AN EXAMINATION OF THE BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PRINCIPALS

by

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ABSTRACT

Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth (AEDY) refers to programs in the state of Pennsylvania that serve students who are seriously and persistently disruptive. In many cases, the individuals who oversee AEDY programs are certified school principals. While there has been an emergence of research devoted to alternative education in general, there is an absence of research that examines the leadership of these programs. The purpose of this research was to examine the beliefs and practices of principals of AEDY programs. Employing a qualitative-based design, structured interviews were used to examine AEDY principals' beliefs and practices compared to those of traditional school principals in five leadership domains: special education, servant leadership, instructional leadership, social justice leadership, and mental health knowledge and delivery of service. The results found more similarities in the leadership beliefs among the two groups than in the leadership practices of the two groups.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Chapter 1

Introduction to Alternative Education

Background

Alternative education is an integral yet frequently overlooked and misunderstood component in many public school districts in the United States. Part of this situation is due to the lack of a clear, concise definition of alternative education. As Lange and Sletten (2002) noted: "There is not agreement across the educational community as to what constitutes an alternative school or program" (p. 7). In addition, alternative education has a confounding history. The early 1960s gave rise to programs that were labeled alternative, suggesting highly experimental means to educate the whole child by to look "within" and express him or herself openly (McGee, 2001). "As the civil rights movement gained momentum and a progressive education movement began by people who were unhappy with traditional learning and curriculum, alternative education came to be defined as programs that "emphasized the development of self-concept, problem-solving, and humanistic approaches." (Conley, 2002, as cited in Kim & Taylor, 2008, p. 207). By the end of the 1970s, many of these alternative schools did not last due to "structural or financial mismanagement." (Kim & Taylor, 2008). Through the 1980s, the "definition of alternative education began to narrow in scope" (Lange & Sletten, 2002, p. 5). Young (1990) speculated that the conservative political climate of the decade and an increasing number of students who were not accomplishing desired levels of achievement caused alternative education to serve more "at-risk" students. Alternative education has

since largely embraced this design and evolved into an entity generally associated with serving "at-risk" populations. For purposes of this research, alternative education refers to those programs that are classified by the state of Pennsylvania as Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth (AEDY). AEDY programs are designed to serve students who are persistently and severely disruptive to the school environment. In Pennsylvania, these programs are defined formally as follows:

> Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth Programs provide a combination of intense, individualized academic instruction and behavior modification counseling in an alternative setting to assist students to return successfully to the regular classroom. The program approval and grant funding is provided to any public school (school district, intermediate unit, area vocational-technical school, charter school, special school jointure, or any combination/consortium of public schools) who meets the minimum program requirements (Pennsylvania Department of Education [PDE], 2010, Introduction Section, para. 1).

In the Pennsylvania School Code, Act 30 of 1997 Article XIX-C, Disruptive Youth, defines a disruptive youth as follows:

> "A student who poses a clear threat to the safety and welfare of other students or the school staff, who creates an unsafe school environment or whose behavior materially interferes with the learning of other students or disrupts the overall educational process." The disruptive student exhibits to a marked degree any or all of the following conditions:

(i)Disregard for school authority, including persistent violation of school policy and rules.

(ii) Display or use of controlled substances on school property or during school-affiliated activities.

(iii) Violent or threatening behavior on school property or during school-affiliated activities.

(iv) Possession of a weapon on school property, as defined under 18 Pa.C.S. Section 912 (relating to possession of weapon on school property).

(v) Commission of a criminal act on school property or during school-affiliated activities.

(vi) Misconduct that would merit suspension or expulsion under school policy.

(vii) Habitual truancy.

No student who is eligible for special education services pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Public Law 91-230, 20 U.S.C. Section 1400 et seq.) shall be deemed a disruptive student for the purposes of this act, except as provided for in 22 Pa. Code Section 14.35 (relating to discipline). (PDE, 2010, Eligible Students and Allowable Transfer Section, para. 1)

Within the last decade, there has been an increase in the number of alternative education programs and the number of students they serve. "Although the field lacks a common definition and suffers a major divide in philosophies of alternative programs, the tremendous growth in the availability of these programs in the United States over the past several years illustrates a continuing demand" (Quinn et al., 2006, p. 12). The National

Center on Education Statistics reported that for the 2000-2001 school year, there were "10,900 public school program that served 612,900 AEDY students in the United States. Thirty-nine percent of school districts nationwide reported having an Alternative Education program for at-risk youth" (Kleiner et al., 2002, p. iii). In 2010, The National Center for Education Statistics released its update on AEDY programs. "In the 2007-08 school year, 64 percent of districts reported having at least one alternative school or program for at-risk students that was administered either by the district or by another entity" (Carver & Lewis, 2010, p. 3). This figure represents an increase of 25 percent from the 2001 reporting. There was an increase in the number of students served as well. "There were 646,500 students enrolled in public school districts attending alternative schools and programs for at-risk students in 2007-2008, with 558,300 students attending district-administered alternative schools and programs and 87,200 students attending alternative schools and programs administered by another entity" (Carver & Lewis, 2010, p. 3). This represents an increase of approximately 33,600 students from the 2001 reporting. The Pennsylvania Department of Education in 2004-2005 reported that there were approximately 311 districts that had programs that served students in Alternative Education. The programs served nearly twenty-eight thousand Pennsylvania students (PDE, 2010). The Education Law Center for Pennsylvania reported that there are currently "614 programs that service nearly 30,000 students. Growth in the number of AEDY programs from the 1999-2000 and 2009-2010 school years was 200%." (The Education Law Center for Pennsylvania, 2010, p. 14).

In many cases, those individuals who oversee such programs are school administrators who are certified school principals. While there has been an emergence in the last two decades of significant research nationwide, including Pennsylvania, that focuses on alternative education programs and their design (Ager et. al 2006; Aron, 2006; Foley and Pang, 2006; Hosley, 2009; Kim and Taylor, 2008; Lange and Sletten, 2002; Price, 2010; Raywid, 1994), there is an absence of research that focuses on the individuals who lead such programs. In one of the few dissertations devoted to leadership of AEDY programs, Juenemann (2008) hypothetically detailed the trials and tribulations of newly appointed AEDY principal "Jane". In her characterization of Jane, Juenemann described a ten- year teaching veteran who envisions herself to be a school principal. Jane's passion is for those students who require a more significant level of intervention behaviorally, socially, or emotionally. Jane prides herself on her realization that it is not only the students who are failing, but the system is failing these students as well. "Her thoughts turned to what kind of leadership it would take to build a learning community that would support teachers who taught at-risk students." (Juenemann, 2008, p.1). Jane then began to wonder what kind of leadership it takes to support teachers and students in Alternative Education. When her district decided to open an alternative high school, Jane applied and became the AEDY principal. However, the challenges soon became apparent:

> Pulse racing, Jane realized her administrative courses had left her unprepared for the challenge of setting up a school that was substantially different from the traditional high school. There was little course work in her

> administrative classes that directly addressed how to create a learning community with staff in an alternative setting that would meet the needs of a diverse group of students. In order to increase learning effectively for at-risk students, create a realistic schedule for staff members who like to teach multiple subjects, and balance the need of the school to have a healthy mix of students with the district's desire to remove problem students from the traditional high school, the staff would have to work well together. Like many other alternative school leaders, Jane was intrigued and perplexed. She turned to the literature and materials on alternative schools and discovered there was little information that offered guidance on buildings and governing an alternative school. If she could not rely on what she had learned in her administrative program or literature about alternative schools to guide her in this process, she was going to have to figure out what to do on her own. This lack of research and absence of appropriate pre-service professional preparation for alternative school leaders limited Jane's ability to create an effective learning environment for alternative school students. (Juenemann, 2008, pp 2-3)

Juenneman's fictitious account of an AEDY administrator did portray a realistic look at scenarios that face leaders of these programs. Yet despite the proliferation of research that focuses on alternative education, according to Price (2010), there is "little research, however, on exactly what leaders of alternative education programs need in terms of skills, preparation, and training to be successful" (Price & Martin, 2010, p. 3).

Statement of the Problem

There is insufficient published research in the area of leadership of Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth. This lack of research for "at-risk" youth leadership, in particular for those who lead AEDY programs, presents complications beyond those today's principal faces in a traditional settings. Levine (2005) wrote that twenty-first century school leaders "have the job of not only managing our schools, but of leading them through an era of profound social change that has required fundamental thinking of what schools do and how they do it" (p. 5). It is a concern that AEDY principals have little formalized, research-based direction in attempting to understand the complexities associated with managing and leading such a unique entity. Furthermore, principals of AEDY programs may not have been sufficiently trained to handle the wide scope of issues that confront them in their role. With the understanding that the principals of AEDY programs in Pennsylvania have been trained in traditional university principal preparation programs, Price (2010) observed that "even with traditional preparation, beginning and inexperienced practitioners are easily overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the WHAT of school leadership today; many contend existing skill development, training, and preparation programs are off target" (p. 3). "It seems to some, that even with changes, traditional programs are still not equipped to prepare those who will lead staffs and students in the growing number of traditional schools" (Chapman, 2010, as cited in Price, 2010, p. 3). In the multitude of research supporting school principals, there is little to assist AEDY leaders.

With little formalized research in the area of AEDY leadership, one way of establishing a baseline for its conceptualization is to compare the leaders of AEDY programs to their more traditional school administrative colleagues. Price has long addressed the lack of leadership studies of Alternative Education practitioners. In an attempt to understand the intricacies of AEDY leadership, Price developed a survey instrument that was sent to AEDY principals as well as to principals of traditional schools. The survey, based upon Alimo-Metcalfe's work in Transformative Leadership, was developed to determine if there were differences in beliefs between the two groups. The survey, comprised of four domains, was hypothesized to reveal differences between the two groups for future work in training and professional development. The results yielded statistically significant differences between the two. While Price's survey is valuable with regard to higher education training and staff development, its dimensions assess only four areas of leadership: Engaging individuals, Engaging the Organization, Moving Forward Together, and Personal Qualities/Core Beliefs. An expansion of Price's evaluation of AEDY administrators' beliefs and practices compared with those of traditional school administrators is needed.

As current school leadership requires administrators to guide schools through difficult challenges, examining beliefs and practices of leaders provides one way to understand and define its complexity. Beliefs by definition are "understandings about the world around us" (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 14). Further, they are "consciously held, cognitive views about truth and reality (Ott, 1989, p. 39 as cited in Deal et al., 1999). Loucks et al. (1998) described beliefs as "the ideas the individual is committed to-

sometimes-called core beliefs. They shape goals, drive decisions, create discomfort when violated, and stimulate ongoing critique" (Harris et al., 2004, p.2). In more recent times, "leadership has been viewed increasingly in terms of belief systems and beliefs about education (Fullan, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2000 as cited in Harris, et al., 2004). Harris et al. (2004) called for the "need to take a broad and inclusive view of school leadership, one that is able to accommodate human subjectivity" (p. 6). Furthermore, "From Dewey (1933) to Rokeach (1968) to Bandura (1986), scholars and researchers have suggested that beliefs mediate knowledge, expectations, and actions" (Brown, 2004, p. 333). The following research undertook a purposeful examination of various leadership domains that required administrators to express their practices and beliefs in order to explain how their knowledge translated to leadership.

This focus on beliefs was vital to conceptualizing what is important to AEDY leaders and what their leadership looks like. As Begley et al. (1999) argued:

> The more reflective life-long learners among administrators have also become more conscious of how their own personal values [beliefs] may blind or illuminate the assessment of situations…Some respected scholars of school leadership in the empiricist tradition still dismiss beliefs and ethics as concepts too abstract and resistant to inquiry to be of any practical use to school administrators. Indeed the need to clarify only becomes important when one needs to know about intents or purpose, or when difficulty is encountered attempting to establish consensus within a given population. (p. 3)

These scholars caution about using values to develop a clear, prescriptive guide to ethical or belief-added leadership. The process of developing such a guide, they argue, is far too complex to catalog which values should be adopted. This is not the intent of the present research. Rather, the intent is as they suggest, the 'adoption of a values and beliefs perspective on school leadership [that] can transform vague advice into something specific enough for school administrators to act upon." (xviii)

The following research conceptually resembles the work of Price. A comparison of leadership beliefs and practices of traditional school principals to alternative education leaders is a significant step toward understanding the complexities of alternative education leadership. The areas of leadership domains that are presented for this research are: servant leadership, knowledge and practice of special education, mental health knowledge and delivery, social justice leadership, and instructional leadership. There are strategic purposes for examining these areas. First, these areas are derived from their abundance in school leader literature. Second, each is a motif in the alternative education literature. Third, the beliefs themselves interact strongly with the qualitative research methodology proposed in Chapter 3. "Research interviews are based on the conversations of everyday life" (Kvale, 1996, p. 14). Due to the prevalence of the proposed domains in school administration leadership literature, the areas are not germane to school principals and are an appropriate conduit for establishing what alternative education leadership looks like.

Leadership Domain One: Servant Leadership

Determining a leader's beliefs and practices of servant leadership "shifts emphasis from behavior to meaning to help recapture leadership as a powerful force for school improvement" (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 285). Examining the moral dimensions of the leaders of AEDY programs helps to establish whether or not there exists an embodiment of their responsibilities towards serving "at-risk" students. This is an expansion of Price's work (2010) in his survey category of Engaging Individuals. Cited frequently in AEDY program design is the characteristic and importance of caring and nurturing as indicators of effective programs (Aron, 2006; Cox & Davidson, 1995; Guerin & Denti, 1999; National Alternative Education Association, 2010). Thus the evaluation of servant leadership for this study explores its importance, practice, and interaction with leaders of AEDY programs.

Leadership Belief Domain Two: Special Education Knowledge and Practice

Given the complexity of school leadership today, determining and evaluating a school principal's beliefs and practices of knowledge and practice of special education is critical to the expectation of administering effectively to all students in the building. Special education students and services are frequently cited in alternative education literature (Aron, 2006; Atkins, et al., 2008; Lehr, 2004; Quinn, et al., 1999; Quinn & Rutherford, 1998; Unruh, et al., 2007). The number of disabled students in AEDY programs has risen dramatically in the last decade (Education Law Center for Pennsylvania, 2010). Given the significance of the number of students and the attention

required to serve students identified as having Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), it is imperative that leaders of AEDY programs recognize the implications of special education in leading AEDYprograms.

Leadership Belief Domain Three: Mental Health Knowledge and Delivery

The mental health knowledge and orientation to be studied is important due to what U.S Surgeon General David Satcher referred to as a "growing public crisis in mental health for today's youth" (Koller, 2006, p. 199). The National Association for Secondary School Principals (2010) noted that schools have historically used their resources to hire a substantial number of student support professionals to deal with students who require significant intervention socially, emotionally, and therapeutically. These school staff members have been the core around which appropriate programs have emerged. However, there is an increase in the need for administrators to understand the complexity of behavioral and mental health problems among students in school. Furthermore, there is research that suggests that alternative education programs in particular must have and benefit from school-based mental health for meeting the psychosocial and academic needs of chronically disruptive students (Carpenter-Aeby & Aeby, 2005; UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2008). With increased accountability for academic results under No Child Left Behind, school counselors, who represent the majority of student support professionals in schools, have seen their responsibilities shift from mental health toward an academic focus, leaving an even wider gap in support services, which are pivotal for AEDY principals. Knowledge and support of mental health services by the school administrator could then ideally enhance the "at-

risk" students' success. Having a strong therapeutic knowledge and delivery of services is essential to leaders in AEDY programs and is recognized in the literature as a vital service to AEDY programs (American Institutes for Research, 2007; Carpenter-Aeby & Aeby, 2005; Hosley & Thein, 2009; National Alternative Education Association, 2009).

Leadership Belief Domain Four: Social Justice Leadership

The Social Justice Leadership belief domain to be studied arises from the statistical information (Aron, 2006; Atkins & Bartuska, 2010; Education Law Center for Pennsylvania, 2010; Sagor, 1999) that detailed the overrepresentation of traditionally marginalized and underrepresented groups of students in AEDY programs. In addition, "traditional policy, leadership training, licensure, and selection processes for school leaders often provided only token, isolated stabs at inequities or see them as management challenges" (Marshall, 2004). Having such inadequate understanding of issues related to poverty, language minority, special needs, gender, race, and sexuality may have significance to leaders of AEDY.

Leadership Belief Domain Five: Instructional Leadership

Finally, the belief and practices of instructional leadership was examined. Many traditional principal preparation programs emphasize the role of principal as an instructional leader as vital to school leadership (Blase & Blase, 1998; Hallinger, 2005; Horng, et al., 2010: Fink & Resnick, 2001;). Guerin and Denti (1999) emphasized that strong instructional competencies are imperative for success for alternative education students. In addition, alternative education programs have long been associated as a

viable means of reducing the drop-out rate. As AEDY programs continue to expand and evolve, the inclusion of this area of school leadership allows the researcher to ascertain its importance as a belief to AEDY principals.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the proposed study is to gain a more complete understanding of what AEDY principals believe to be important beliefs and practices of leadership. There are five leadership domains proposed in order to establish what AEDY principals believe to be important or not important to leadership of AEDY programs. By comparing these beliefs and practices to those of their traditional school colleagues, it is hoped that a clearer picture of AEDY leadership will evolve. It is proposed that this research address the following questions.

1. What are the leadership practices and beliefs of AEDY principals with regard to servant leadership?
2. What are the leadership practices and beliefs of special education knowledge and delivery of service of AEDY principals?
3. What are the leadership practices and beliefs of AEDY principals in the area of mental health knowledge and delivery?
4. What are the leadership practices and beliefs of AEDY principals in areas of social justice?
5. What are the leadership practices and beliefs of AEDY principals in the area of instructional leadership?

Significance of the Study

The results of this study were important for several reasons. One, they helped to conceptualize what AEDY administrators believed to be important in the role of serving at-risk student populations. Hosley (2010) stated that there are currently only two significant studies conducted on alternative education in Pennsylvania: Hosley's study supported by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania in 2003 and Ager's evaluation of AEDY programs for PDE in 2006. Though comprehensive in their analysis of AEDY components, neither study focused exclusively on leadership.

Second, the following research sought to determine whether an AEDY administrator's beliefs and practices had congruence with the beliefs of the traditional school colleagues. The results of the study served as a platform for establishing whether there were differences between what leadership looks like in AEDY versus traditional schools. This is significant in terms of staff development for AEDY administrators. Furthermore, this research could assist districts in helping to formulate more appropriate job descriptions for developing or existing administrative AEDY positions.

A third rationale for the study was to establish where current leadership training at the university level fits and does not with properly preparing administrators who oversee programs that serve primarily at-risk populations. This is significant in terms of principal preparation programs.

Finally, with such little research in AEDY leadership, principals of these programs may feel as though they are isolates, wondering if the leadership role they hold has any commonality with others who have similar positions. At conferences and at

regional meetings, there is a pervasive belief among attendees that the job they perform is not understood or recognized for its uniqueness by traditional school colleagues and others. A purposeful examination of the two populations assisted AEDY principals in understanding their leadership role in comparison to their colleagues.

Limitations and Delimitations

The primary delimitation of this study of AEDY principals' beliefs and practices was its focus primarily on leadership. The study was not directly relevant to the structure and design of AEDY programs themselves. The study did not concern itself with leadership domains outside of those presented earlier. Nor was the study an examination of recent legislative policy developments on AEDY programs.

The primary limitation of the study was that it represented only a sampling of AEDY and regular education principals from Pennsylvania. The purpose of this research was to determine what the beliefs and practices of AEDY principals looks like in the practice of leading a program and how those beliefs operate in comparison to those of regular education peers. Also, the methodology utilized in the study consisted of a series of interviews and was primarily qualitative in design. These interviews are secured and are available upon request.

