the implementation of NCLB. After seeing progress made by their students, the teachers indicated that they saw the necessity for the changes and bought into the new initiatives. As Reeves (2009) indicated, this development of a shared value system would be indicative of the beginning of sustainable change. This occurred in the majority of Secondary Special Education Teachers who were in co-teaching situations. The teachers who were still in self-contained classrooms, or continued to voice support for them, tended to have the least amount of buy-in for change initiatives related to NCLB. Additionally, these teachers were the most vocal about their students not being able to achieve higher standards of learning. As Danielson (2002) proposed, educators who think their students cannot learn are "more likely to give-up and find something, or more likely someone, to blame" (p. 12) for the lack of achievement in their students.

The majority of the teachers in the study had been placed in co-teaching classrooms as a result of NCLB. Some of them indicated they felt treated like a paraprofessional and not as an equal by their co-teacher. One teacher indicated she did not allow herself to be put into the situation of being treated like a paraprofessional and worked with the other teacher to gain respect as an educator. All of them had been involved in a positive co-teaching experience and agreed personalities of teachers needed to be matched when making assignments for co-teaching classrooms.

Recommendations for Further Study

Since the setting for this research was only one county within Central Pennsylvania, one recommendation for further study would be to conduct studies in other locations outside of Central Pennsylvania. Results may be different in more urban areas or in suburban areas surrounding the larger cities in Pennsylvania.

The researcher looked at the evolution of the professional path of Secondary Special Education Teachers since the implementation of NCLB. Another study may want to look at Elementary Special Education Teachers to see if they have been subject to as many changes as their secondary counterparts. A greater number of these teachers are in co-teaching situations and presenting instruction within the regular education environment to both identified and non-identified students than before NCLB.

Another area for future research would be administrators' views of the abilities of Special Education Students to increase scores on the PSSA and the students'

actual scores. Is there a correlation between the two? It appears if it is perceived by staff that there are low expectations for achievement in Special Education Students by administrators, students scores tended to be lower. Thus, administrators must find ways to promote high expectations for achievement as well as motivate staff to work to attain these levels in their students. As Fullan (2010) advocated, in order to lead teachers in continuous improvement, school districts must have people at all levels guiding and supporting the change initiatives at all levels. This would also include teacher leaders supporting their peers to reach increased achievement levels for all students.

A further area of research would be to look at the effectiveness of self-contained classrooms compared to co-taught classrooms composed of mixed populations (Regular and Special Education Students) for learning support instruction. A researcher could look at the effectiveness of having two teachers in a classroom with at least one being highly qualified in the subject matter presented. This comparison might also explore the rigor of the curricula that is offered to learning support students. The topics would touch on the NCLB requirements of highly qualified teachers as well as presenting a rigorous curriculum to all students.

In this case study, only one of the eight Secondary Special Education Teachers interviewed had a negative attitude about all aspects of NCLB, their job, and the abilities of students. The other seven teachers were making adaptations and evolving with the changes being implemented as a result of the legislation. It would be interesting to look into what are the traits that make these

teachers resilient and able to adapt to changes while other teachers have a more difficult time. Additionally, a researcher could explore what affect resiliency of teachers has on students. As Henderson and Milstein (2003) question, “How can students be expected to accept the challenges required to move toward resilient behaviors and attitudes if educators, some of their primary role models, do not demonstrate these qualities?” (p. 34).

Chapter Summary

Politics are driving change initiatives in public schools today. At the forefront is the NCLB legislation that has driven changes in curricula, teacher qualifications, and assessment procedures for students. These changes have forced Secondary Special Education Teachers to change and develop resiliency in order to remain committed and positive in their roles in the classrooms. Additionally, they have felt responsible for maintaining positive attitudes in their students who have had to meet the high levels of achievement proposed under NCLB (100% proficient or advanced scores by 2014).

Teachers felt confused and upset that the government system had reneged on the 99 year teaching certificates that were issued to them upon meeting all certification requirements. Through all changes, the Secondary Special Education Teachers maintained compassion and commitment for their students and worked tirelessly to help them achieve prescribed goals. The teachers developed stronger connections with all students, regular and special education, in their buildings as well as the peers with whom they collaborated and instructed students. The majority of Secondary Special Education Teachers gained

confidence in their abilities to help students achieve with the backing of their administration. The increased teacher confidence appeared to have led to increased confidence in their students as well. The increased confidence in students permeated academic achievement as well as increased social interactions with peers.

This study found, that in the future, school administrators may lead their staffs to help students increase achievement by setting high goals. At the same time, the administrators need to provide professional development that provides the tools to assist teachers in reaching the elevated goals with their students. Professional development will strengthen the confidence these educators have in their ability to advance achievement of students. Special Education Teachers have remained committed to the field of education and their students. As a result of NCLB changes, they have developed stronger connections with all staff members and students within the school community. These educators have a strong sense of compassion for all pupils with whom they interact. Finally, administrators need to strive to create a school environment in which all teachers are treated as professionals and not as paraprofessionals.

Hence, even with all of the change initiatives related to NCLB, Secondary Special Education Teachers and Students appeared to be resilient. The majority of schools in this study increased student achievement on the PSSA. This study told the story of the evolution of the professional path of eight Secondary Special Education Teachers since the inception of NCLB. As Pace Marshall (2006) stated the power of a story “comes from the meaning and wisdom it conveys, the

spirit it evokes, the possibilities it inspires, the hope it stirs, and the faith in new images of the future it unfolds” (p. 5). By telling the story of these teachers looking at the *confidence, commitment, compassion, and connections* they exhibited, the researcher developed an understanding of the past, an increased awareness of the present, and a vision for the future.