Summary

Since their inception in the 1960s, alternative education programs have undergone a rich and varied transformation to their present-day function of providing an educational experience for at-risk youth. For the intent of the proposed research, alternative education

is defined by programs that serve persistently defiant and disruptive youth in Pennsylvania. Despite the steady increase in the students in AEDY programs, there is little research that examines what the leadership of these programs looks like. A purposeful examination of comparing the leadership beliefs and practices of AEDY principals to that of traditional school principals is presented. The interview data will assist in developing a coherent framework that outlines what AEDY leadership is today.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

History of Alternative Education

Educator and author Mary Anne Raywid's efforts of formalizing alternative education research helped establish her as a leading authority on historical issues affecting alternative education. In addition, her research helped bring alternative education research to the forefront of the discussion for at-risk youth. Raywid (1998) described the difficulty in defining the historical progression of Alternative Education by stating:

> Alternative schools have, from their inception, stood for very different things. They have been launched to fulfill disparate purposes and designed to function differently from one another. They've functioned almost as an empty glass to be filled with any sort of liquid-or even used for something other than a glass. (p. 14)

To understand the evolution of AEDY programs as they exist today, it is important to recognize the origins of the evolution of programs that that are considered alternative. Atkins (2008) stated, "Despite the proliferation of these programs, a generic description of what constitutes an alternative education program, historically, has been elusive" (p. 344). The first programs that came to be known as alternative did not focus on disruptive and defiant student, but rather their focus was for challenging the status quo through innovation and idealism. Lange and Sletten (2002) tied the beginnings of the alternative education movements to the civil rights movement of the 1960s. They suggested that the earliest noteworthy alternative education programs developed as departures from

traditional schooling. In contrast to the role of serving students with significant and persistent discipline problems, Raywid (1981) hypothesized that the movement's support for reexamining traditional schooling was a manifestation of what she referred to as the "educational humanism of the Sixties" (Raywid, 1981, p. 551). Many of the advocates for challenging the institution of education were also challenging the government and society at large. With a focus on individuality and personal freedom, "the students, and in many cases the staff, of these schools believed it was acceptable, possibly even honorable, to choose not to be part of the Establishment" (McGee, 2001, p. 588). The supporters of alternatives to public education envisioned existing schools as "cold, dehumanizing, irrelevant institutions largely indifferent to the humanity and "personhood" of those within them" (Raywid, p. 551). As Raywid (1981) further observed, the participants in the early alternative education movements (staff and students) did not see themselves as doing things any differently than what was necessary to transform all types of education. In short, it was simply a good way of conducting schools and not an alternative at all. Experimental programs were also generally well-funded by several noteworthy foundations: Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller. Corporations-IBM, Chase Manhattan Bank, Union Carbide- also supported programs that were innovative in nature (Raywid, 1981). Raywid provided further analysis of the time period and its relevance to alternative education by explaining that:

> During the mid-Sixties President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society Program declared a War on Poverty. Education was to be in the vanguard of the battle. Government funds were made available to school sin unprecedented amounts

> under several different programs of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. The intent of these efforts was to equalize opportunity. Simultaneously, other programs such as Title III, ESEA, were introduced specifically to facilitate innovations and the development of alternatives for other populations as well. (Raywid, 1981, p. 551)

At their inception, alternative programs began to emerge more frequently in suburban and urban districts as opposed to rural districts. The urban alternative education programs were aimed more at serving students who were not experiencing success, while the suburban programs were often "innovative programs seeking to invent and pursue new ways to educate" (Raywid, 1998, p. 14).

In contrast to the idealistic and optimistic fervor that surrounded the alternative education movement in the 1960s, the 1970s presented various challenges for alternative education. The greatest threats to alternative schools and programs were the research analyses that yielded the similar results. Alternative education, according to its emerging base of critics, was not a viable improvement to schools (Raywid, 1981). The "lackluster findings effectively halted new efforts at innovation, with some critics demanding a complete moratorium on innovation of any kind" (Raywid, 1981, p. 551). Kim and Taylor (2008) suggested that many of the alternative schools of the 1970s did not have any longevity due to "fiscal or structural mismanagement" (p. 207). The demise of such open thinking, however, was tied in part to the lack of results that produced "no significant difference" in the goal of improving schools and student learning (Raywid, 1981). Lange and Sletten explained that:

> Alternatives of this period, including Freedom Schools and Free Schools, advanced the notion that a singular, inflexible system of education that alienated or excluded major sectors of the population would no longer be tolerated. To this point, Raywid (1994) remarked: "despite the ambiguities and the emergence of multiple alternatives, two enduring consistencies have characterized alternative schools from the start: they have been designed to respond to a group that appears not to be optimally served by the regular program, and, consequently, have represented varying degrees of departure from standard school organization, programs and environments" (Raywid, 1994, as cited in Lange & Sletten, 2002, p. 4)

The counterculture mindset that had been at the core of alternative education since its inception would change dramatically as the 1980s initiated a different way of viewing public education. Young (1990) suggested that the alternative schools of the 1960s and 1970s did not survive and seemed to change from "the more progressive and open orientation in the 1970s to a more conservative and remedial one in the 1980s" (p. 20 as cited in Lange & Sletten, 2002, p. 5). Young further attributed the apparent decline of innovative schools to the conservative climate of the decade as well as the increasing number of children who were functioning at unacceptable achievement levels (Young, 1990). With the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, educational achievement in the U.S. was at the forefront of discussion. This study asserted that the state of education was on a "downward trajectory and that American technological and economic preeminence were consequently imperiled" (Guthrie & Springer, 2004, p. 7). Raywid (1981) suggested

that the growing number of alternative schools during this time centered on teaching basic curricular concepts that were geared towards students who were disruptive or failing in their home schools, and decreased their emphasis on shared decision-making. Guthrie and Springer (2004) described the impact of *A Nation at Risk* and its curricular impact by stating:

> Decade-by-decade, anecdotes and claims about America's educational failures extend as far back as the mid-19th century. Regardless of whether schools were safer, more rigorous, or better equipped to serve its populace in years past, there seems to prevail a common sentiment that "when I was in school" the education system was a healthier and better place. *NAR* continued this tradition, claiming a decline in school performance but failing to specify precisely when the golden age occurred from which this decline began. (p. 17)

Thus what were common among alternative education programs in the 1980s were programs whose primary focus was on fundamental skill attainment in the core subject areas: English, mathematics, science, and social studies (Raywid, 1998).

It was not until the mid-1990s, when Raywid (1994) grouped alternative education programs into three main types that AEDY programs became understood in to their present form. The three types that are generally agreed upon to represent alternative education as it is presently known are:

Type I. Alternatives seeking to make school challenging and fulfilling for all involved. Their efforts have yielded many innovations, a number of which are now widely recommended as improvement measures for schools. Type I alternatives virtually always reflect organizational and administrative departure from the traditional, as well as programmatic innovations.

Type II alternatives are programs to which students are sentenced –usually as one last chance prior to expulsion. They include in-school suspension programs, cool-out rooms, and longer term placements for the chronically disruptive. They have been likened to "soft jails", and they have nothing to do with options or choice. Typically Type II programs focus on behavior modification, and little attention is paid to modifying curriculum or pedagogy. In fact, some of these programs require students to perform the work of the regular classes from which they have been removed. Others simply focus on the basics, emphasizing rote, skills, and drill.

Type III alternatives are for students who are presumed to need remediation or rehabilitation-academic, social/emotional, or both. The assumption is that after successful treatment students can return to mainstream programs. Therefore Type III alternatives often focus on remedial work and on stimulating social and emotional growth-often through emphasizing the school itself as a community. (p. 28)

Raywid clarified the Types further by pointing out that particular programs can be a mix. A compassionate staff, for example, may give a Type II program Type III overtones. However, the Type does ultimately determine whether the student is there by choice, sentence, referral, etc. Raywid noted that Type II and III set out to fix the student on the assumption that this is where the problems lie. Type I assumes that difficulties may be explained by school-student match.

Since Raywid's classification of the Three Type system, Aron (2006) cited Roderick's "promising typology" as a recent expansion of Raywid's work. Aron stated that Roderick's work differs from Raywid's as it places the educational needs of the student at the forefront rather than focusing on the student's at-risk factor or program characteristic. Roderick's proposal identified four main groups of alternative education students.

1. Students who have fallen "off-track" because they have gotten in trouble and need short-term systems of recovery to route them back to high schools.
2. Students who have prematurely transitioned to adulthood because either they have become parents or they have home situations that do not allow them to attend school.
3. Students who have fallen off track academically, but are older and returning to obtain the credits they need to transition to post-secondary programs.
4. The final group of students who have significant problems (i.e. low reading levels) and are way over age for grade, largely due to retention or have come out of special education programs unsuccessfully (Aron, 2006, p.

All three of Raywid's Types of Alternative Education Programs have expanded greatly in the last ten years (Aron, 2006; Atkins, 2005; Education Law Center-PA, 2010; Foley & Pang, 2006; Kim & Taylor, 2008; Siegrist, et al., 2010; Unruh, et al., 2007). The part of alternative education that serves chronically disruptive and defiant youth has grown exponentially from the 1990s to the present day. This is due largely to a "growing response to high school dropout rates, truancy, school failure, substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, and other factors" (Siegrist, et al., 2010, p. 133).

Historical Progression of AEDY programs in Pennsylvania

In Pennsylvania alternative education programs had existed for years with local district autonomy. The 1990s marked a departure from lack of formalized state involvement to a more concerted effort at defining alternative education. The state expanded its involvement primarily through funding. Prior to 1995, school districts funded alternative programs as they would any other school program, mainly through a "combination of local tax revenues and state education subsidy dollars" (Education Law Center-PA, 2010, p. 15). In 1995, as part of the "safe schools" initiative, the state began to allocate funding for alternative education programs that served disruptive youth (Education Law Center-PA, 2010). According to the Education Law Center – Pennsylvania (2010), the General Assembly in Pennsylvania enacted the first law on alternative education-Act 30 of 1997, which later became codified in Article XIX-C of the Pennsylvania School Code.

Article XIX-C had an enormous impact on AEDY programs. For the first time, school districts could now apply for funding that would supplement the funds available through local sources. Also, for the first time, there were requirements established as to what type of student could be served by AEDY programs. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) increased its role from that of grant allocator, to more specialized involvement including issuing guidelines, collecting data, organizing conferences, distributing information on best practices, and providing support and oversight (Education Law Center, 2010). In 2000, Article XIX-E, authorized district ability to contract AEDY services through private educational institutions pre-approved by PDE. The enactment of both of these Articles contrasted strongly to AEDY program expansion and expense. In 1999-2000, 306 programs applied for and received grant funds. In 2009-2010, 614 programs applied for and received state grants. These programs now include those operated by school districts, consortia programs in which several districts participate, intermediate unit programs, and therapeutic and mental health facilities (Education Law Center-PA, 2010). In 2002-2003, PDE allocated approximately 26.2 million dollars in the form of min-grants to AEDY programs. While funding has since diminished, the mini-grant dollars represented only 5% of funds spent on AEDY programs. The Education Law Center in Pennsylvania estimates that "state basic and special education subsidy dollars as well as local tax revenue may likely total hundreds of millions of dollars" (2010, p. 16).

Characteristics of Alternative Education Programs

There has been an emergence of literature in the last ten years devoted to examining the elements of AEDY programs that will foster student successes (Aron, 2006; Brock-Fowler, 2001; Cable et al., 2009; Conrath, 2001; Foley & Pang, 2006; Hosley, 2009; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Siegrist et al., 2010; Zweig, 2003). Even with the proliferation of research, Aron (2006) observed that:

> The research base for understanding what works and for whom in alternative education is evolving. There are few scientifically based, rigorous evaluations establishing what program components lead to various positive outcomes for youth. The newness of the field means that researchers and policymakers are still examining the characteristics of promising programs, but lists of these characteristics are starting to converge and point to what should be measured and monitored as more rigorous evaluations are funded and implemented. (Aron, 2006)

McGee (2001) noted that there are not sufficient data available today to determine what precisely the parameters were in identifying an alternative education programs' best practices. However, recent research suggests that there has been an increase in "assessment instruments or rubrics to evaluate the effectiveness of alternative education programs "(Siegrist et al., 2010, p. 135). Ingersoll and Leboeuf (1997) concluded that "high-quality, well-staffed alternative programs decrease truancy, act as deterrents to poor behavior in traditional school environments, minimize suspensions and expulsions, and enhance academic achievement" (Ingersoll & Leboeuf, 1997, as cited in D'Angelo & Zemancik,

2009, p. 211). Henrich (2005) identified common characteristics of typical AEDY programs by his examination of empirical studies and qualitative studies that focused on attributes of the programs (Table 1). Henrich's research is a compilation of characteristics derived from Barr & Parrett, 1997, 2001; Chalker & Brown, 1999; Cox, 1999; Duke & Griesdorn, 1999; Knutson, 1998; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Leiding, 2002; Lehr & Lange, 2003; Raywid, 1994, 2001; Reimer & Cash, 2003; Ruebel et al., 2001; Saunders & Saunders, 2001; Schultz & Harris, 2001; and Tobin & Sprague, 2000. The columns represent characteristics of what research shows to be common elements of a typical alternative education program.

Table 1

Typical Alternative Education Program Characteristics

Staffing	Instruction	Focus	Nontraditional
Small school, class size, staff	Standards-based	Supportive environment	Flexible scheduling, evening hours, multiple shifts
Low student-to-teacher ratio	Innovative curricula	Informal or high structure	Student and staff entry choice
Adult mentors	Functional behavior	Student-orientation	Reduced school

	assessments		days
Leadership from principal or director/teacher-director	Self-paced instruction	Proactive or problem focus (i.e. last chance)	Linkages between schools and workplaces
Lack of specialized services (e.g. library, career counseling)	Vocational training involving work in the community	Character, theme, or emphasis from interests of founding teachers	Intensive counseling and monitoring
Dynamic leadership	Social skills instruction	Teacher-student and student-student relationship	Collaboration across school systems and other human service agencies
Fewer rules and less bureaucracy	Individualized and personalized learning		Collegiality with faculty and student

Five program characteristics appear regularly in the alternative education literature and form the foundation for the leadership domains that underlie the current study.

Domain One: Servant Leadership

In the last thirty years, servant leadership as a conceptual platform for leaders has been on the rise (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). "Whether in the boardroom, church pew, or school hallways, leaders have embraced servant leadership as a legitimate leadership style for creating a positive and productive environment" (Black, 2010, p. 440). Servant leadership traces its origins in part to the early 1970s when Greenleaf (1970) utilized the term in an essay which he published:

> The servant-leader *is* servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is *leader* first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions...The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, *while being served*, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? *And*, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived? (Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership)

Greenleaf's assertion that the leader takes care of other's needs first is paramount to understanding how servant leadership operates. In addition, "principals who embrace their role as servant leader will focus on creating school settings in which people are working towards a shared vision and honoring collective commitments to self and others" (DuFour, 2001, as cited in Taylor et al., 2007, p. 402). There is a certain anonymous, unselfish aspect to this leadership as Black (2010) observed, "Servant leaders put serving others before themselves, assuming a non-focal position within teams, providing resources and support without an expectation of acknowledgement" (p. 438).

The American Institute of Research's *Study of Effective Alternative Education Programs: ACCESS* (2007) yielded several key results relative to servant leadership. Several of the themes that emerged during the study were the importance of the leader's listening, his or her caring attitudes, and the leader's commitment of putting others (students) first. Additional findings suggested that the teachers and stakeholders in the programs believed their administrators to be highly supportive of them. It was important to those served in the program that principals strongly recognize the needs of others and assist with the needs of others. One key aspect of support manifested itself in the ability of the principals to provide relevant staff development and encourage participation in learning opportunities. By providing such support regularly, the staff believed the administrators pushed them to operate at their most effective level. Finally, the importance of personal connection between students and staff was an emergent theme. The administrators believed that a genuine interest in the students and that developing a caring, nurturing atmosphere facilitated student success.

Throughout the research of alternative education, there are recurring themes that emphasize the importance of caring and nurturing environments as indicators of effective programs. Such themes are interrelated with the school climate of the program. There is research to suggest that there is a correlation between servant leadership and school climate (Black, 2008; Cohen et al., 2009; Hoy et al., 1998; Lambert, 2004; Miears, 2004). This is important in that the relationship between servant leadership and school climate is highly congruent in key areas such as respectful engagement, shared school vision, and modeling and nurturing the benefit of relationships (Cohen et al., 2009). Black's (2008) research revealed a significant positive correlation between the perceptions of servant leadership and the perceptions of school climate.

The positive climate of alternative education can be facilitated by the small school size that generally characterizes AEDY programs (Aron, 2006; Foley & Pang, 2006; Lange & Sletten, 2002; Raywid, 2001). Students in schools with smaller populations have a greater sense of affiliation and belonging (Cotton, 2001 as cited in Juenemann 2007). Lange and Sletten (2002) emphasized the importance of smaller class and school size as being particularly important for at-risk students. Smaller learning environments in alternative education provide the students a voice and a presence that they may not otherwise experience in a larger population. It is important that the staff of alternative education make use of smaller learning environments to establish positive teacher-student relationships. Such positive interaction, an important aspect of servant leadership, is cited regularly as an important characteristic of effective AEDY programs (Lange & Sletten, 2002; National Alternative Education Association, 2009; Tobin & Sprague, 1999).

There is literature to support a relationship between a positive school climate and student achievement (Chen & Weikart, 2008; Hudley, Daoud, Polanco, Wright-Castro, & Hershberg, 2003; MacNeil & Prater, 2009; Ripski & Gregory, 2009). Cohen et al. (2009) contend that there is "compelling empirical research that shows that a positive and sustained school climate promotes students' academic achievement and healthy development" (p. 45). This is critical to administrators who are cognizant of the constant demand on them to provide supportive learning environments, in an era of accountability of the school leader, to produce results. In the context of AEDY leadership, a school climate that is focused on establishing positive interactions among the staff and students could help facilitate the success of at-risk students. "These relationships also contribute to a sense of school membership-the reciprocal relationship that encourages a student's attachment and commitment to the culture and goals of the school" (Wehlage et al., 1989, as cited in Lange & Sletten, 2002, p. 12). Results that are fixated on performance of standardized tests offer only one glimpse of the complexity surrounding school climate. The data that may be compiled from school climate research may additionally enhance the "social, emotional, ethical, civic, and intellectual skills and dispositions that contribute to success in school and in life" (Cohen et al., 2009, p. 45).

School climate and servant leadership characteristics are also interconnected in the alternative education literature in the concept of trust. Aron (2006) observed that "many studies highlight the need for administrative and bureaucratic autonomy and operational flexibility. This autonomy builds trust and loyalty among staff" (p. 13). Lange and Sletten (2002) proposed that students' sense of trust, belonging, satisfaction,

and self-esteem frequently are reported in alternative education studies as areas of the climate of such programs. Hosley's (2009) research examined, among other aspects of AEDY programs, specific programmatic goals of alternative education. The data confirmed that positive changes in behavior, school attendance, social skills, and academic performance were the highest priority of programmatic goals according to the administrators surveyed. These areas are highly congruent with positive school climate.

Quinn et al. (2006) measured school climate in three alternative education programs. Utilizing the Effective School Battery (ESB) survey, students and teachers responded to a set of 13 scales. The student scales included items that assessed the student's perception of attachment to school, belief in rules, interpersonal competency, positive self-concept, and school rewards. The teacher scales included sanction, morale, race relations, and smooth administration. The findings revealed three main issues. One, students believed that the psychosocial climate was one in which the "rules are equitably enforced, fair, and valid" (p. 15). Second, the students responded strongly that the administrators and teachers treated them with a great deal of dignity and respect. Third, the teachers and students were open to new and innovative ways of doing things according to the scales of planning, action, and school climate. The results also revealed that students and teachers felt respected and treated fairly when social, interpersonal, and academic successes were supported. Based on their findings, the researchers declared that "students identified as troubled or troubling tend to flourish in alternative education learning environments where they believe that their teachers, staff, and administrators care about and respect them, belief their opinion, establish fair rules that they support, are

flexible in trying to solve problems, and take a non-authoritarian approach to teaching" (p. 16). The research findings by Quinn were validated by similar findings in a case study completed by Henrich (2005). Henrich reported that the data from his research suggest that "developing trust between the student and staff through dialogue usually precedes sustained student productivity. As each student is believed through staff regard over matters academic and personal, the student finds a connectedness and anchor within the alternative school and one or more caring, adult mentors" (p. 35).

Servant leadership's emphasis on collaboration and its potential in yielding positive results can be found in the work of D'Angelo and Zemanick (2009). The researchers found a large, urban alternative education program that was in the process of designing and developing a new alternative education site. At its inception, the district wanted to hire an administrator who emphasized collaboration. Hiring a staff, including an administrator, who were willing to be flexible and think creatively was one of the core components that the school district faced. The responsibility in facilitating creative thinking was essential to the local school board and relied heavily on the administrator and his staff. The collaborative design led by the administrator helped to "alleviate some of the questions, angst, negativity, and ignorance about the goals of the program and how it functions on a day-to-day basis" (p. 218). The researchers found that the administrators hiring a collaborative based administrator helped facilitate the program's success.

The proposed research examines the level of stewardship that traditional school principals and AEDY administrators incorporate into their leadership practice. Second,

they are asked what practices by them lead to a positive school climate. Third, they are asked what barriers, if any, were prevalent in establishing a positive school climate. Finally, the administrators were asked to explain the role they believed school climate had in affecting student achievement.

Domain Two: Special Education

The study of special education students in the regular education environment is widely documented. Unruh et al. (2007) acknowledged that there are hundreds of studies and projects that have been conducted on ways to help students with disabilities succeed in learning environments with their non-disabled peers. However, often overlooked is "the growing practice of placing students with disabilities –often those with the most significant behavioral challenges-in alternative schools or programs outside of general education settings" (p. 1).

DiPaola (2003) suggested that school principals in general struggle with the complexities of special education:

> Special education presents one of the major challenges facing school leaders in this era of school reform. Today, schools must provide students with disabilities appropriate access to the general curriculum and effective instructional support. Student progress must be monitored closely and demonstrated through participation in assessment efforts. Research suggests that the principal's role is pivotal in the special education process; however, few school leaders are well prepared for this responsibility. (p. 4)

Students with disabilities who receive special education services vary greatly in their needs. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) noted that disabled children, like all children, differ from one another in "ability, age, learning style, and personality" (www.cec.org). Moreover, their unique learning needs are based on their disability. Such learning needs are addressed formally with the students' Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Disabilities requiring an IEP may be due to cognitive impairment, learning disability, emotional disability, chronic health problems, or physical disability. Historically, special education students were placed in "segregated learning environments with poor or low academic expectations, social isolation, and a curriculum poorly aligned with general education" (DiPaola, 2003, p. 5). For the contemporary school administrator, special education is not an isolated but rather "integrated system of academic and social supports designed to help students with disabilities succeed within the least restrictive environments" (p. 5).

In the last fifteen years there has been increased attention focused on students with disabilities and their interaction with AEDY programs (Bear & Burkholder, 2001; Katsiyannis & Williams, 1998; Fitzsimons-Lovett, 2001; Quinn & Rutherford, 1999; Atkins & Bartuska, 2010; Atkins, Bullis, & Todis, 2005). Special education students present a unique challenge to AEDY programs. As the number of students in AEDY programs has expanded, so have their diverse educational needs. Fitzsimmons-Lovett (as cited in Atkins, 2010) hypothesized that two significant Acts of Congress expanded the mission and number of special education AEDY students: the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 and the 1997 amendment to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

The Gun Free School Act stated that students who brought weapons to school could be expelled from the school or sent to an alternate setting for at least one year. The 1997 amendment to IDEA mandated a placement in an "appropriate interim alternative setting" for these students up to 45 school days as part of their IEP. In short, if students with disabilities were sent to an AEDY program, their specialized education programs would have to be continued. Atkins and Bartuska (2010) contended that more research on the effectiveness of AEDY programs is needed, especially on those programs that serve students with disabilities who have been remanded to an alternative school for disciplinary reasons.

Special education students have a conspicuous presence in AEDY programs, with recent research suggesting that they comprise approximately one third of the alternative school population (Unruh, Bullis, Todis, Waintrup, & Atkins, 2004 as cited in Atkins & Bartuska, 2010). In Pennsylvania, according to the Education Law Center in Pennsylvania (2010), the percentage of students with disabilities attending AEDY programs is 37.5%. This percentage is twice the 15.1% of students with disabilities in the public school system. The Education Law Center in Pennsylvania also raises the issue of the potential legalities of having an overrepresentation of students with disabilities served in alternative education programs. The Center cites two federal laws that directly impact disabled students in the context of AEDY settings. To begin, the regulations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibit a state or local education agency from discriminating against persons with disabilities. If such inflated numbers of students placed in AEDY programs were significantly disproportional, then there could be a cause

of action for violation of the Act. Moreover, IDEA contains provisions aimed at preventing the discipline numbers from being disproportionate of students with disabilities to those of their non-disabled peers. Under IDEA, states are required to review disciplinary data to determine whether there are disproportionate numbers of students with disabilities being placed outside the regular education environment. If disproportionate numbers were found, then there may be a violation of the state's anti-discrimination laws.

What does distinguish placement of a disabled student in an AEDY program from placement of a non-disabled peer are the processes and recommendations that must be made in order to ensure the student receives a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) (Table 2). There are several phases in the process of placing IEP students in interim alternative education. Each phase has a series of questions that must be asked to ensure that the student is receiving a free and appropriate education.

Table 2

Factors to consider when placing a student with an IEP in an AEDY program

Process and Recommendation	FAPE Consideration
Phase 1: Referral and placement in alternative education program	1. Appropriate placement? 2. Is attendance a choice? 3. Is the IEP in place?
Phase 2: Appropriate services	1. Is the IEP maintained?

	2. Is there meaningful curriculum and instruction? 3. Is there interagency collaboration? 4. Is the program responsible for state testing requirements?
Phase 3: Exit and transition	1. Is there anticipated graduation from the program or district? 2. Is appropriate completion documented? 3. Are transition preparation and services provided and followed?

Provided that the IEP team has convened and that the placement ensures a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment and that all other IDEA provisions have been satisfied, the student may be placed in an alternative education setting.

Assuming that the disabled student has been appropriately placed in the AEDY setting, Lehr's (2004) research identified three primary issues for the placement of students with disabilities in alternative schools. The issues were identified from interviewing 49 state directors of special education or their designees. The issues were mentioned by at least 20% of the respondents. The first issue was the number of students

served in programs. The results showed that there were limited or no data regarding the number of disabled students attending AEDY programs. The results also concluded that there was a perception among directors that the primary disability category for students attending alternative education was emotional/behavioral disability. The second issue, enrollment, was consistent with the often ambiguous nature of AEDY research. Alternative schools were perceived to be a viable option for disabled students, yet there was a contrasting concern that such students may be pushed out of traditional schooling in a subtle manner. Such a contrast was apparent in the third issue, service delivery. State directors reported that they were comfortable with alternative education programs, but did have questions regarding the quality and availability of staff licensed in special education and the degree to which alternative schools were appropriate settings to meet student needs in the least restrictive environment.

There is currently no leading model for serving students with disabilities in AEDY programs. Rutherford and Quinn (1999) identified six essential components of effectiveness in special education in alternative education settings. The first component is the presence of Functional Behavioral Assessments that document the antecedent (what comes before the behavior), the behavior, and the consequence. The second component, Functional Curriculum, is a curriculum that focuses on practical life skills and usually taught in community based settings with concrete materials that are a regular part of everyday life. The purpose of this type of instruction is to maximize the student's generalization to real life use of his/her skills. The third component is Efficient and Effective Instruction. In this component, the recognition and application of research-

based instruction and promising strategies is customized based on the individual needs of the learner. The fourth component, Transition Programs and Procedures, allots for students to begin developing long-range goals and the course of action to be undertaken upon graduation from high school. The fifth component, Comprehensive Systems, details the resources and services that are necessary to facilitate the disabled student's success in the classroom. Finally, appropriate staff, resources, and procedures are essential due to its provision of highly qualified teachers delivering instruction and following all IDEA provisions and timeframes in the IEP procedures.

Additionally, the AEDY principal and the supporting staff have been shown to be most effective when offering what Whelage (1991) referred to as a community of support. Bear, Quinn, and Burkholder (2001) summarized data from researchers and authorities in special education and alternative education (Bear, 1999; Cotton, 1990; Gottfredson, 1997; Kellmayer, 1996; Kershaw & Blank, 1993; Quinn & Rutherford, 1998; Raywid, 1994; Wehlage, 1991).The summary examined alternative education programs that were effective in addressing the needs of students who were considered chronic behavior problems and were identified as needing an IEP. There were several characteristics of effective programs that the researchers found fostered an environment of community support in addressing the needs of students with chronic behavior problems. The first characteristic was the presence of qualified teachers and support staff who willingly accepted positions in working with challenging students. Second, the program management had to have flexibility in program management and decision making. Third, the program had to have sufficient funding and resources. A fourth

characteristic of effective programs were sensitivity to individual and cultural differences. Another effective program characteristic was the case management approach to student services and on-site counseling services. Finally, programs that are evaluated frequently are effective in dealing with chronic behavior problems.

With increased enrollment and an increase in the diversity of need of IEP students, special education presents a unique challenge to AEDY administrators. By examining the practices, beliefs, and attitudes of leading a diverse population, a conceptual model may emerge to address its complexity and lead to greater administrative understanding and skill. The following research asked administrators of traditional schools and AEDY programs to respond with questions designed to measure their beliefs of leading students with disabilities. Specifically, administrators were asked how the presence of disabled students interacts with their leadership. Second, administrators were asked to elaborate on their challenges and rewards in working with disabled students. In addition, respondents were asked about their practices that helped to contribute to inclusive learning environments and why this was important. Finally, they were asked to describe their experiences in formalized preparation to work effectively with disabled students.

Domain Three: Mental Health Delivery and Services

Among the many challenges facing schools today, educating students with mental health problems is one of the most prevalent. The World Health Organization defines mental health as a "state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a

contribution to his or her community" (World Health Organization, 2011). Ideally, schools provide an environment whereby students find success academically, behaviorally, and socially. "On each of the 160 or more days of the school year, students have opportunities to learn and practice important academic skills and social behaviors, see and interact with peers and adults who model and promote pro-social skills, and receive recognition and constructive feedback about their behavior" (Sugai, 2003, p. 530). As Koller et al. (2006) noted, "While schools are primarily concerned with education, mental health is essential to learning as well as to social and emotional development" (p. 199).

Yet students who have more demanding emotional and social needs require more significant interventions and structured services to facilitate success. "Mental health services are an important resource that schools provide to help students benefit from education" (Colorado Department of Education, 2002, p. 5). AEDY programs are designed to assist students who have emotional and behavioral difficulties. Youth with such difficulties often have higher rates of truancy, suspensions, expulsions, tardiness, and attention-seeking behaviors (Epstein et al., 1994 as cited in Lueck & Kelly, 2010). These behaviors parallel criteria by which students may be referred to AEDY programs.

The number of students requiring mental health intervention services is on the rise. "According to the Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health (1999), an estimated one if five students will experience a mental health problem during the school years, with 11% experiencing a significant mental health impairment" (Colorado Department of Education, 2002, p. 5). Furthermore, while the number of students with mental health

needs increases, an estimated 70% of children with diagnosable mental illness do not receive treatment or receive inadequate treatment (Tashman et al., 1998, as cited in Koller et al., 2006).

As a result of increasing numbers, schools have increased the number of mental health and substance abuse services available to students (Anglin, Naylor & Kaplan, 1996; Heneghan & Malakoff, 1997; Slade, 2003 as cited in Slade, 2004). Although half of middle and high schools nationally offer some level of mental health counseling, there are serious disparities in the availability of services and supports by region, locale, and school size (Slade, 2004).

It is widely acknowledged in AEDY research that behavioral and mental health services for students in alternative education can vary widely (Atkins et al., 2003; Carpenter-Aeby & Aeby, 2005: Hadderman, 2002; Sugai, 2003). For most programs, mental health services are required through grant funding or are mandated by their states. Part of alternative education is providing support for students in need of more specialized and intensive supports. Carpenter-Aeby et al. (2005) found that counseling, therapy, group work, case management, and family-community involvement were credited as integral parts of effective AEDY programs. In addition, their study is one of the few available that focused on the long-term (five-year) analysis of an alternative education program's effectiveness in terms of mental health services. Their study examined psychosocial and educational outcomes of students upon entering and exiting an alternative education program funded by a state grant to promote safe and drug-free schools. Their instruments for data collection consisted of four widely-used measures of

student psychosocial functioning: the Rosenburg Self-Esteem Scale, the Depression Self-Rating Scale, the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale, and the Life-Skills Development Scale-Adolescent Form. Their findings were consistent that school-based mental health had a positive impact on students.

Mental illness in adolescence is especially pertinent to leaders of AEDY programs. There is research that suggests that "rates of delinquency are higher among youth with certain types of emotional disorders— for example, depression or anxiety co-morbid with substance use disorders— and among youth with chronic and multiple disorders (seriously emotionally disturbed youth)." (Grisso, 2008, p. 143). Cocozza et. al (2000) found that youth in the juvenile justice system experience substantially higher rates of mental health disorders than youth in the general population. While not all students who attend AEDY programs are classified as juvenile delinquents in the justice system, they are in violation of a policy that would be considered disruptive or defiant.

Berzin et al. (2011) suggested ways that educational leaders can develop a comprehensive approach to supporting the mental health needs of students. One, leaders can establish an infrastructure that supports short and long term mental health needs of the students. Part of the challenge, according to Berzin et al., is that the efforts must be sustained over a significant period of time and not reflective as "just another reform" (p. 14). Second, leaders may build capacity by providing more meaningful in-service and community-based training. Berzin et al. cited several studies, (Domitrovich & Greenberg; 2000, Hawkins, Von Cleve & Catalano, 1991; Merry et al., 2004; Wyn, et al., 2000) that showed that stronger mental health prevention programs involving teachers can have an

effect on reducing problem behaviors and poor psychosocial adjustment. Such collaboration my increase positive social competence and increase student achievement.

For the proposed research, administrators were asked to describe their role in the delivery of mental health services in assisting students and why they believed this to be or not be important. Second, administrators were asked what practices they undertake to ensure the mental well-being of their students. Third, administrators were asked to identify the challenges that mental health issues present to their schools and explain their role in resolving any challenges. Finally, respondents were asked to describe their level of formalized training and university preparation in this area.

Domain Four: Social Justice

The complexities, challenges, and demands of school administration are commonly addressed in research today, and also an increased demand in the last decade for school administrators to "attend respectfully, immediately, and appropriately to the needs and requests of families with diverse cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds" (Shields, 2004, p. 109). Educators have reason to be concerned with social justice as demographics shift, economic conditions continue to widen gaps socioeconomically, and diversity among school populations continues to expand. Ryan (2006) argued, "As diversity becomes more apparent in our schools and communities, the divisions that separate the advantaged from the disadvantaged have also widened" (p. 4.). Furthermore, as Shields (2006) observed, "Educators , policymakers, and indeed, the general public are increasingly aware that despite numerous well-intentioned

restructuring, reform, and curricular efforts, many children who are in some ways different from the previously dominant and traditionally most successful White, middle-class children are not achieving school success" (p. 111). Students who have been traditionally marginalized educationally have a greater likelihood of dropping out of high school prior to graduation, are less likely to attend post-secondary schooling, and often lack the skills to be successful in the workforce (Ryan, 2006). Noguera (2005) argued that the problems in education are "manifestations of social inequality rather than lack of technical capacity. The real question is whether or not we care enough to provide all students, regardless of race and class, with a good education. So far the answer is no" (Noguera, 2005, p. 11, as cited in Lalas, 2006, p. 22).

The topic of providing equitable learning for students frequently manifests itself in current literature with reference to standard-based assessment and student achievement (Cambron-McCabe, 2005; Gronn, 2002; Merrow, 2001; Skrla et al. 2004). "When policy makers are asked to identify social justice elements in their states, they point to high academic standards and stringent assessment strategies" (Cambron-McCabe, 2005, p. 202). Currently, the most widely used measure of equity is performance on mandated standardized testing. Ensuring that each child achieves proficiency on such assessments has serious implications. Funding may be impacted and schools themselves may be closed due to low performance. For purposes of this research, social justice leadership transcends providing equity in narrow assessment terms but rather utilizes Theoharis' (2007) definition of social justice leadership. This definition states that social justice leaders "make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other

historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision" (p. 223).

Social justice has an ambiguous interaction within AEDY programs. There is one interpretation favored by scholars such as Sagor (1999) who support alternative education if its "strategic use has the promise to be one of the better ways for us to provide every American child access to his or her birthright" (p. 75). By contrast, Theoharis (2007) contended that social justice "cannot be a reality in schools where students are segregated or pulled out from the regular classroom, or receive separate curriculum and instruction" (p. 222).

One of the greatest challenges facing AEDY programs is the stigma attached to them, thereby suggesting that they exist as "dumping grounds or warehouses for at-risk students who are falling behind, have behavior problems, or are juvenile delinquents" (Kim & Taylor, 2008, p. 207). Kim and Taylor (2008) conducted a groundbreaking study that addressed alternative education in terms of inequality and inequity. They examined an alternative school in terms of negative and positive themes from multiple perspectives of individuals within the school. They found that a "multidimensional state of disequilibrium permeated the school environment" (p. 217). The positive themes evidenced support for a caring environment among students, teachers, and administrators. The negative themes evidenced a bureaucracy that was authoritative in nature and resulted in further marginalizing of students.

Research by Kim et al. explored the deficit thinking that often is encountered in

alternative education. According to the Paulo Freire Institute of Critical Pedagogy, deficit thinking is defined:

> Deficit thinking is the practice of assuming that students from particular groups such as low income, ESL, racial/ethnic backgrounds, are destined to fail in school because they have "internal deficits". Deficit thinking blames the victim instead of examining what schools can and SHOULD be doing to change their outcomes. It is a 'cop-out' used to validate inferior teaching practices and *inferior* student outcomes. (Freire Institute, 2011).

The deficit thinking paradigm that exists in AEDY programs places educational failure on individual factors such as poverty, minority status, or family characteristics. Such blame is deficient due to its lack of acknowledgement of systemic failure, often manifested by status quo institutions that marginalize students by school tracking, inequalities of school funding, curriculum that is inadequate and low teacher quality.

The researchers described a beneficial program as one that provides "content, processes, rigor, and concepts that they need to develop and realize future goals" (p. 208). By contrast, programs that are not beneficial are "behavioristic, positivistic, and reductive" (p. 208). In addition, such a program represents "social reproduction and social control and reinforces existing inequalities" (Kim et. al, p. 208).

This work is also helpful to understanding alternative education in the context of critical theory. Critical theory (Giroux, 2001) examined the relationship between domination and subordination. It also emphasizes the importance of critical thinking by

"providing an argument that is an indispensable feature of the struggle for self-emancipation and social change" (p. 208). This theory places emphasis on the ability to look at contradictions in society and in education as beginning points to formulate what is real versus what should be real in a social context. In terms of AEDY programs, Kim et. al contended that the application of critical theory helps formulate understanding by examining what is currently happening in alternative education and by examining who benefits and who does not.

Kim et al.'s research reinforced the duality of AEDY programs in terms of social justice. They found that the positive themes of the program were a caring environment for students and an atmosphere of trust among students and staff. However, there were negative themes of curriculum deficiencies and a consistent lack of substantive instruction. Their findings demonstrated that caring and safe learning environments do not necessarily equate to equal and equitable education. Furthermore, mainstream education and status quo thinking marginalize not only students, but also teachers and administrators. Kim et al. emphasized the need for policymakers to ensure that all voices are heard. This recommendation allows a reconsideration of traditional hierarchal structures in order to guarantee equitable practices.