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Appendix A

IUP Letterhead

Informed Consent Cover Letter

Dear _____,

Mentioning No Child Left Behind, Pennsylvania State School Assessment, School Improvement, and Special Education Subgroups raises the level of concern for many educators in Pennsylvania. This is especially true for Secondary Special Education Teachers who have been subjected to many changes since the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The purpose of this study is to explore in depth the evolution of this group of teachers since the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2001 in the form of NCLB.

I am a doctoral student in the Administration and Leadership Studies program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. I am conducting a research study that explores the evolution of Secondary Special Education Teachers since the inception of NCLB. I would like to invite you to take part in this study that will allow me to gain information for my dissertation.

Your participation will involve three aspects. First, I will be interviewing you, asking questions pertaining to the topic. This will last approximately one hour. The interview will be audio taped and transcribed. After the interview a follow-up call will be made to clarify your answers and make any revisions necessary to clearly represent your thoughts. Additionally, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcription for accuracy. At a set time after the interview, I will be shadowing you for a three hour time period, within your school, to gain greater insights into your typical day and the interactions that occur.

All information gained from the interviews and observations will be kept locked in a filing cabinet in my home for the duration of the study. If you are willing to participate in this study, I will have you sign a consent form (attached) before we begin the first interview. You may elect to withdraw from the study at any time.

To be part of this study you must meet the following criteria:

1. Currently teach full time within your school districts
2. Be a secondary special education teacher
3. Instruct students in grades 7-12 who take the PSSA
4. Have taught for at least 3 years
5. Willing to be interviewed twice and be shadowed within your school setting for a 3 hour time period

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the consent form and forward it to my work address:

Donna M. Messner
201 Jackson Street
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

If you have further questions or need clarifications, please feel free to contact me by telephone or e-mail:

814-934-9023 (cell)

814-695-5659 (work)

DMessner59@aol.com

Thank you for your consideration of participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Donna M. Messner
Principal Investigator
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Advisor: Dr. Cathy Kaufman
Faculty Advisor
126 Davis Hall
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Indiana, PA 15705-1087
ckaufman@iup.edu
727-357-5593

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE INDIANA UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS. (724-357-7730)

Appendix B

IUP Letterhead

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this Informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

I may withdraw from this study at any point by informing the primary researcher orally or in written form that I no longer wish to be a participant. At which time the researcher will remove me from the study and destroy any information that has been collected.

Name (PLEASE PRINT)

Signature

Date

Phone number or location where you can be reached

Best days and times to reach you

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

Date

Investigator's Signature

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE INDIANA UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS. (724-357-7730)

Appendix C
IUP Letterhead
School District Superintendent Site Approval

Dear Superintendent,

I am a doctoral student participating in the Administration and Leadership Studies program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. I am conducting a study that examines the evolution of Secondary Special Education Teachers since the inception of No Child Left Behind. The information gathered from this study will serve as my dissertation required for a doctoral degree in education.

I am requesting your permission to interview and observe two Secondary Special Education Teachers within your district. It is necessary to receive site approval from you before conducting the interviews and observations.

The teachers will participate in a one hour interview followed by an observation within their school setting. All information will be kept in strict confidence and pseudonyms will be given to the participants and the school district.

If you agree to allow me to interview and observe your staff members, please remit a letter of permission on your district letterhead to me in the enclosed envelope.

Thank you for your consideration and help with this matter.

Sincerely,

Donna M. Messner

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. (724-357-7730)

Appendix D
Interview Questions

1. How has your certification or “highly qualified status” changed as a result of NCLB regulations?
2. Describe how you feel about the Bridge and the HOUSSE requirements.
3. Explain how the commitment, in other words the dedication to a long-term course of action, engagement, and involvement that Special Education Teachers have regarding Special Education Students in your school, has evolved since the implementation of No Child Left Behind if at all.
4. In what ways can Special Education Teachers increase the scores of their students on the PSSA to help them achieve proficiency?
5. Compare the teaching of Special Education Students in your school now compared to a few years ago. Are these students better prepared for standardized tests now? Why?
6. Describe how interactions or connections, meaning the relationships and associations, between you and other teachers and special education students have changed over the last five years.
7. Districts have implemented numerous curricular changes to increase scores on the PSSA. Explain how these changes have affected Special Education Students in your building.
8. List ways in which your district has helped Special Education Teachers to be more effective in increasing test scores of their Special Education Students.

9. Give examples of how your building principal or special education supervisor influenced your confidence, belief in your own ability, that students can achieve the goal of 100% proficient or advanced scores on the PSSA with your instruction. Do you feel they have been successful?
10. What changes as a result of PSSA have you and your colleagues observed in your Special Education Students throughout the last five years?
11. Why or why not would teachers in your building recommend a relative who is about to enter college go into the field of Special Education?
12. Describe the relationship Special Education Teachers in your building have with Special Education Students and their knowledge of Special Education Students' needs and concerns since the implementation of NCLB.
13. In what ways has the school climate and interactions with students evolved since the implementation of NCLB initiatives in your building?
14. Explain how your building principal reacts to concerns in your building regarding NCLB.
15. How has the compassion, the urge to help and concern for the troubles of students, and commitment to students by the Special Education Teachers in your building changed since NCLB was enacted?
16. What control do Special Education Teachers in your building have in regards to student achievement, including all ability levels of students?

17. What do Special Education Teachers in your building and you see as the positive and negative effects of NCLB in your school?
18. Are there times when you have questioned the purpose of your teaching role in which you have felt more like a glorified aide in the classroom setting?
19. Is there anything about the evolution of Special Education Teachers since the inception of No Child Left Behind and related issues that I have not asked that you feel would be pertinent to my research?