As a remedy to counter further marginalization and to develop programs that are socially just in design, Sagor (1999) proposed a set of criteria for equitable youth education policy, with alternative education as its focus. Such a model would, according to Sagor, help lessen the stigma of AEDY programs. Sagor contended that too often alternative education programs become "the exclusive preserve for public education

outcasts" (p. 73). He proposed that four policy criteria be established to warrant socially just outcomes:

Criterion 1: Children from disadvantaged backgrounds should attend schools where the likelihood of academic achievement is no less than for their more advantaged agemates.

Criterion 2: As much as possible, public agencies should discourage schools from segregating students by demographic factors, especially those factors that have been shown to correlate to disparate outcomes

Criterion 3: In keeping with our awareness of the psychological and development differences between students, schools should make alternatives available to everyone for the development of academic skills.

Criterion 4: Affirmative measures should be used to ensure that neither stigma or status be attached to a choice of enrollment in any public funded program. (Sagor, p. 79).

Current data suggest that there is an overrepresentation of historically marginalized school populations served in AEDY programs in Pennsylvania. The Education Law Center in Pennsylvania found in 2005-2006 that 36.3% of the students attending AEDY programs were African-American. In addition, 10.5% of students were Hispanic. These two groups accounted for 46.8% of students served in alternative education. In the general school population, African-American students and Hispanic students respectively account for only 15.5% and 5.7% of students for a total of 21.2%. Thus, more than double the percentage of minority students in AEDY programs is noteworthy in terms of

how AEDY principals may belief such information for its implication in overseeing their alternative education programs.

Social justice leadership has a critical context in administering in an AEDY program. The proposed research examines the beliefs and practices of leaders to better understand the complexity of leading a group of students who have been excluded from the general education setting. Social justice leadership does not "associate leadership with dominant or central individuals who are expected to do great things by virtue of their personalities, their skills, or the positions they hold" (Ryan, p.17). Rather, this type of leadership seeks to "rely on individuals who contribute in their own often humble ways to a clear established process" (Ryan, p. 17). By interviewing AEDY principals and traditional school principals belief and practices of social justice it is hoped that "the exploration of new understandings, the synthesis of new information, and the integration of these insights throughout professional spheres can lead future educational leaders to a broader, more inclusive approach in addressing issues of student learning and equity" (Brown, 2006, p. 703).

The following research assessed whether or not the administrator believes that his or her school presents equitable learning opportunities for students and why this may or may not be important to them. Second, the research asked respondents what their practices have been with traditionally marginalized groups of students. Third, questions regarding the challenges of leading schools in terms of equity were asked. Finally, respondents were asked to elaborate as to their training in dealing with diverse populations.

Domain Five: Instructional and Curricular Leadership

A focus on academic success is paramount to AEDY programs for several reasons. First, the student referred to the program may already be at risk of dropping out of school. Second, AEDY programs are often "highlighted in the dropout literature because of the presence of several key characteristics commonly associated with alternative schools that 'answer' the call for schools to attend to the needs of students at risk" (Lange & Sletten, 2002, p. 10). Third, the focus on dropout prevention has escalated dramatically in the last several years, most notably since the enactment of the NCLB Act. The Alliance for Excellent Education (2010) reported the following:

> Nationwide, about seven thousand students drop out every school day. This statistic may not have been noticed fifty years ago, but the era during which a high school dropout could earn a living wage has ended in the United States. By dropping out, these individuals significantly diminish their chances to secure a good job and a promising future. Moreover, each class of dropouts is responsible for substantial financial and social costs to their communities, states, and country in which they live. (p. 1)

Kaufman (2005) found "those students who are most likely to drop out of high school are not necessarily failing due to low intellectual ability; other contributing factors such as behavior may outweigh academic ability" (Kaufman, 2005 as cited in Siegrist et al., 2010, p. 134). The student referred to an AEDY program may have accumulated a multitude of suspensions, disciplinary actions, truancies, and further complications to

their learning efforts. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) reported that school is a place where dropouts and potential dropouts get into trouble: suspension, probation, and cutting classes are far more common for this group (Wehlage & Rutter, 1986, as cited in Lange & Sletten, 2002). "Because of the uniqueness of alternative schools, it is important that teaching professionals and administrators stay abreast of best practices applicable to the students they serve" (Menendez, 2007, p. 19). Part of the challenge for AEDY principals is incorporating best instructional practices to enhance the learning of students who previously have not experienced success.

Making the students believe that the course material is demanding and relevant is one of the key challenges to AEDY programs (Cable et al., 2009). Kramer and Ruzzi (2001) take such a challenge one step further in the wake of the enactment of NCLB. They contend that the student populations in alternative education have largely been ignored by the "push to raise standards, measure results, and strengthen educational accountability" (Kramer et al., 2001, p. 56). In order to ensure academic success, "quality alternative education programs should have many of the same high expectations, standards, and outcomes believed in more traditional school settings" (Leone and Drakeford, 1999, p. 86). Furthermore, part of the call for equity lies in ensuring that alternative education programs have access to academic resources that respond to higher standards and expectations in ways that support its mission and structure (Kramer et al., 2001). Many of the students in AEDY programs are in need of extra academic support. Tobin and Sprague (1999) suggested that "sometimes social behaviors interfere with learning, and if these are brought under control, the student is able to catch up if given

time and direction" (p. 11).

The National Alternative Education Association, (NAEA) in 2009 cited among its ten exemplary practices of high academic expectations, whether academic or vocational, to support individual learners in AEDY programs. Additionally, programs should use "an integrated, well-organized framework of research based curricula and teaching practices designed to address the "whole" student while continuing to meet or exceed federal and state standards" (p. 11). Duke and Griesdorn (1999) reported that there are indicators of academic achievement in alternative education that may be quantified based on the percentage of students who increase in key areas: graduation, credit attainment, improvement on standardized scores, and the number of those who return to regular secondary school and earn passing grades. Guerin and Denti (1999) contended that programmatic design of AEDY programs should include curricula that are responsive to the needs of the student that focus on core academic subjects, and that have an array of supplemental subjects (i.e., Career Explorations). However, Kleiner et al. (2002) reported that the predominant offering to students nationwide in AEDY programs was general curriculum.

In the state of Pennsylvania, Hosley et al. (2009) completed a follow-up to a 2003 report published by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania that examined alternative education policies and practices among Pennsylvania school districts. Hosley et al. (2009) conducted the follow-up research due to the increasing number of alternative education programs, the number of youth served in alternative education programs, renewed discussions related to dropout rates in Pennsylvania, and a general lack of

knowledge due to program practices and structures of alternative education programs. Hosley found that the vast majority of administrators and teachers reported that offering the same curriculum that is available in a regular classroom was the curriculum content of their programs. Table 3 illustrates Hosley's research of teachers' and administrators' responses of the types of curriculum utilized in their programs.

Table 3

Percentage of administrators and teachers citing the following types of curriculum content in their programs. (Totals do not equal 100% due to multiple responses.)

Curriculum Content	Administrators (%) (N=141)	Teachers (%) (N=180)
Vocational education	34	32
College preparation academic program	45	41
Alternative curriculum not otherwise available to regular education students	43	61
Remediation of skills and knowledge	78	84

Same curriculum that is Available in the regular classroom	79	79
Other	10	16

AEDY programs in Pennsylvania are designed for students who are seriously and persistently disruptive. However, the law specifically requires districts that operate AEDY programs to incorporate an academic component into their programs. By law, districts may refer students to AEDY programs only if, at the time of the recommended transfer to the AEDY site, students demonstrate to a marked degree any of the conditions that were outlined in Chapter 1. The Basic Education Circular (BEC) provided by PDE provides guidance on AEDY program requirements to ensure that students in these programs are provided appropriate academic and behavioral support services. To be considered for implementation of an AEDY program, a school district (or in rare instances a consortium of school districts or a single intermediate unit) must meet the following criteria:

> School districts where these facilities are located are responsible for providing regular and special education services as described in 24 P.S. §13-1306. AEDY programs serve the purpose of temporarily removing persistently disruptive students from regular school programs. AEDY programs must provide students

> with a sound educational course of study that meets or exceeds state standards as mandated by 22 Pa Code Chapter 4 and allows students to make normal academic progress toward graduation in their home district. AEDY programs must also provide behavioral supports and counseling aimed at modifying the disruptive behavior that led to the transfer. AEDY programs may operate outside the hours of the normal school day and on Saturdays. School districts that do not apply for and receive approval from PDE to operate an AEDY program must provide basic and special education programs for all students in conformity with all requirements of the School Code and the Pennsylvania Board of Education Regulations, including days, hours, curricula and teacher certification requirements. Any alternative program not approved by PDE must adhere to the same requirements as a regular education setting, including at least 900 instructional hours per year for 6th grade and at least 990 instructional hours per year for 7-12th grade (22 Pa. Code §11.3); and "highly qualified" teacher requirements (22 Pa. Code §403.4). (PDE BEC on AEDY, 2009, Introduction).

The expectation is that programs will provide both academic and behavioral support. Hosley et al. (2009) found that the teachers and administrators of AEDY programs in Pennsylvania assign nearly equal belief to academic change and behavior change, as seen in Table 4.

Table 4

Administrator and teacher perceptions regarding the focus of curriculum in alternative education programs. (Totals do not equal 100% due to multiple responses

Curriculum Focus	Administrators (%) (*N*=141)	Teachers (%) (*N*=180)
Focus on Behavioral Change	43	62
Focus on Therapeutic Change	18	30
Focus on Academic Change	42	67
Balances Academic, Behavior, and Therapeutic Change		
Equally	52	59
Focus on the Individual		
Students	46	42
Other	0	3

Another characteristic of AEDY programs relative to student learning is the effect that school size has on student behavior and achievement. There is considerable evidence to support smaller learning environments' impact on reducing the number of dropouts (Bryk & Thum, 1989; Cotton, 1996; Gregory et al., 1987; McNeal, 1997; Pittman & Haughwout, 1987; Ready et al., 2000; Wehlage, 1991). Lange and Sletten (2002) suggested that small school size is directly linked to a reduction of violence due to the greater likelihood of higher teacher engagement that decreases the number of discipline

problems. Small school and small class size are generally associated with AEDY programs (Aron, 2003; Barr & Parrett, 1997; Duke & Griesdorn, 1999; Foley & Pang, 2006; Lange et al., 2002; Raywid, 2001; Tobin & Sprague, 1999). Furthermore, as Juenemann (2009) wrote, "Students with histories of school failure need academic support that is both timely and responsive to their needs" (Juenemann, 2009, p. 10).

For purposes of this research, the leadership domain of instructional leadership seeks to clarify and establish a framework for the AEDY principal's role in learning. "Instructional leadership, developed during the effective schools movement of the 1980's, viewed the principal as the primary source of educational expertise" (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 372). This view has been disputed by critics as being a rigid, archaic view that marginalizes the role of teachers by making them "docile followers" (Marks & Printy, p. 373). The traditional role of viewing the principal as an instructional leader was significantly enhanced as standards-based accountability often required that principals take responsibility for student learning (Graczewski et al., 2009). Hallinger (2005) argued that although there were limitations to administrators in this role, policymakers embraced the notion that instructional leadership become associated with a desirable role for principals. Hallinger (2005) further contended that the literature associated with espousing principals as instructional leaders tends to be heroic in nature. Halllinger advocated that principals should be goal oriented, strong, directive, and builders of culture. The hands-on in matters of learning, curriculum and instruction are, according to Hallinger, simply ill-fitting for today's principal.

This research asked the administrators to describe their practices as an

instructional leader. It asked them to detail their beliefs of the current trend of data analysis by administrators. The research also asked them to detail barriers to facilitating academic success for all students. Finally, the research sought responses to the level of formal training and preparation they have undergone for this role.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this research examined the practices and beliefs of AEDY principals compared with those of traditional school principals. By generating a comparison between the two, a distinguishing conceptualization of alternative education leadership resulted. With insufficient published research devoted to alternative education leadership, such a model may provide a basis for modifying principal preparation programs. Moreover, it may assist in developing appropriate job descriptions for alternative education leadership positions. It may also help to develop appropriate leadership staff development for AEDY administrators. The current research also sought to enhance the school leadership literature of traditional school principals.

Five domains of leadership were examined in this study: servant leadership, special education, mental health, social justice, and instructional leadership. These domains have been selected because of their recurrence in alternative education literature and the current school leadership literature. The research questions are as follow:

1. What are the leadership practices and beliefs of AEDY principals with regard to servant leadership?

2. What are the leadership practices and beliefs of special education knowledge and delivery of service of AEDY principals?

3. What are the leadership practices and beliefs of AEDY principals in the area

of mental health knowledge and delivery?

4. What are the leadership practices and beliefs of AEDY principals in areas of social justice?

5. What are the leadership practices and beliefs of AEDY principals in the area of instructional leadership?

Research Design

The research design for this study was qualitatively based. "Qualitative studies aim to provide illumination and understanding of complex psychosocial issues and are most useful for answering 'why' and 'how' questions" (Marshall, 1996, p. 522). The questions designed for the proposed interviews were structured to address the 'why' and 'how'. Because of the study's aim of exploring the complexities of leadership, a qualitative research design was more appropriate than a quantitative research design, whose traditional aim would be to test pre-set hypotheses. Furthermore, "Qualitative work starts with the assumption that social settings are unique, dynamic, and complex. Qualitative methods provide means whereby social contexts can be systematically examined as a whole, without breaking them down into isolated, incomplete, and disconnected variables" (Hatch, 2002, p. 9). The domains of leadership to which each participant was asked to respond were not isolated facets of leadership, but rather components that combined to form a more complete picture of AEDY leadership. The complexity and ambiguity of alternative education settings is well-established (Aron,

2006; Atkins, 2008; Lange & Sletten, 2002). A purposeful examination of leadership in such settings will assist in clarifying their intricacies. In addition, "Qualitative studies try to capture the perspectives that actors use as a basis for their actions in specific social settings" (Hatch, 2002, p. 7). This study hoped to detail the practices and beliefs of AEDY principals and those of traditional school principals in order to capture the what, how, and why of AEDY leadership.

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) noted that "All research is interpretive, guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (p. 26). At a basic level, there are four major interpretive paradigms that structure qualitative research: positivist and post positivist, constructivist-interpretative, critical (Marxist, emancipatory), and feminist-post structural (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006.) The interpretive paradigm for this study is constructivist-interpretive. There are several tenets of constructivism that apply to the proposed research.

Constructivism views inquiry as a means of "understanding and reconstructing of the constructions that people (including the inquirer) initially hold, aiming toward consensus but still open to new interpretations as information and sophistication improve" (Denzin & Lincoln, p. 211). Kinchloe (2008) observed, "The understanding of constructivism helps us make sense of the educational world that surrounds us in a rigorous and thoughtful way" (p.4). Crotty (1998) identified three clear assumptions of constructivism:

1. Meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the

world they interpret. Qualitative researchers tend to an open-ended question so that the participants can share their view.

2. Humans engage with the world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives. We are all born into a world of meaning bestowed upon us by culture.

3. The basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community. (Crotty, 1998, as cited in Creswell, 2009)

The present study of leadership practices and beliefs draws from the direct experiences of the leaders themselves. Therefore, the knowledge acquired from this study is socially constructed by the researcher based on their responses, a learning or research characteristic associated with constructivism (Schweitzer et al., 2008).

The primary data collection method for this qualitative study was standardized open-ended interviews. AEDY principals and traditional school principals were asked a series of identical questions in a standardized open-ended interview format. One of the main purposes of the interviews was "to probe the ideas of the interviewees about the phenomenon of interest" (www.socialresearchmethods.net). Another of the goals of this research was to describe through participant interviews the practices and beliefs of the respondents regarding their leadership experiences in the five domains of leadership previously mentioned. Interviews provide "in-depth information pertaining to participants' experiences and viewpoints of a particular topic" (Turner, 2010, p. 754).

"Qualitative interviews are special kinds of conversations or speech events that are used by researchers to explore informants' experiences and interpretations" (Mishler, 1986 and Spradley, 1979 as cited in Hatch, 2002, p. 91). With little published research devoted to alternative education leadership, the participants' interview responses helped to organize the participants' practices and beliefs in order to build a model of alternative education leadership.

Population and Sample

In educational research, the population of interest is "usually a group of persons (students, teachers, or other individuals) who possess certain characteristics" (Fraenkel et al., 2006, p. 93). The population of interest for this study was AEDY administrators and traditional school principals in northwestern Pennsylvania. Four traditional secondary school administrators in northwestern Pennsylvania were interviewed. In addition, four AEDY administrators in northwestern Pennsylvania were interviewed. The sampling strategy employed for this research is purposive sampling sometimes referred to as judgment sampling. "The logic and power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 1990, p. 169 as cited in Tashakkori et al., 2003, p. 280). The rationale for purposive sampling lies largely in the assumption that the researcher has specific knowledge of the areas to be assessed and can employ this knowledge in selecting participants. In this study, the researcher employed his professional experience and knowledge to select the participants. It was believed that the participants have information about the subject matter. Participants were selected for their significant experience as administrators of either AEDY programs or traditional

secondary schools. They all have secondary school administrative experience and are certified in Pennsylvania as school principals.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred during the fall and early winter months of 2011. The data set consisted of verbatim transcripts from audiotapes of the personal interviews conducted with each school principal. A listing of the specific questions to be asked in each interview may be found in Appendix B. There are four questions that surveyed the respondents in the five domains of leadership: servant leadership, special education leadership, mental health knowledge and delivery, social justice leadership, and instructional leadership. To initiate the interview, the respondents were presented with a brief definition of the five domains of leadership in the order listed above by the researcher. This approach was to prepare the respondents to consider their responses to each leadership domain. Additionally, it is important that "informants be invited to participate in a two-way conversation that treats them with respect and dignity. Interviewers should signal this respect by never starting an interview without some small talk or without explanations of research purposes and the importance of the informant to the research process" (Hatch, 2002, p. 114).

The guidelines for the interviews were based on the current research literature that outlines strategies to ensure successful interviewing. First, the importance of listening must be understood in order to create an optimal interview experience. Seidman (2006) noted that "listening is the most important skill in interviewing. The hardest work for

most interviewers is to keep quiet and listen actively. This type of active listening requires focus beyond what we usually do in everyday life" (2006, p. 64). A second guideline for a successful interview is to plan well before the interview begins. Berg (1998) stressed the need for researchers to remember their research purpose. Moreover, Hatch (2002) stated that "having a purpose in mind before the interview begins will help keep the interview on track and productive" (p. 115). The third directive to ensure a successful interview is to "explore the informant's understandings" (Hatch, 2002, p. 115). According to Hatch (2002), good qualitative interviews are "dynamic, interactive, social events" (p. 115).

Data Analysis

"Data analysis is a systemic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories" (Hatch, 2002, p. 146). The present study employed typological analysis as its primary method of analyzing the collected data. Hatch (2002) defined typological analysis as "data analysis that starts by dividing the overall data into set categories or groups based on predetermined typologies" (p. 152). The rationale for selecting typological analysis is that those administrators interviewed will respond to a set of predetermined leadership domains. The data set was established beforehand. Hatch (2002) indicated that such an analysis can be particularly useful in studies that use interviews as the primary means of data collection. One of the primary goals of the

current research was to capture the leadership practices and beliefs of AEDY principals and regular school principals. In a well-designed study, the data from the interviews "ought to provide lots of evidence related to participants' perspectives on the topics of interest. So the topics that the researcher had in mind when the study was designed will often be logical places to start looking for typologies on which to anchor further analysis" (Hatch, 2002, p.153).

"A basic principle of qualitative research is that data analysis should be conducted simultaneously with data collection" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 2 as cited in Maxwell, 2005). This allows the researcher to focus progressively on his or her interviews and observations, and to decide how to test emerging conclusions. Furthermore, "such categorizing makes it much easier for the researcher to develop a general understanding of what is going on, to generate themes and theoretical concepts, and to organize and retrieve...data to test and support these general ideas" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 231).

Hatch (2002) has proposed sequence of steps as typological strategies useful in analyzing data from interviews. The first step is that the typologies need to be analyzed. The second step consists of reading the data, marking entries related to the typologies, and recording the main ideas in entries on a summary sheet. The third step requires looking for patterns, relationships, or themes among the typologies. Next, Hatch recommended that one needs to read the data, code entries, and decide if patterns are supported by data. Finally, the last step requires looking for relationships among the patterns identified, writing patterns as generalizations, and selected data excerpts that support the generalization.

Chapter 4

Analysis of Data

Overview

The focus of this study was to examine and compare the leadership beliefs and practices of alternative education principals and traditional school principals. There are five leadership domains that have been established from education administration research and literature with an emphasis on alternative education that served as the platform from which these research questions have been developed. The data were collected and analyzed pursuant to the following research questions.

Research Question 1: What are the leadership practices and beliefs of AEDY principals with regard to servant leadership?

Research Question 2: What are the leadership practices and beliefs of special education knowledge and delivery of service of AEDY principals?

Research Question 3: What are the leadership practices and beliefs of AEDY principals in the area of mental health knowledge and delivery?

Research Question 4: What are the leadership practices and beliefs of AEDY principals in areas of social justice?

Research Question 5: What are the leadership practices and beliefs of AEDY principals in the area of instructional leadership?

This chapter reports the findings of the study. The findings are based on the major patterns and themes that emerged from the structured interviews. Each domain is organized by the fundamental research question mentioned above. The data are then organized by the supporting questions for each domain. The findings from each domain are reported accordingly.

Each respondent is assigned either a letter "A" to indicate an alternative education principal or a letter "T" to suggest a traditional school principal. The number that follows each letter is assigned to distinguish the four participants who are either AEDY or traditional. The participants were selected according to the following criteria:

1. Each principal must possess administrative certification determined by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.
2. Each principal must have a minimum of five years administrative experience.
3. Principals must be located in Northwest Pennsylvania and their willingness to participate in the study.
4. Principals must have been chosen by the researcher by recommendation of their respective supervisors for the strong knowledge base in their respective areas of expertise relative to school administration.

A description of the alternative education principals who participated in the study is as follows:

1. Principal A1 was a female principal of an alternative education school with six years of administrative experience. This individual had a background in school counseling and mental health counseling. The enrollment of A1's program was 150 students.
2. Principal A2 was a male principal of an alternative education school with nearly 20 years of administrative experience in both a traditional school and alternative education school. Principal A2's school enrollment was nearly 150 students.
3. Principal A3 was a female principal of an alternative education school with 15 years of experience dealing with at-risk populations. Principal A3 had an enrollment of 125 students.
4. Principal A4 was a male principal of an alternative education school with a background in mental health and school psychology. This participant has ten years of administrative experience. There were 50 in Principal A4's program.

A description of the traditional school principals who participated in the study is as follows:

1. Principal T1 was a female principal of a traditional middle school with 30 years of administrative experience. Principal T1 had an enrollment of 600 hundred students.
2. Principal T2 was a male high school principal with seven years of principal experience. Principal's T2 enrollment was 1100 hundred students.

3. Principal T3 was a male middle school principal with nearly 15 years of experience at the secondary and middle school level. The enrollment of T3's school was approximately 560 students.
4. Principal T4 was a female middle school principal with 7 years of administrative experience at the elementary and middle level. The enrollment of T4's school was approximately 360 students.

Domain One: Servant Leadership

Question One: Using Greenleaf's definition of placing the needs of others before your own, to what degree does stewardship and servant leadership lay a role in your leadership style? Why do you believe this to be or not to be important?

Alternative education principals' responses:

A1 stated that servant leadership is part of A1's philosophy. A1 saw this philosophy of leadership as being very different from traditional top down leadership.

A1: I think it's very important. I think that is a huge part of my leadership style. I see myself as an educator across the board and I see myself, if there is an opportunity in supervision, or doing evaluation times to teach, or to give suggestions, then I feel that's my responsibility. I'm not a "do it this way because I said so." I have so many different staff with so many different personalities, and I view my position as being a mentor to them. Especially with some of the young women who are coming in who need a little

extra push to voice their opinions that are very good. And, I think that some of that comes at a cost to how I want to get things done. And, I continue to learn from other people that there are different ways to do things, and that maybe that is more effective or less effective. But I take all of that into consideration before making a decision. But I do feel a responsibility to educate.

A2 stated that servant leadership is an important aspect of A2's philosophy as an administrator. A2 believed that this is a leadership aspect that all those involved in working in an educational setting need to embrace.

A2: I think by the mere definition of it, that we, as educators, not just in leadership roles, but all of us. That's what we are here to do. And, when I say all of us, I mean that includes the bus drivers, the custodians, and the cafeteria workers, all of us that are in this education setting. We all have a hand in being supportive and strong role models for all of these kids.

Principal A3 reported that servant leadership is an extension of treating people how you would like to be treated. A3 stated that it is important not to ask the staff to do anything that you wouldn't do.

A3: Yes. Yes, because here's the philosophy I have stood by, and I hope this fits. If it doesn't, then tell me so I don't go off on that path. That I treat the parents the way I would want to be treated if I walked into my son or daughter's school. And I treat the students the way I would want my own children to be treated. So looking at that, I would

also tell you that I don't ask my teachers to do anything I wouldn't do. So in looking at that, I hope it's meeting that definition.

Principal A4 stated that cooperation and teamwork are enhancements of servant leadership. A4 stated that doing day to day little things go a long toward cooperative effort.

A4: Yeah, It is important that you do. For example, nobody works for me, they work with me. You know, I think that comes across if you do it correctly through your staffing, through your participation in the events going on, day-to-day events, going in and filling in for the teachers. You know if I go in and I'm running the program, I'll just step in and say, "Why don't you go and get a coffee I'll take over for now?" Or I even have planned lessons where I go in and I'll schedule and do a fifteen minute mini lesson. And then as somebody who is acting up, I will teach. I usually do it after I do my walk throughs because if I have an area I want to talk to them about, I want to have a point of reference. Because if I do it, they are still going to act up. So I'll go where little Mike is over to the side acting up, and I'll go through and redirect and redirect and then use time out and continue teaching if that is something I am working on. I think that's a way of them feeling like I'm there. It can also be detrimental, too, because sometime they think that because I ran the program and because I taught it for so many years that, they think it has to be my way. And that's the other part as I'm not always giving the answers. I do a lot of reflective listening with them.

Question One: Using Greenleaf's definition of placing the needs of others before your own, to what degree does stewardship and servant leadership lay a role in your leadership style? Why do you believe this to be or not to be important?

Traditional school principals' responses.

Principal T1 stated that it is imperative to T1's leadership style to place children first and foremost. T1's experiences as a parochial school principal instilled the child-first philosophy.

T1: I spent 15 years in parochial education and those people know that the children always come first. I don't buy into all the hoo haa of some of the parameters of public education has put out there. When I crossed the line into public education, I was appalled in the bull shit an administrator must put up with because of the unions. Everyone who knows me now and has worked with me knows it is the education of the child comes first. I remember when a teacher posed a question, "We don't have to teach those children!", and she was referring to the special ed children. So before throwing the Gaskins ruling in her face, I had reminded her that when she got her degree it wasn't just to teach only a certain segment of society; she is there to teach all children. So in my life and in who I am it has always been that the needs of the children always come first. And being an urban educator makes it even more important because our children have so little, and we have to do so much.

T2 indicated that servant leadership may have its function, but was generally not part of T2's style.

T2: Sometimes, I think you can take that too far with servant leadership. I think that is slavery leadership. I like more of a situational leadership. Sometimes the best thing to do is get a committee together. Sometimes the best thing to do is to make a decision as the building leader. So, servant leadership has its place. I've seen it in action done well, and I've seen it in action where it is almost nauseating.

T3 stated that servant leadership is very important. T3 expressed that self-serving administrators who seek attention and credit only for themselves are moving in the wrong direction administratively.

T3: I think it is one of the most important things. I believe that a leader's job is to make everybody else able to do their job as best they can. If I am using people to make me look better or to support me or to somehow enhance me, then we are taking away from the kids. And that's not the way it should be. It drives me crazy when I see a principal out there going for the glory for themselves, or taking the credit for themselves and getting people to do things to make them look better. Things are flowing in the wrong direction in that case. My job is to support the people who are doing the work with the kids, and to make sure that they can do the best job they can.

T4 stated the cooperation and a sense of collaboration are important. T4 reported that those individuals on the "front line" know what they need in order to be successful.
T4: Oh I absolutely think, I mean what I think is that the most successful you can be in the environment of a school is where people feel that they are a part of the group and the decision making. I mean, what I feel, I mean I would hope that all of the teachers and myself all have the same goals in mind, but what I think it is more important to look at

what they are doing. They are the people on the front line. They know what is important. They know what they need to happen in order to be successful, so I think it is much more important to listen to them and have them tell me what they need. Then for me to just come up with some let's try this or let's try that because I think it would be a great idea.

Question Two: What practices do you undertake to create and enhance a positive school climate?

Alternative education principals' responses:

Principal A1 stated that the team approach was having a direct and positive impact on the students. Principal A1 reported that building a positive school climate is a work in progress with both failure and successes.

A1: A lot of it starts with every year we have a different theme. We do a lot of professional development, and it is usually centered around team work. When I first came on board, things were not in order. Everyone was kind of doing their own thing. I have about 35 staff. But I needed to do one thing. So we started with team work and team building. And that became a constant theme in all of our professional development things, all of our staff meetings, and all of our conversations. And that began to trickle down to the kids. To see us all, there might be a situation in a classroom and somebody else is going to help. We are all doing the same thing even though the classrooms are separate programming. I do supervision twice a month. They're very simple-15 minutes. But it gives me a chance to sit down and talk with our teachers and you know, see how things are going. It's not a write up kind of thing. It's called a close and direct supervision and it could be "I noticed this in your lesson plans and I really like this." A

lot of it is very positive so that it gives me a chance to meet with everybody a couple of times a month. It's difficult to schedule, but it is very important for the morale. And I can see, after being here for two years, people working together, not being so concerned with what I'm doing, but with what we are doing. And a lot of it is just for the kids, and the culture is putting our expectations out there and collectively deciding this is what is going to be ok in the hallways or this is what is ok in the cafeteria. And it's not ok as somebody's going to address it. And we address it consistently. It doesn't always happen, but that is our goal.

Principal A2 indicated that providing opportunities similar to what the student would experience in the traditional school setting was effective in creating a positive climate. Principal A2 stated that budget constraints have eliminated the feasibility of providing many of these opportunities now.

A2: One of things that we did in Alt. Ed. was again trying to mirror situations similar to the high schools that they were going to be returning. As you know, they can't participate in athletics but we did offer before and after school gym. We started to put together an intramural program and we started to put together clubs. And, again, those are all things that are offered at the high school. And these were things that our kids became attached to and they got to know the teachers in a different light and vice versa. It absolutely added to that climate and culture. It did make a difference. I think we are lacking that in our typical schools now because of budget cuts. Intramurals have been cut, some of the clubs of been cut. Some of these things that are a hook to these kids, unfortunately, are vanishing due to budget constraints.

Principal A3 answered the question in two parts; one relative to the students and the other relative to the staff. A3 stated that fundamental acts of courtesy and respect went a long way to creating a positive school climate.

A3: Well I will break it down in two parts. Let's start with the students. As the students enter it's a new day. Every day is a new day. It doesn't make a difference what happened yesterday. We start new-we greet them at the door and we say hello to them. We really show that we care and we are also meeting them at the end of the day talking about how their day was. So on that part there, there was a huge component with behavior specialist, mental health specialist, and myself meeting and greeting these kids as they walked into the building. And with teachers? The teachers were usually in their classrooms cause students would walk to their room and the teachers had to be there. But they were greeting them as well. In addition, this is one of those strategies that we learned along my route of doing this, is that we front load, "would you please?" I could be putting the please at the end of the statement, but by the time I asked you to tuck you shirt in please, I could have a student turning on me saying, "Why you always picking on me?" So when you front load it "would you please?" tuck your shirt in, so we utilized "would you please?" with the students. That was an overall domain with the teachers and we utilized nonverbal cues, again respectful with the students and basically we tried to practice what we were teaching them.

Principal A4 stated that the level system in place in alternative education ultimately leads to student success. Also, A4 reported that having a case manager to monitor the student during their time the in the program and assist in his or her return to

regular school was important. Finally, A4 reported that when the students are familiar with what is expected of them, the result is a positive climate.

A4: A level system I think is what truly creates a climate because you give privileges based off of the levels. You do transition based off the levels. If they are successful in the levels, then the transition meetings are very effective. Having a person that is still involved as if they have a case manager from SAP from their building their case manager stays with them even though they are in the program. And they continue to me with them as though they were still in the building. So that creates another atmosphere that is still part of the building; that they have a connection back. I think that creates a positive atmosphere. The other thing is that we don't tolerate crappy behavior. When they are acting out, they are responded to, and it creates a feeling of being safe. They know exactly what is going to happen before they do it. And everybody will look and say, "Oh, don't do that, don't do that." And that creates a familiarity to what the expectations are. When you have familiar expectations you have a good environment.

Question Two: What practices do you undertake to create and enhance a positive school climate?

Traditional school principals' responses:

Principal T1 stated that creating a positive school climate was a priority this year in the face of deep budget cuts that resulted in loss of staff. Being required to do more with less has caused T1 a great deal of frustration and pain.

T1: Oh yea, I wish that could be just be all about Jefferson or just Erie. Over these past years, because the transition from a superintendent who had 17 years with us to a new

superintendent who has worked within the district and who has such a different style, huge changes were made to my leadership style because I had to lead these teachers thru the transition. In doing so there were educational programs that had flipped over the last 2 years. That made it very difficult to accept from the senior teachers as well as the newer teachers because of the furloughing as well as the budget cuts. So a positive climate became the foremost initiative I had this year. The teachers saw me weep openly because we had to cut jobs and it was very, very difficult. So it has been a challenge this year, and it took, because of the flips in program, 10 new teachers came into the building. Not new to the district, but new to the building. And I lost 5 teaching positions. You try to smile but you suffer in silence as you try to put that Colgate smile on. And you do more with less, and to maintain a positive climate, I personally paid for two field trips because the district cut them after the school year started.

Principal T2 stated that small things amount to a great deal in creating a positive school climate with the staff.

T2: Well, we are out and about in the classroom as much as possible and just take the time to stop and talk to people. Little things, you can send birthday cards or if somebody is sick, sympathy cards. Do little special things for custodians because they are kind of the unsung heroes in the building. Just the little things.

Principal T3 stated that creating a school climate is not something that can be created using tangible rewards. T3 reported that making the students feel valued in the school was important to creating a positive school climate.

T3: Yes. It's about intrinsic rewards. It's not about giving away gift cards or things like that necessarily. Although I guess some of our kids could probably use that. We do have some things like that. But if you live it and believe it, then you don't really need a reward ceremony to support it. That's what we try and do. We try to make sure the teachers believe in student-centered learning, a student-centered environment. That way the kids feel valued. They feel important in our school.

Principal T4 reported that creating a positive school climate can be challenging to a principal new to the building. The difficulty, according to T4, is finding the right line between providing staff and students' boundaries and allowing them to do things for themselves.

T4: I find that as a new principal, it is difficult. Because I find that there is an interesting balance of people wanting to be listened to and wanting their ideas to be used. But at the same time I have learned that if you don't give people enough direction, then they think you are not leading. So there is that very delicate balance of I do think that there are times teachers want to be told what to do. Just like kids, we always say kids need boundaries. They just don't know they need boundaries. It's the same with teachers. I find if you let it go too much then the teachers, they like things black and white, which is a little surprising to me because I am not a black and white thinker. So when I encounter people that are black and white thinkers, when I think like well you kind of just have to...every situation is different. But there are people who like to be told exactly what to do and how to do it.

Question Three: What have been the barriers to creating a positive school climate? How did you handle those barriers?

Alternative education principals' responses:

Principal A1 reported that sometimes veteran staff does not want to embrace a new way of doing things. The barrier with the students was that they did not have the same belief or value system as the staff.

A1: One of the barriers can be the students that don't want to comply. It's a matter of trying to convince them that this is what's good for them. They want to fight you on it. I think that our society and our culture around us is very different than a lot of our kids are used to. They may run the streets the other 18 hours of the day when they are not in school. And when they are in school, they are answering to us. I think some of the other barriers come in with older styles of teaching versus new styles of teaching.

Principal A2 stated the staff is often times the greatest barrier in creating a positive school climate. A2 believes that it falls upon the administrator's shoulders to meet with the staff and try to get them to see things more differently than they currently do.

A2: When you ask that question, the first thing that comes to mind is some of the naysayers. "We rode this horse before, we've been to the show before, we've tried this and it hasn't worked, we've tried that and it hasn't worked." Fortunately, they are low in number, a very low number and a low percentage, but they are out there. It's terrible. They try to recruit other colleagues to pull them down, drag them down. In dealing with

it, how do I handle it? I'll bring the teacher in and have a one-on-one conversation about it. One of the things I try to stress and share with them is that there has never been a single program that has made one bit of difference in the field of education. It's not the program; it's the people that make the difference. I'm asking you to please get on board. Give it a shot and try it out.

Principal A3 does not perceive any barriers to creating a positive school climate. A3 acknowledged that the small size of the teaching staff made it far easier to manage potential and existing barriers.

A3: I didn't find any. Do you think that the school climate affects student achievements and if so how? Wait I'm gonna back that up. I didn't think so, but I also have a small faculty so when you're looking at a handful of teachers, 10 teachers perhaps, it more of a family than it is when you get into larger faculties. You might get to the point where Ms. [building principal A3 used to work for] said, "No gum no gum no gum no gum!" And you might have had a thing (in which I did) that says if I don't see it or hear it, I don't care. And I would be looking and I would be wondering if you're chewing gum, I had more important things to do. But when she said no gum as a principal you had to follow that. With my small group of kids and as my teachers move around, my students moved, so the climate had to be consistent and the rules had to be consistent. And how we spoke to them had to be consistent which you could do with the small group of teachers that I had compared to having 50 teachers. So that made the climate easier to do.

Principal A4 reported that developing and maintaining consistency is the biggest barrier to a positive school climate. The biggest consistency issue was with the staff. Principal A4 often had teachers from the traditional school rotate in the teaching configuration due to the mandate of having highly qualified staff. The plus to this instructional rotation, according to A4, was that teachers may "experiment" with new lessons in the smaller alternative education setting and modify the lesson for the general population.

A4: Well the best way that I found is that I've now with the staffing changes. It used to be where we had one person teach all the subjects with us changing over to having highly qualified people rotating through. We have one person who is a rock in there that is there all day that is the program coordinator. She is highly qualified in El Ed, in middle school English, and secondary English. So she does all the reading and language arts for the program. She does the group social skills. She does the lunches, but she is there all day long. She is the one who enforces the program and enforces the discipline, enforces everything. Now, her aide, we hired a guy from [local mental health agency], who is about six eight, 380- 400 pounds. But he is now trained. He does the lessons when she goes on her planning. She has an office in our building. So when she plans, she is still in ear shot of the students, but he will then do the discipline while she is doing that. So between the two of them if you wear an ID badge, you're in charge. Teachers come in and teach. They are there for only for a period and one is there for two, and he does like a block. He is there for Math and Science, the Math/Science block. They have a much harder time with the discipline, but they are not here for discipline as they are there to

provide instruction. It is almost like a person who is cyber. And that is the way I want them to come across. They are creating lessons. They are bringing in the lessons and the aide makes sure that they have everything when they walk in the door. When they walk in they handle the papers that are already checked. They hand them the things they've left for the week. They'll say this is what I need for the week. On Monday I need to have this ready, on Tuesday I need to have this ready. They'll get the lab ready that they walk in their lab will be set up so that they can instruct. They don't have to do anything, which then creates a whole other atmosphere. The other thing is if they are going to try something, they are going to try it in alt ed. Anything new-there is no limits as to what they are able to do down there.

Question Three: What have been the barriers to creating a positive school climate? How did you handle those barriers?

Traditional school principals' responses:

Principal T1 reported that fiscal difficulties resulted in a challenge for the school climate and for the teachers. Significantly higher class sizes have proven to be problematic in keeping a positive school climate.

T1: Before this year there were limited barriers because we all worked so closely. This year I have one teacher in particular who is extremely negative because that individual lost their Title One position and is now a classroom teacher. It has taken the spirit out of couple teachers. I went from 6 teachers in junior high to 4, so I had classes with 39 children in them. And it has been a challenge trying to keep everyone positive.

Principal T2 reported two main barriers to a positive school climate. The day to day managerial aspects of the position make it hard to be accessible building wide. The size of the building and the largeness of the staff make it difficult to create and maintain a positive school climate.

T2: Sometime, you can get yourself bogged down just in the management of the building, and that you can't do just the little things that you want to do like being out and talking to people. Last couple weeks have been crazy around here. Sometimes it's hard pressed to get out of this office. Sometimes there are just personalities out there that make it difficult. Other than that you just strive to do what you have to. The size of the building too, I mean geez, we have 100 teachers, and it's a little bit more challenging. In my previous district I had 33 teachers. So, you get to know everybody a little bit better.

Principal T3 reported that the main barrier to a positive school climate is the damage control effort involved in maintaining a good reputation.

T3: Like I said, it only takes a couple of dumb mistakes by a couple of teachers to set you back, and then you have to work to build that back up. You do something dumb and the parents get on you about it as they probably should. When you make a mistake you need to know so that you can correct it. But then word gets out and spreads. Then all of a sudden, Westlake is a bad place. Or that teacher is a bad person, or whatever. And then you have to work to regain that reputation. You are only as good as your reputation. When you have people working against you, whether intentionally or unintentionally, you have to make sure you correct those things.

Principal T4 reported that the main barrier to a positive school climate is finding the proper balance in creating leaders among the teachers. T4 expressed ambiguity in empowering teachers and then sometimes needing to adjust for bad decisions made by them once empowered.

T4: I think the barriers for me are I want the teachers to be leaders too. I'm one person in the building and granted I am the leader of the building as a principal. I think it is important for teachers to take that leadership role. I find sometimes they don't want to take that role. They are willing to step up and they are willing, most of them, to do the right thing for kids. But again, I am always surprised at how much direction people what. And I always say to them, you're professionals. You can make that decision, and that's where I find myself getting into the most trouble when I allow them to make the decision because I'm telling them well you're a professional. You do what you think is right. And I would say over half the time that backfires sometimes which then in turn creates some conflict I think in your entire, amongst your staff, and amongst myself.

Question Four: Do you believe that school climate affects student achievement? How?

Alternative education principals' responses:

Principal A1 reported that safety and attendance were two school climate issues that affected student achievement. The data that A1 has collected over the years suggests that attention to these two matters is improving student achievement.

A1: It does. In our building with the number of things we have, safety is a big issue. You know we have kids from different gangs. We have kids from different sides of town. And

so safety in our school climate is a big issue. Well, I think attendance is an issue which affects performance. But if so-and-so had an issue over the weekend with this neighborhood rival, it does affect that. I think that we're seeing more progress with kids when you look at this. This is the first couple of years that we have tracked data. Prior to me coming to this program, there really was not pre and post data collection, and we are seeing growth with the kids. We are seeing improvement with the kids.

Principal A2 reported that a positive school climate made a difference in A2's previous assignment as a traditional school principal. A2 stated that the success that the school had in athletics made a positive impact in the school at large.

A2: Absolutely! There's no question. I'll tell you what. When I was at [previous traditional school] and I know that this is different from my alt. ed. hat that we are talking about. But when I was at [previous traditional school], we were very strong in our athletic programs. And the kids rally around that. And they take pride in it. And you'll find that the climate is uplifting, attendance is good. Of course when you have good attendance, you are going to have better grades, and the discipline issues were better. So it all goes hand in hand. There's no question that it had an absolute bearing on academics there. We made AYP every year.

Principal A3 reported that students do well if they perceive the adults in the program care for them. In addition, A3 listed specific formalized program enhancements that, while behavior related, impact their academic achievement.

A3: Yes, tremendously, if the students believe you care about them they are more willing to perform. I also want to tell you that under life space crisis intervention and going in

here we do ART (aggression replacement training) where you have the model where you have that conflict cycle. We teach it to the kids like you're late for school. I tell you you're late, and you know if you're late and there's a consequence or warning for it. You may get upset about it. Now do I jump in your conflict or do I back off? You still have the consequence; I don't need to get into your conflict. Not only did we teach it to the students, but the teachers modeled it. And so you can't have a conflict by yourself. So that whole philosophy of treating them the way you want to be treated.

Principal A4 reported that students perform well in the alternative education environment due to their negative behaviors being reduced.

A4: Absolutely, absolutely, Most of these kids are achieving for the first time. It is because the school climate has the behavior under control and then they achieve.

Question Four: Do you believe that school climate affects student achievement? How?

Traditional school principals' responses:

Principal T1 reported that the impact change can have on a building requires adjustment and affects school climate. T1 reported that readiness from the staff did not immediately mean that logistical changes would be embraced by the students. T1 also utilized expertise from other district staff (school psychologist) in helping to arrange the classrooms to maximize achievement.

T1: Oh yes, definitely. Another big change took place this year in 4th or 5th grade in going from self-contained classrooms to departmentalization. So the instruction strategies had to change completely. And I was ready for it and the teachers were ready for it, but they

forget that they had to prepare the students for it. And the kids just weren't ready for it. They didn't have the skills or time management or in organization. So for the first month of school, it was very stressful for the teachers. So I had to keep reminding them that they're just kids. So they have to understand what organization and time management is all about. It probably took the first half of the year for the children and the teachers to acquiesce to that. In fact, in 5th grade I spent a great deal of time observing each 5th grade classrooms. And the conclusion I came to as I worked with them was that all the classrooms ran differently and consistency breeds success. No matter how much we want to buy into an Argus poster, sometimes the little sayings make sense. So I recommend to the teachers that they all set up their classroom in the same structure which is an arena type setting because they had some challenges with the kids. Then I had the school psychologist sit in all their classrooms and she did make some suggestions. Not only did we rearrange the classroom because the environment means a whole lot, but she suggested that they sit in the same seats in their classes so that way it would help curtail some of their frustration. And then I had one teacher whose classroom looked like a man cave in that there was nothing in here to make it engaging that make me want to come in here. While he took it lightly, I recommended he work with 2 people to rearrange his room and it turned out a lot better. But that in itself, has taken a lot of time. It has worked out, but it has taken a lot of patience for the teachers and the kids as well as the parents.

Principal T2 reported that students who feel they are safe in school will perform better.

T2: Oh, I think there is. If you don't feel comfortable in a school or if you don't feel safe, you aren't going to do as well. We want to make all the secondary thought kind of go away so that the kids are just concentrating on their academics. There definitely is a correlation between school climate and how well a kid does.

Principal T3 reported that students who believe they are accepted in the school will perform better. However, lack of supports outside of school may cause interference.

T3: The whole idea of school spirit-wanting to be there, and feeling that you are contributing to your school. Like I said, a lot of times our kids don't have the parental support that we wish they had or that they need. If we are not driving them to achieve and they don't get it at home, then they are lost. That's when you start to run into problems.

Principal T4 reported that teachers are the most pivotal part of establishing the positive school climate and that when they feel positive about their job, it resonates throughout the building.

T4: I do believe, but I have to say I feel like where I'm at, the teachers they always like to do a good job. And even if we're going through a little time where things aren't the best, I still think that my teachers want to do the best job for kids. I think it is nicer when you come to work, and you can enjoy what you are doing and be around the people that you enjoy. But I think that ultimately, the teachers that I'm around, they still come to school and do the best that they can to teach the kids. It does affect it. It does.

Domain Two: Special Education

Question One: How does the presence of special education students affect your leadership in your building?

Alternative education principals' responses.

Principal A1 reported that having special education students increased A1's awareness of all students' needs in the program. The only leadership effect was the specialized knowledge that was required when discipline infractions occurred with an AEP student. A1 reported a perceived difference in how regular education students viewed the discipline treatment compared to their special education peers.

A1: I would say that special ed students presence in the building makes me more aware of everybody's education needs. It does get frustrating at times when you have an IEP kid who does something and you are kind of jumping through hoops. And the discipline is confusing to other kids. You know, "I did this and I got suspended but he didn't." You know you can't say anything. And it is just a matter of being creative with discipline.

Principal A2 reported that there was little effect on the leadership as A2 treated IEP students in the same manner as regular education students. Principal A2 indicated that the more serious discipline infractions affected leadership in terms of having a greater understanding of the regulations associated with IEP students.

A2: I don't think it affects the leadership. It affects the way that we have to handle those kids that have an IEP in terms of what the restrictions are when it comes to dealing with them from a behavior standpoint. But as far as it affecting my leadership, I pretty much

treat those kids the way I treat other kids. The only issue comes from when a kid is in my office for something that is pretty serious. We have to follow the regulations regarding days of suspension and proper procedure.

Principal A3 stated that there was not much of a change impacting A3's leadership. A3 gave examples of the required knowledge by citing a number of the processes that should be followed before a special education student is eligible to attend an alternative education placement. Specifically, the student assistance programs (SAP) in the referring schools needed to initiate the required interventions that assisted the potential alternative education student.

A3: I don't really think there is much of a change to the leadership. You're gonna follow special ed rules and regulations. And kinda follow the appropriate education of all the students, not just special ed. But all the students follow policy that our school district established with all the consequences. If they weren't working, they wouldn't be referred to alternative ed. Now, we obviously know that we have certain guidelines that we need to follow with special ed, including the fact that they have a behavior support plan in place. Which, unless you're placed there for a one time single event, you should have in place before you ever come to me. You would also have to have, which is a regular ed side as well, a student assistance program for them. So you're gonna look at the fact that we have interventions that need to be completed. For special ed, as they walk in, obviously you're gonna be looking at the number of days they were suspended in looking to make sure you don't go over the allotted number of days.

AEDY administrator A4 stated that often times what should be considered a best

practice should be utilized for the benefit of all students, not just special education students. In A4's view, this assisted with equity in terms of instruction being the same for regular and special education populations.

A4: It doesn't. Because it is individualized and we need to find where the kids are where they are at, it does affect it in the sense makes your range between your different levels of students different. But as far as your approach, it doesn't change your approach. Because you need to identify where the issues are and then go from there. And the kids have holes when they come in probably because of their behavior previously. And when they come into the program their behavior and attendance kept them from having a solid full education. Whether identified as special education or not doesn't matter, because they have holes and we have to fill in those holes that need to be completed. A lot of times I think programs get caught up in where they say, "Ok only a special ed teacher should be doing this." No, it is what they are doing that are good teaching strategies and not just special ed teaching strategies.

Question One: How does the presence of special education students affect your leadership of your building/program?

Traditional school principals' responses.

Traditional school principal T1 reported that the impact IEP students had on the leadership of the building was that it reinforced, through the implementation of the co-teaching model, the importance of trust and collaboration between regular education and special education teachers.

T1: I am very fortunate in that I have an assistant principal and have some very strong special ed teachers. In general when we flipped to a co-teaching model, it was quite an experience for all of us. There was very little in-service for the special ed teachers to go into that model. So therefore you had to establish a feeling of trust. Did these teachers trust each other to work with each other? What we didn't have in a co-teaching model was time. So the teachers had planned together. We're in our fourth year of the teaching model, and it is working very, very well. There's a comfort level that we didn't have several years ago, so the teachers were working hand in hand. It was also difficult for the regular ed teacher to be sharing their domain, their space, and their environment with another teacher. I tried to express to teachers that we have to have the full concept of team building or it's not going to work. So it has worked out very well, and it has helped me a great deal to watch it grow.

T2 reported that the greatest effect that special education students had on T2's leadership was the amount of time devoted to IEP students.

T2: It takes a lot of time and resources away from school districts. So always being cognizant of IEPs being correct, correct procedures, it's all legalistic. It takes a lot of time and resources.

T2 reported that special education students have the greatest student need and stated that those students impact T2's time the most.

T3: Time. The time issue. The amount of time spent on IEP's. The amount of time spent with the Special Ed teachers. Dealing with their kids and supporting them. The amount of

time you spend with the regular education teachers. You have 600 kids in the building and about 80 Special Ed kids. It's like the 80/20 rule pretty much, which is fine. I'm not saying that begrudgingly, but that's just the reality. You are going to spend most of your time with the students with the greatest needs and certainly those kids are your greatest needs.

Principal T4 reported that scheduling IEP students into regular education classes was important to T4's leadership. T4 also reported that the No Child Left Behind mandate made T4 more aware of the importance of special education students as a sub-group on making state determined Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

T4: One of the things is class placement, and I think especially when students get to be in junior high. Teachers, I think find it more difficult to include students and adapt for them on the level that they are supposed to be with the curriculum. So that part of my job is to try and include kids into the regular classroom. Cause I feel like when they are in seventh and eighth grade if they are not included in regular classes, there's a good chance that they'll never get out of special ed classes. So I do a lot in particular with scheduling in working with teachers to try to get them to understand what adaption and modifications special education students might need. Also I would say with No Child Left Behind, obviously I think everybody struggles with sub groups dealing with students that the government is demanding that they be on grade level. However, we know they are not on grade level just by the fact that they have an IEP. So we have to somehow figure out a way to make those kids accessible on a test at grade level when we know that they're not

on grade level, so that our scores and our school isn't in school improvement. Those are the two biggest ways.

Question Two: What do you believe have been the rewards of working with IEP students? What are the challenges?

Alternative education principals' responses.

A1 reported the reward in working with special education students is that A1's program could see the student beyond the special education label and in turn, save them from what A1 referred to as "falling through the cracks".

A1: I honestly think that we are able to reach these kids on a different level. We have the ability to decide if this child is a more visual learner, or if this child might need to do more hands-on activities. This child may need more breaks. We have a couple of students right now who are AD/HD that we have actually taken their chairs and replaced them with large exercise balls. It's been working out wonderfully. I think the benefits to that not only carry over into our general population, but that our teachers really see that this is a child, not just a special ed. kid. This is Johnny, and these are Johnny's needs. I like the fact that we are able to fit those needs so that we can assure that those kids aren't falling through the cracks.

A2 described the rewards of working with special education students as equally gratifying as working with regular education students.

A2: Again, same as it is for any other kid. It is a great feeling when you see the light bulb go on. That is the reward again, just like you would with any other kid. I think a lot of time, unless it's quite apparent with a physical disability or something along those lines, a lot of time we don't even know that they have an IEP until we pull up their schedule or look for their teacher record or curriculum data or that sort of thing. So the challenges and rewards, I think, are the same as they are for "regular" students, whatever that means.

A3 stated the A3's school did a lot of different strategies in the hope of yielding positive results.

A3: *All the positive things that we would do, and whether we got them into counseling, peer mediation, and conflict resolution. And different strategies that we would use with the students that would yield positive results*

A4 stated that finding success for special education students or regular education students is rewarding.

A4: Seeing them find success. It is actually no different than any of the other students. It's them finding their way of doing things and being able to achieve. That's the reward-seeing them achieve.

What are challenges of working with IEP students?

Alternative education principals' responses.

AEDY administrator A1 reported that ensuring the individualized aspects of an IEP retained its importance as a challenge. According to A1, it was important that the information contained in an IEP be individualized for that student.

A1: I think some of the challenges are making sure that they don't just get a blanket IEP with a general goal. I like to see our teachers giving them goals that are attainable, but also fit their needs. I don't like they will be proficient with math at an 80% level. I like more information. I think that the more information that we have when it comes to IEPs or evals, the better off we are in serving them.

AEDY administrator A2 indicated that the challenges and rewards for regular education and special education students were similar.

A2: So the challenges and rewards, I think, are the same as they are for "regular" students, whatever that means.

AEDY administrator A3 reported that one of the challenges was that, regardless of how well or how poorly the special education student performed in the program, the student would exit the program in a predetermined number of days.

A3: Special ed can only be out of their regular school placement for 45 days. Unless they get put on a least restrictive environment. They could if it were in lieu of expulsion type situation and we did get those students. But for the most part they could be out for 45 days. We would usually only assigned a special ed student for 30 because we needed to have and illusion, and I'm sorry it is an illusion, that their behavior mattered

AEDY administrator A4 reported that the primary challenge in working with disabled students was the difficulties in having the teachers in the program understand that disabled children have unique learning needs and have the ability to learn.

A4: Being able to get your faculty to understand what the issues are and giving students alternatives to coming up with their own system to overcome their disabilities. They have to come up with a system. Just because they have a disability doesn't mean they are not intelligent, it just means that they learn differently and they have to respond differently and act differently to get the same results. What it comes down to they still have to perform.

Question Two: What do you believe have been the rewards of working with IEP students?

Traditional education principal responses.

T1 reported that the greatest reward of working with disabled children was the sense of collaboration with the parent and community services.

T1: The rewards are you get to know the parents better and get to know the service agencies better because we really don't have any kind of close contact with the service agencies. And because with IEP children, it's necessary to understand that and get involved in the community in different aspects if we wouldn't normally.

Traditional school principal T2 reported that by all indications, the IEP students in the building were doing well, which is the reward.

T2: I think for the most part, say out of 100 IEP students, probably 80% of them you wouldn't even know they have special needs. They are doing really well because they have those other pieces in place. But just to know that what you are doing on a daily basis, it does kind of bridge that gap. That might be lacking in some areas, and they are doing just fine.

T3 reported that the growth and progress of seeing special education students perform well is the primary reward.

T3: Just watching them grow. It's just so much fun, even with the severely autistic kids, just seeing their progress. I was in that classroom a couple of weeks ago. Some of the higher functioning autistic kids were doing double digit multiplication, and watching them work through those problems. It might have taken them ten minutes to do one problem, but just to watch them work through and getting the right answers was really cool. And to see how that teacher interacts with them, and teaches them how to do it.

T4 stated that seeing special education students reach their potential was very rewarding. In addition, another reward was the appreciation that parents of IEP students had for the efforts that the school made to ensure that their child was included academically and socially.

T4: I think when you can reach a student and you see their potential and you see them reaching that potential that can be very rewarding. And I think equally when you have a more severe case of disability and you see kids that include them and stick up for them they can be part of the lunch group, I think that can be really rewarding to see those kids

mesh together. And I think, I mean the parents, any parent that I have encountered that their child with a disability is successful both academically and socially. I find them to be so very supportive of schools, which is very rewarding to know that they appreciate all that we do to help their children. I find those are the parents that are more appreciative than the regular parents.

What are the challenges of working with IEP students?

Traditional school principals' responses.

Traditional school principal T1 cited the biggest challenge in working with disabled was that the regular education teachers often do not understand what is required of a teacher of a student with an IEP. As a result, T4 reported greater attention was needed administratively to ensure that teachers understand the implications of having IEP students in their class.

T1: The challenge I would say, any administrator would say, is discipline. Because regular education teachers don't understand and very rarely look over the highlights of the IDEA laws and what they entail, and how it affects a special needs child. What I did as a principal at [previous school] the first in-service day, one of my assistant principals was in charge of special ed. And she would do half the in-service day working with teachers and going over the regulations of IDEA, and what's involved in working with a child with an IEP

Traditional school principal T2 reported the main challenge was handling external issues surrounding the IEP student and ensuring the student's success.

T2: I think the challenge of working with IEP students the academic part is easy. We have a lot of programs. We have come up with a lot of different ways to build a safety net to help them academically. But many of our IEP students also come with that extra baggage. It's the motivation pieces that are sometimes lacking. You know the socio-economic issues. And those are aspects of the IEP student that are most difficult to overcome or to work with. It is easy to put a program in to place to help somebody. But how do you make somebody care and to motivate a student? In particular when most of these kids only have one parent at home. The parent skills are lacking.

Two traditional school principals, T3 and T4, indicated that standardized testing was the greatest challenge with IEP students. Specifically, ensuring that students make "Adequately Yearly Progress" (AYP), presented its own set of challenges. Helping students recognize their intrinsic level of motivation to perform well on these tests was a challenge as well.

T3: Again, the biggest challenge is with your learning support subgroup and your AYP. Subgroups like that can have a devastating effect on your building in terms of AYP and its reputation because a lot of people don't understand. You know, when they say, "Your school didn't make AYP." Well, they really don't understand why it is a special ed subgroup that caused that to happen. So you spend a lot of time trying to make sure that doesn't happen and spend a lot of resources on those kids. That sounds kind of caustic, but that is the reality. We're helping those kids, obviously. But sometimes it may not seem for the reasons that we are concerned with their achievement. But we are concerned with

our own survival, as it were, and our own reputation as a school. And that's not fair to the teachers or fair to the kids to do that.

T4: Well, I think the challenges are the PSSA and getting them to obviously perform. I think that there are times that kids with learning support they struggle with a little bit more of a motivational issue because they are not good at school. And people don't like to do what they are not good at. So therefore, I think it becomes equally more difficult because you not only have the academic challenge, but now you also have the motivational challenge in how to reach those kids and want them to do well, and to do well for themselves.

Question Three: Using Ryan's (2006) definition of inclusion as "A collective process oriented philosophy that includes all students and ensures fair representation." What have been your practices in creating inclusive learning environments?

Alternative education principals' response.

A1 reported that communication efforts with the referring schools were paramount in creating an inclusive learning environment.

A1: I think that the AEDY regs has us put together the periodic reviews and the individual plans. This has really pushed us to a different level in how we provide our services. Our plans, academically and behaviorally, really are driven by what we are seeing every day. And we are meeting with our schools more frequently than the first semester. Charter schools, we are meeting with them every two months basis. With our county schools, we are meeting with them quarterly. And what you'll see is that we may

have met one quarter on their behavior plan, but the next time we meet we realize that this wasn't working. We need to sit down and make sure that it is working. And we change those goals.

Principal A2 reported that the key to ensure that all students were included in the educational process was to have the alternative education program structure itself as nearly as possible to the experience in the referring school so the eventual transition to the referring school would facilitate the student's success.

A2: What we did in alt. ed., was that we tried to run that as similar as possible to a regular high school setting. Because we felt that way, and I had a great staff. I really was blessed with a great staff that cared about the kids. We always felt that we had to do the best job we could like you would any other typical high school because eventually they are going to be leaving our place and heading back to a typical high school setting. And, that was our goal. So we wanted to make sure that they were prepared to return to that home school and to return well prepared. We followed the same curriculum, same pacing guide, and just like you would with any student that you worked with, we would make accommodations.

Principal A3 reported that the staffing efforts of the program ensured that all students had equal access to learning. The small size of the classrooms allowed for a great deal of individual focus on the student.

A3: Well, the first thing I was given, and I was given, is that I had 2 teachers in every classroom. Whether it was a special ed or regular classroom, I had 2 teachers in every

classroom. Our class sizes, we liked to keep them around 8 to 10. Sometimes we had to wait until rooms were open at the end of the year when one program left and we had extra rooms. The highest class we ever had we had 17 students in it. As soon as a class opened up, that class was split. So, inclusive with 8 students and 2 teachers there was really no way that they couldn't get the attention. We also had a behavioral specialist, a full time mental health specialist and that allowed for skill streaming ART to be done on a daily basis so that kinda included all the kids.

Principal A4 reported that the social skills curriculum provided the forum for students to understand each other and ensure that all students were actively engaged in the program. The student centered approach to the program design allowed for the students to recognize each other's differences.

A4: It is probably guided more by the group social skills course that we do because it is no longer separated by grades or by differentiated groups. It is whole group instruction. And the instruction is really on the focus of dealing with tolerance of other people, dealing with frustrations, dealing with anger. Also celebrating each other's successes, and promoting each other's successes down to even when we do the promotion ceremony, it is done as a group. The students ask the kids questions. The next time you get mad when someone calls you a name, now you're at level three. How are you going to act differently than when you were a level two? Those types of questions and then the kids have to answer those questions. Those are all generated from the students. They are more brutal on each other than the staff is. They know what everybody's weaknesses are, and they bring them up. That is where it creates an atmosphere of inclusiveness. I think

truly every student being on the level system and being under the structure of a program every kid is, there is no kid above it. There is no kid below it. Everybody is on the program.

Question Three: Using Ryan's (2006) definition of inclusion as "A collective process oriented philosophy that includes all students and ensures fair representation." What have been your practices in creating inclusive learning environments?

Traditional school principals' responses.

T1 reported that inclusion of all students in the learning process required a shift in traditional thinking on the part of the teachers, and that teaching for diverse populations was every teacher's responsibility.

T1: When you're speaking of all students, I'm thinking about our multi-cultural students because that number is growing at [current school]. It previously was at [previous school]. We were the middle school ESL school and now the policy in the district has changed and it is in all buildings. Probably our regular ed teachers had a difficult time with full inclusion of ESL students and special ed. I think I'm saying this generally public school teachers in general feel that if you have a special ed teacher or an ESL teacher they should be fully responsible for the education of those children. So flipping the regular ed teachers over to understanding you are still responsible and accountable for the education of all children especially the older teachers. It has been a challenge to all of us. But it's coming along.

T2 reported that having a co-teaching model in the classroom was effective in providing an inclusive learning environment.

T2: I think the main thing we do is our instructional Collaborative Instruction classes where we have a co-teaching model. A person from the outside coming in could sit down in a classroom with two adults and would be hard pressed to pick out who was the regular teacher and who was the special ed teacher. Most of our team teachers do a real nice job at that which provides a greater opportunity, not only for the special ed kids in that class, but they do some modification and adaptation for all the kids in the class. There is nothing in our school activity wise that would exclude any students from participating. And really, the way we have the school set up with activities, even with our CI classes, I'm not sure that even a lot of the other students can tell who has IEP's and who does not. In some cases we do have some self-contained classes. But for the most part they integrate really well.

T3 reported that an emphasis on student relationships helped the teachers to create an inclusive learning environment.

T3: It all comes down to the teacher-student relationship, the administrator-teacher-student-relationship. As a building principal, you have to make sure your teachers know that the idea is they have to be student-centered. We want a student-centered building because we know our population has certain needs. We want to make sure that school is where they want to be, and that it's a safe place for them. We have a few things we throw around all the time. One is that this is sometimes the best seven hours of their day for a

lot of our kids. And we want to make sure that that's the case. We want to make sure that when they come to school they feel safe. They feel supported. They feel they are worth something, and that they are learning, because a lot of times they don't get that at home. You know, there is a certain segment of our population that does not get that support at home that they should be getting. Like other kids are getting. We try to keep that in the forefront of our minds and make up for that as best we can.

T4 reported that creating an inclusive environment was the right thing to do. T4 reported that inclusive environments were more easily created at the elementary level. There were some difficulties with faculty as well.

T4: Well, I think you do it because it is the right thing to do. I mean everybody wants their child to be included and be around the same age peers. So I think that it's not appropriate that a lot of these kids, at least in junior high can still be on the second or third grade reading level. You don't put them in second or third grade. You put them with the same age peers. I do think it is the right thing to do, and I think it is much more difficult coming from an elementary school to a junior high. It is much more accepted in the elementary school to include kids. I have a difficult time with some teachers, with more than I normally ever had, with them saying I don't know what I am supposed to do. If they can't read the book, they can't do this. They can't read my test. I find that to be frustrating because I think that it takes a lot more to adapt as the grades get harder and as you get older.

Question Four: Describe your training or university preparation as an administrator for dealing with special education students.

Alternative education principals' responses:

A1 described that on-the-job training and A1's relationship with a mentor were the most influential in gaining knowledge of special education.

A1: Candidly speaking, I got most of my education on the job. The classes that we took to get to this level gave you some basic background-school law classes. But I was very fortunate to work with someone who had been in special ed. her life and entire career. I was fortunate to be able to ask her questions. And she really mentored me when it came to what it meant to get present levels and what it meant to do X, Y, and Z and why we do all of this. I was very, very fortunate to be able to bend her ear on numerous occasions. My education only kind of got me in the door. But being on the job, I'm really getting my hands dirty, so to speak. And really, even though I'm not a special ed. teacher, but sitting in and learning how to do an IEP and learning all of those pieces. That being my choice as well. That's one of the areas I felt that I had a weakness in. And so when I had an opportunity to work closely with her, I took every chance I could to continue to learn.

Principal A2 reported minimal university level principal preparation devoted to understanding special education school populations. The focus of A2's training centered around discipline and the special education student.

A2: I think I had one class. And, again, most of that had to do with dealing with disabled kids in terms of discipline.

A3 reported that due largely to the IDEA regulations taking effect, A3 became self-motivated to learn as much as she could in a short period of time.

A3: Gosh, my degree is in health and physical ed. undergraduate. So I would say to you that when IDEA came in, I was beginning my administrative career. And looking at IDEA, I would take in-service anytime there was a special ed in-service. Our asst. superintendent, [name of assistant superintendent], who was one of the special ed supervisors, I would say to her I have to go to this. And her response to me was, "Our special ed teachers know what they are doing with this." I said, "Oh no the buck stops here. I'm the assistant principal sitting here, and the buck stops here. If they're not doing what they are supposed to be doing it still stops here." So I need to know what they are doing. So I basically inundated myself for probably a year and a half to two years with any type of special ed in service. I jumped in on special ed in-services because I wanted to know how to write an IEP. I wanted to know that you needed to do manifestations. My first year as an assistant principal it took me from Nov until March to get an AEP packet of the students that I was working with for special ed to be done correctly.

A4 explained that A4's formal training in the principal preparation was non-existent and that the training received as a school psychologist and acting in different capacities in the district provided A4's knowledge of special education.

A4: None. My training was from running alternative ed programs and from being school psyche, being a therapist, being a bus driver previously, being an administrator, teaching emotional support and working at [local mental health agency]. That is the training that

I got; it was never from any of the course work that I got. Now the school psych was beneficial to me, but the principal certification wasn't. But the school psyche was, not because of the testing, but because of the understanding of the mental health side of it.

Principal A2 reported minimal university level principal preparation devoted to understanding special education school populations. The focus of A2's training centered around discipline and the special education student.

A2: I think I had one class. And, again, most of that had to do with dealing with disabled kids in terms of discipline.

Question Four: Describe your training or university preparation as an administrator for dealing with special education students.

Traditional school principals' responses

T1 cited non-existent training at the university level and poor training in general which is the catalyst for T1 teaching courses in higher education.

T1: Nonexistent. Higher education for intense and purposes sucks as far as preparing administrators for walking into an educational setting which is why I teach graduate courses in higher education.

T2 reported non-existent training in the principal preparation courses aside from a bit of knowledge of special education law in the a legal course.

T2: Non-existent. Trial by fire. I mean, they touch a little bit on a little special education law in your law class. I had a special education class as an undergrad that really was not helpful. It really is just trial by fire.

T3 reported that there was no training all in T3's principal preparation program.

T3: None.

T4 stated that T4 is only two courses and an internship away from an advanced degree in special education. There was no mention made of T4's training in the principal preparation program.

T4: I actually have, when I was in my first year as a guidance counselor, I went back to school for my masters in special education. I'm two classes and an internship away from my masters in special education. The reason I did that actually was because when I was a guidance counselor in my first year, I realized that so much of my job had to do with special education. So that I probably needed to get myself on board and understand it.

Domain Three: Mental Health knowledge and delivery of services

Question One: Describe your role and practice as an administrator in delivery of mental health services to support students.

Alternative education principals' responses:

Principal A1 reported that A1's background in counseling allows for a broader understanding of the issues that cause students to act the way that they do. A1 reports that the time when meeting with the student is a good opportunity to get to the root causes of what they issues really are.

A1: My first master's degree is in community counseling. I have my licensure. It makes me very aware of what is going on what is causing the behavior. I think that having an understanding of mental health and having an understanding of where our kids are coming from, and how that plays into how they act and react or how they do in school. I think that when it comes to discipline issues, a lot of times when I have kids in my office, it's a really good opportunity for me to get to that central issue. It's a good time to spend some time and really talk with them because I understand that there is something causing them to react in that manner. And I think that sometimes we want to skip over that issue. You kicked the desk. You called the teacher a name. So as a result, you are going to have lunch detention. And that's all well and good, but why did you do that? What happened to cause that? What was that trigger or button? And I think that having my background in mental health gives me a broader vision.

Principal A2 reported that A2's mental health role was enhanced by various supports, mainly the student assistance program consisting of a guidance counselor and mental health specialist.

A2: I had a real strong advantage in the Alt. Ed. situation that I was in that we had a full-time guidance counselor and we had a full-time mental health specialist. Both of them were just outstanding people. When it got to the point where I felt that they needed some

professional help, something beyond my line of expertise, I was very fortunate to have a couple of people that I could refer them to. And, we also had the Student Assistance Program. That program was alive and well in the alt. ed. program. And, again, I had maybe half dozen teachers on that aside from our mental health specialists, guidance counselor, and our nurse was involved in it also. Now come to think of it-probation officers. So there were a lot of support systems there and there were people on board that our kids were comfortable in going to.

Principal A3 reported that facilitating mental health services is A3's primary role. A3 emphasized the mental health process as opposed to a singular event.

A3: Connecting them to services! And that's technically it. And you can quote me on this. I tell my mental health specialist that it's a process not an event. And you had to keep saying that because sometimes you could have an event and bring the parent in. And then you'd say your child is grieving because their father passed away and your child's behavior escalated after that (and this is a true case) so let's see if we can't get you connected to the Caring Place. And the parent would be kinda all for it. And the next time you talk to them, because there's another event and you would say, "Did you take them to the Caring Place?" And they would say, "Stay out of my business." Finally maybe 4 or 5 times down the road you come up with it and the mother had a new boyfriend whose mother passed away. She saw how much she was grieving so she thought, "Oh, that might be a good idea to get them connected." This kid was a 5th grader at the time and got out of AEP and ended up the next year student of the month and never came back.

Mother finally got him connected. So it's a huge component. But it is a process, not an event.

Principal A4 reported that the student assistance program was imperative in meeting the needs of the student. A4's role is to "sell" the parent on the importance of accepting help from mental health agencies.

A4: Activating our student assistance program. You can make decisions based off of student reactions to the behavior student needs. Orchestrating it, assuring that it's happening, and that we're looking for and to look for the red flags in mental health. And then following up and trying to sell just patient in mental health services. Encouraging parents to be open to mental health services and to allow us to provide supportive services to their kids. That's always a challenge.

Question One: Describe your role and practice as an administrator in delivery of mental health services to support students.

Traditional school principals' responses:

T1 reported the T1's role was more of a conduit to providing the referral to the mental health specialist. T1 reported that the central office administration was not always receptive to expanding mental health service personnel. T1 had the advantage of having students in the building for up to eight years which results in optimum rapport with and knowledge of the families.

T1: Well, when I was at [former middle school] there was a mental health specialist and she was there 3 days a week. It was very much needed in 6, 7, and 8th grade. We had 1,000 students in that building and no matter how many adults we had, we never seemed to have enough. At [current school] it was a K-8 school, and I realized that a mental health specialist should be there. Especially for the K, 1 and 2 children because we had so many children that came from a one single family home or a home where grandma was taking care of everybody. We used to have a half time mental specialist or at least she was on call but she wasn't even half time, and they cut her out. No matter how much you begged the people at the top, how much you need a mental health specialist in elementary school, no one seem to listen because no one has ever been a K-8 principal. So I tried to do as much as I can with the children with the help of an on call school psychologist that we share with 8 buildings. She is fabulous. I try to get the parents in my office as often as I can. And being a K-8 principal is a wonderful thing if you're there for 8 years because you get to know the children so well you establish relationships with the family. And that helps a great deal.

T2 reported that there are multiple sources of mental health services to assist the principal referred students.

T2: Well, luckily in this building we have a full time mental health counselor, which is golden. In my previous district, we had a school psychologist who worked with those kinds of kids. When I come across a mental health issue, I definitely use the resources that the district has here; in guidance, the counselors, the mental health, and SAP

liaisons. I made a comment yesterday in screening that for some reason there are more mental health issues in this district. More than I ever thought there would have been.

T3 stated that T3's role is primarily that as a referral person to make the right connection to an individual who is more qualified to handle mental health issues.

T3: Just knowing where the right places are to refer people and who does that in the community. When you are presented with an issue, when you are presented with a kid with a problem, where do you go? Where do you go from there? I think I have a pretty good handle on community resources and community assets in terms of mental health. My base is that I refer them to the psychologist, or the counselor, or the SAP team to make those sorts of decisions that I don't feel qualified to do.

T4 explained that T4's role is similar to being "part of a team but not playing" due to the presence of a school psychologist in the building. T4 believes that the administrative role is to contact the parents in the event that there is something that the team believes needs to be brought to the parent's attention.

T4: I mean I definitely think I play a part in it. It's just that I really think, and I reflect back on the school district that I came from before my previous one, and I had a much bigger role in it. The way that this school district that I'm at now is designed, I have a school psychologist in my building. And I think that adds a different feel to the whole thing. We do a building level team every few weeks where all the providers come in that we work with and the school psychologist. So I mean, I'm a part of that team. But I don't play, I don't think, as the lead role as I did in my previous district. But, I mean, certainly

when I'm with my team and when I'm with my teacher teams and were doing student support meetings, or grade level type meetings and kids names come up. You know we don't always see some of the things that happen in the classroom. And something comes up that I think is troublesome, I think it is my responsibility to, well; I think it is the teachers' responsibility to contact parents. But it is my responsibility, if teachers are talking about kids they're really having a difficult time with, for me to call and advocate to that parent that we are having difficulties with your child. Maybe sometimes it's mental health type things.

Question Two: What have been your practices in the building in the areas of mental health with students?

Alternative education principals' responses:

A1 reported that due to the time constraint in handling the issues, A1 initiates the initial part of the process.

A1: I would say that the initial triage would start with me. Then I would call in our SAP person to follow up with everything only because I don't have time to do all of that leg work.

A2 reported that the main practice was to refer the student to the appropriate mental health service. However, there were times that the student felt more comfortable speaking with A2.

A2: I was a referral. If there were something above and beyond my expertise, I would depend on these other people. There were a few situations where some of the kids were actually more comfortable in coming in to see me and talking about situations in their lives.

A3 reported that observation of the student in the building helps to establish the degree of need for the referral to the appropriate mental health provider.

A3: We have a mental health specialist in the building, and we sign fact papers as they (the students) come in. We sign for interventions in school. We usually don't sign for mental health or drug and alcohol until we observe the student for 2-3 weeks if we begin to see a need for it. Because again, we don't know your student so unless you want to sign on it right now. My mental health specialist could do a mental health assessment in their building, but technically her role was to connect them to services. We did end up having [local mental health provider] in our building, but that was because a parent agreed to services and we were just a satellite and they would come in.

A4 reported that building practice in the area of mental health is to have all staff trained on the SAP model. In addition, the AEDY program uses the tier system of behavior.

We have a three tier system where every kid gets a tier one interventions as far as mental health supports. Everyone in our building is SAP trained. Now the only purpose for everyone being SAP trained is so that they have an awareness and an understanding, and also identification tool. They understand what they are looking for to make referrals. And we are broken into teams and those teams then actually discuss and then they have a

SAP liaison that is funneled back to our tier two SAP program. Our tier two SAP program is where the kids are identified with SAP case managers that work on social issues. I call them social coaches. On our tier one level every kid in our building has an academic coach. That academic coach is not just SAP trained, but they meet with their kids, talk about academics, behavior, and attendance. Those are the three everybody talks about; academics, behavior and attendance. If that's not successful they move up to the next level. In that level, there is three levels in every level. The lowest level is that they just get supportive services from one of our SAP team members. If they need more we have a county level person that comes in and meets with them and works through the team and with one of our staff coordinators. Never are they in place of, they just get added on services. The more need they have the more they get of us. If that doesn't work then it goes to the next level, which is school based mental health, and which is the achievement center that works here in our building. If that's not working then we go to alternative ed. If they fit the criteria and through their informal hearing are appropriate to be placed there, then we do not deny kids placement. If they have not exhausted every single intervention that we can provide to them that is appropriate, they are not even considered for an informal hearing, let alone alt.ed. That isn't even discussed. Alternative ed isn't even discussed until every single thing on our intervention listing of tier one and tier two interventions have been attempted. Not one single kid I mean. They are denied. Principal brings that, nope, no entry.

Question Two: What have been your practices in the building in the areas of mental health with students?

Traditional school principals' responses:

T1 stated that T1's practice is to act as a facilitator of information and as a support for parents. T4 indicated that the parent needs a third party to work through the process with.

T1: Oh absolutely as a facilitator! I should hang a shingle on my door. Going back to my roles as a parochial school principal, I didn't have a counselor or an assistant principal, so you did everything. Some teachers get annoyed that that happens, but parents need that 3rd outside stranger to cry to or share something with.

T2 stated that mental health issues are best left to more qualified mental health specialists trained in that area.

T2: To be honest, that is not my area of expertise. I leave that up to the professionals over in guidance. I can talk with a student. I can recognize the potential issues, but then I steer them in the right direction.

T3 reported that T3's role is that of a facilitator who makes the referral to the proper professional in the building.

T3: Pretty much a facilitator and identifying the problems you know. I can identify the problems in the classroom, take them to teachers, and pass along the information to the people in the building who can make those decisions better than I could.

T4 stated that third party services were the practice that T4 employs. T4 indicated, however, that the referral and initiation of service delivery must start at the building level.

T4: Facilitation of services. Again, where the way we have it set up is we have a contract with a provider that they come into the school and see the kids. And I think that takes away from some of the responsibilities of the school district employees because we have a contract provider that comes in to do that. But it is our responsibility to identify those kids and get that service moving. It doesn't just happen automatically.

Question Three: What do you believe to be the challenges that students with mental health issues present to your school/program? What is your role in those challenges? Why?

Alternative education principals' responses:

Principal A1 indicated that there is a difficulty in understanding medication issues as these relate to a student's mental health.

A1: I think understanding their medication and if they did take it or they didn't take it. I think that understanding that there is a root cause for their behaviors helps, and a lot of people don't want to view it that way. I guess some want to say, "Well that's only an excuse for him to do this and he or she is using this as a way to get out of doing work." I think if you don't understand mental health, it is difficult to see how it plays into why they won't do their spelling test.

Principal A2 responded that the biggest challenge with mental health in A2's program is that, generally speaking, there is a tendency to over-diagnose and over-place students as having a mental health condition.

A2: Well, this is probably somewhat out of the question but I think we over-diagnose and put kids into those slots. You know, I've done some reading and been to some seminars and conferences for RTI, and there's no question, we're over-diagnosing these kids. And I think all of us could stand some professional development along those lines and implementing those RTI principles. I know in our district they have been doing this for the last couple of years at the elementary level and it really hasn't gotten to us for whatever reason I don't know what. On the secondary level, I think that we become certainly more attuned to some interventions that we could be doing with these kids before we so readily test them and label them.

Principal A3 indicated that the age of the child referred to the program is linked to the degree of challenge. A3 stated that the younger the child is at the time of AEP placement, the more issues the student will enter the program with.

A3: Having delved a little bit deeper, the younger that child that gets sent to AEP, I would say to you there are more of those challenging issues. Because there's a difference between a 3rd grader being sent to AEP compared to an 8th grade for the first time being sent to AEP. It is so huge. The needs of that younger child are enormous. To be thinking about sending a 3rd grader to AEP you gotta be thinking, "Wow!" something's not there. So having the fact that they do need some services, not every student but the idea is that there is somebody there to support. This program couldn't run unless there were hands on. We even want it with the younger kids cause now we go down to 2nd grade. We even wanted with the younger kids to have a psychologist to come in because of the age of the child in AEP. Not looking at the 8th graders, we're looking at the young kid.

Principal A4 commented that there are two main challenges with regard to mental health. The geography of A4's program is rural and does not have access that more populated areas of the county have. A challenge is the mental health that the parents often have and how this translates into providing a support base for their child.

A4: Access, for us as it is rural. I mean, they don't have any other mental health access and then supports at home to support that access. I would say it is more common than not that we have kids that also have parents that have extreme mental health issues as well. When they have extreme mental health issues, they don't do well in being able to support their kids. So then we become the only support for them. We're only a third of the day and they are two thirds, so they overpower us.

Question Three: What do you believe to be the challenges that students with mental health issues present to your school/program? What is your role in those challenges? Why?

Traditional school principals' responses:

T1 reported that one of the challenges was teacher's understanding the student's background.

T1: Usually the challenge is their demeanor, or if there having a bad day and it's an explosive day, and if there is an older grade. [T1 by name] knows their background, but their new teacher doesn't so the teacher tends to react rather than stop. We have had several young people who either have a high level of autism or some form of Asperger.

And the parents choose not to put them in a school that has the resources for them, so therefore I deal with them with the help of outside agencies.

T2 indicated that mental health challenges themselves are the issue.

T2: It is just a challenge in itself. Some of the issues are so severe that sometimes academics are almost in the back seat. Until you can totally address the mental health issues, there is no sense in talking about Algebra or Biology or Shakespeare. Which really affects attendance and which is really a big issue for all those kids. Once in a while we have to set a teacher down and say this kid is not necessarily doing A, B, and C on purpose. Here's a little bit of background on the student. Once they hear some of the background, it clicks for them. And they become a little more understanding.

T3 described the biggest challenge as orientating people to overcome negative stereotypes and stigmas concerning mental health problems.

T3: Making people aware, you know, without compromising the kids to the point where people are really treating so differently so that they are not able to access their education. Part of the problem, obviously, is the stigma of mental health problems. You have teachers who are downright fearful of certain diagnoses, and they don't want that kid in their classroom. Or they are going to treat that kid differently whether they know it or not. They may not realize they are treating that kid differently, but they think, "I have this kid over here that may flip any moment." So they will put them in a different place in the classroom. We have to get over some of those barriers that teachers are fearful of having kids like that in their classroom.

T4 stated that students with mental health issues were frequently misunderstood.

T4: I think they are probably the most misunderstood students. Because a lot of times people, they don't have that physical disability. So why can't that student go home and do their homework? Why can't they behave properly? You know, most of the other kids do that, why can't they? Well sometimes they have an emotional disturbance, or if they have a number of other diagnoses, I don't think it is a wildly accepted in this profession in understanding why kids are the way they are. It's sort of assumed that every kid is going to walk into this building and be a good student and follow the rules and the expectations. But they come with baggage, and I think it is difficult for teachers to understand kids that have mental health issues especially because you see kids that can. The mental health issues usually for kids are not something that is in certain situations, especially like in middle school. You might see a kid interacting correctly one minute, and then five minutes later they are doing something different. And so the teachers automatically assume, well if they can make the right choice there, they can act appropriately. Why can they do that there and why can't they do that the whole entire time they are in school?

Question Four: Describe your training or university principal preparation in the areas of mental health.

Alternative education principals' responses:

A1 indicated that overall A1 was properly orientated to mental health by good professors and mentors. A4 also indicated that the intrinsic motivation to learn more has been helpful.

A1: I think it was very good. There were some holes here and there but I had very good mentors, good professors. I also take a lot of time to assess where my weaknesses lay and then try to educate myself. Find somebody that will teach me some more.

A2 stated the mental health was covered only minimally at best.

A2: Minimal at best.

A3 replied that the training received in university and principal preparation program was non-existent.

A3: None. I can tell you that when I first started teaching I got connected with the student assistance program and went for their week long training to be on the SAP Team. Okay, that's telling you where it's at!

Principal A4 reported that A4's degree in educational psychology was the only training acquired in the area of mental health.

A4: There is none. Actually I take that back. I have my Ed Psyche masters.

Question Four: Describe your training or university principal preparation in the areas of mental health.

Traditional school principals' responses:

T1 reported a reliance on the school psychologist, mental health specialist, and student service director for assistance. T1 reported no training at the university and principal preparation level.

T1: None. I depend on other resources-the school psychologist, the mental health specialist, and the director of student services.

T2 stated that training was poor. T2 couldn't recall discussing mental health issues in the coursework.

T2: Thinking back, I'm not sure that we even ever touched upon mental health issues. Or if we did, it was very lax.

Principal T3 reported that there was no training at the university level or principal preparation program. T3 recommended periodic in-service devoted to what services are available in the community.

T3: None. Like I said before, it would be nice if at the building administrator level we could periodically have in-service to review what services are available in the community.

Principal T4 stated that mental health training was non-existent at the university level or principal preparation.

T4: Like as when I went to become a principal? None. I have the background prior to being an administrator so I think it is a little bit easier for me. But I think that's just my personality. But as far as my getting a degree, absolutely none for mental health kinds of issues.

Domain Four: Social Justice

Question One: Do you believe that your school presents equitable opportunities for all students? Is this important? Why or why not?

Alternative education principals' responses.

Principal A1 stated that it was important for each student to have a "voice" whereby an adult can assist him or her when necessary. Principal A1 indicated the belief that having time to devote to students due to smaller enrollments than at the high school was a "luxury" that benefits the students.

A1: It's very important and one of my biggest goals for the students. As I was telling you, most of my programs, I have five residential programs that I oversee their education. I oversee our home tutoring, our home bound tutoring programs, our prison program, our two elementary IT programs, AEP programs in the county, the charter, and also the acute partial kids. I'm forgetting about them. So I have all the kids who have the potential to fall through the cracks. And if they are not given a voice and they are not given an adult to rise up to the occasion and help them, it's very easy for them to fall through the cracks. Not because it's a purposeful thing, I don't believe that school districts say "I'm just not going to deal with this group of people because it is just too difficult." I think I have a very unique and wonderful opportunity to have only 150-some kids, and if I need to spend an hour with a child, I can do that. Whereas in a building where there is 700 students, you don't have that luxury. And I really look at that aspect of my job as a

luxury. And I encourage our teachers and behavior staff to view it in the same way. We have this chance to really connect with a child and have them recognize their own voice. They can borrow ours temporarily until they get their own. But have them recognize that they may be different and they may have different goals.

Principal A2 stated belief in importance of providing equity for all students. In addition, A2 stated that due to the program being so diverse in population, the students accept each other naturally.

A2: I think so. At large as it's such a melting pot. In alt. ed. or here at [another school in the school district] in particular because of our large percentage of ELL students. It's such a melting pot and I don't think the kids realize or get bother by it, or even recognize it. Or if it bothers them or recognize that this kid is black, that one is white, this one is yellow. I think it's gotten more and more, in the matter of sexual orientation, it's just more and more accepted.

Principal A3 stated that having equity for the students was important. In addition, having the staff training in the content areas was the best way to ensure that students would have the same learning environment as they did in the referring school. According to A3, having equal access to the same curriculum was the optimum way to ensure equity.

A3: It presents equitable representation for all the students, absolutely. We are, maybe start off with how, the first year I was there the program really focused on behavior, behavior, and behavior. We did academics, but lot of times my teachers were not pulled

into the curriculum trainings. I have new teachers and I love them. I have a teacher that is now his 6th year cause it's his 6th year with me. The teachers brought in were brought in by me. So they really needed the training, and when I squeaked enough and said they needed the training, they started getting the training. So now they have the same training. If there is math training for 7th grade teachers, my math teacher goes to that training. We have the same science curriculum, the same math curriculum, books, materials that are in every other school. What we do differently is we don't have the related arts. We have instead the skills streaming. We do that social emotional component to work with the kids. As far as the academics go, we are providing the same material.

Principal A4 also stated that it was important to have an equity based program as well. A4 described the philosophy of alternative education as a program, not necessarily a placement. According to A4, the common core curriculum being implemented into the AEDY program as it has been in the district's traditional schools has helped to ensure equity.

A4: Yes in that they are able to transition. That they are able to get out of the program that is just an extension of the regular ed programming for the district. It is not a special ed placement. It is not a placement at all. It's a program. Yes, it has made it a lot easier with the common core. The common core has made it a lot easier than moving people's thoughts away from textbooks, or not the curriculum that curriculum is supported by textbooks and getting people to think differently. They are teaching kids not content.

Question One: Do you believe that your school presents equitable opportunities for all students? Is this important? Why or why not?

Traditional principals' responses.

T1 reported that everything that can be possibly be done to ensure equity was being done. T1 reported a perception that there was still inequity toward women in the district in general.

T1: It is to me. And I do everything I can to make sure everybody has equitable representation. I came from a very small town outside of [large nearby city], and I was in high school during the civil rights movement and everybody was treated the same way. And, um, as much as I think we have come a long way since the Civil Rights, there are some places in the organizations that I worked for that you don't feel that. From a minority point of view or from a gender point of view. Oh God, I've been in this district for 20yrs, and when I came into it from my point of view there was still racial issues going on in the district. Even I was offended of some of the stuff I heard come out of teachers and administrators mouths. I still work in a man's world, no matter how far we have come since Gloria Steinem. Administration is still a man's world, especially in a small urban community like this. It's hard for me to get the word urban out of my mouth because it's a small town mentality. This is 2012 for God's sake; we should be colored blind. There are some students that say I am treating me that way because they're black. And that offends me, and I always tell the kids that. It offends me that you think that way

and that is not the philosophy of this school and not my philosophy at all. I treat everybody with equity.

Principal T2 reported that it was important that students have a voice in the school. Having such a voice might result in tangible items (coffee machines for students) or have an intangible effect (better school climate).

T2: I believe so. We have a group of students that meet on a regular basis from all walks of life; special ed, regular ed, honor students down to kids who are in the office frequently, that voice their opinions and give their comments. For example, one thing that is coming out of that group is that actually potentially having a cappuccino machine in the cafeteria. It is something the kids want, and we are pursuing that. We should have one pretty soon. I think that if students know that they have a voice in their own school and that their concerns are met with a certain aspect of us taking them seriously, I think it improves school climate.

Principal T3 reported that equity was very important. T3 stated that the greatest inequities were the financial inequities that occur outside of the school day. Specifically, some students have the financial means to provide them greater access to activities that those who do not have the money cannot participate in. T3 believes this is the biggest problem of inequity.

T3: Yes, it is very important. Like I said before, from 8 to 3, I think we do a good job of making sure everybody has access to equal opportunities. What happens outside of school is where things break down. Obviously with the other two middle schools, we try

to maintain the same curricula and same resources available to all students. But it is the extracurricular activities where our kids do not have access because those things cost money. It's important to get a good education, but access to all of those other things that you can do throughout your schooling years is where our kids are falling short. Because some families don't have the resources to get their kids involved in a lot of those things at a high enough level where they can participate through high school and maybe beyond. For instance, when it comes to sports, the families at other middle schools can afford it send their kids to all the camps and other programs which make their kids better at sports. Theater is the same thing, or private lessons in music. Some kids can't take advantage of those, so therefore, in high school they are being left out of a lot of extracurricular that enhance their education going forward into college. So, that is the inequity that I see as the biggest problem from where I'm at.

T4 reported that the vast majority of the students in T4's school are white. T4 stated that due to such a small number of African-American students, equity, at least in terms of race, is attainable in T4's school.

T4: I do. But saying that, I think you have to understand the population of the school that I am at. I mean, I think I have three or four African American students in all of my 300 kids. And I don't know. I mean any other-they're all white kids. So I mean, it's looking at those couple of kids. They certainly get the same opportunities as all the other kids get. There isn't a big emphasis on making sure that they get something different than the other kids because there is only three or four of them. So I think I would like to say yes, but like I said, I think it is the population of the school.

Question Two: Describe your practices in working with traditionally marginalized groups of students.

Alternative education principals' responses

Principal A1 believed that building relationships was a strong practice at the school in assisting students who have been underrepresented in the school experiences. Establishing trust is important as is the creative methods to ensure an appropriate community agency referral is made if necessary.

A1: We try to connect and building relationships as much as we can. We try to get to the point where there is a level of trust, and sometimes that's difficult because you still need to maintain your professional boundaries. There will be times where you are building this relationship with this kid, but then you have to kick in the discipline or call the parent or do X, Y, and Z. However, once you have built that relationship and after you have a certain trust level with the kids, you start to find out what's going on. I try to link them with every service imaginable in our community. And if I don't know the service, I'm going to call somebody and find out what is available. We have a tremendous variety of services available to all kinds of kids, and I try to utilize them as much as possible. But I can't do it alone. Our school can't do it alone. And so we are going to pull in whatever we can pull in and whoever we need to pull in to help the student.

Alternative education principal A2 reported that having outside agency support and making the appropriate referral is an important practice to ensure equity. Shifting

demographics (i.e. increased homeless student population) require additional supports that the schools alone cannot accomplish.

A2: The low socio-economic status. You know we have free and reduced lunch and such a high percentage of our students qualify that they don't even bother checking now or filling out forms or things of that nature. When it really becomes an issue and is becoming noticeable, we do have families that are homeless. That ends up being reported to us. We can send them off to agencies for their basic needs, for clothing we have the clothing closet. Fortunately we have some agencies that will provide the basic necessities for these folks. It's important that we are attuned to that and at least know where to refer them.

Alternative education principal A3 stated that one desirable practice would be to be vigilant as to the demographics of the students entering the program. A3 advocates that the school district central office do this as well.

A3: Well, they are, and I would have to tell you percentage wise, the majority of the students are black males that are in the AEP program in the city of [home school city] followed by black females. So looking at the whole thing, that's huge. So we are marginalized and I don't control who comes to me. But these reports go to the superintendent and they are watched carefully from different schools. Because I don't know your school. I could say I know [local school] and I could say [that local school] is 51% white, 2% Hispanic and 47% black, so in your referrals they are equal. I don't know the rest of the schools, but downtown knows that and obviously they would be speaking

on what's going on. So looking at that, yes, there is a proponent there that you definitely you have to watch the demographics.

Principal A4 reported that females are the minority in the program and that the program is not diverse in terms of race, creed, or nationality. There are also a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students in the program. A4 cited the importance of the student assistance program as a safeguard to ensure that there is not an overrepresentation of one particular group in the program.

A4: Girls are a minority. We don't have minorities. We are 99% white, I mean, honestly it is economically disadvantaged is the majority. So if you're a girl and you are not economically disadvantaged, you would be a minority. We have had one in the program, which was white, girl, who was not economically disadvantaged. She was proficient on the PSSA. Because what helps with that is when you have an extensive and comprehensive student assistance program. Having a comprehensive and extensive student assistance program will determine and exhaust every single possible avenue prior to enrollment in the program. If you do that, then you are definitely not under representing anything. They truly have met the criteria to be in the program. When you use it as a dumping ground that's when you end up under underrepresenting all populations because then you start targeting certain kids, even behavior kids as being a target. We don't have all behavior kids in the program. We have some that are just truly an attendance behavior kids. We have some drug violating kids. The girl I was talking about, she brought alcohol to a middle school, an eighth grader, brought alcohol.

Question Two: Describe your practices in working with traditionally marginalized groups of students.

Traditional principals' responses.

T1 stated that the practice of creating opportunities that would celebrate diversity and include more minority students was important. The difficulty in this practice, according to T1, was the sustainability of the program once T1 left for a different principal position in another building.

T1: Well I try not to treat them as a group of minority kids. We're all in this together so the more we mix together, the more everybody feels, you know, that there isn't any segregation. When I was at Wilson the middle school, it hurt me to watch the minority kids to not get involved in any of the clubs or activities. So I gathered some of the children together who I thought were leaders and asked them why they didn't take part in band or chorus. And they told me they don't play their music. So my goal was to start a gospel choir. It took me 7 years to get it started, but with the help of one of my teachers and one of the Baptist minister in town, we got it started. And we we're the only gospel choir in the whole district, but when I left unfortunately it fell apart. And my music teacher, who was a white gal, is the only white music teacher in the district that plays gospel music.

T2 stated that one practice is to employ targeted discussions with the staff during their Professional Learning Community time (PLC). T2 indicated that understanding different cultures is a good practice.

T2: Make sure that all the doors are open to any kids from any background. One thing that we did do here is in one of our PLC's last year. We went through a book titled Understanding Poverty. It might be helping the staff understand where these kids are coming from. Something else that we should be doing is also maybe doing some PLC in understanding different cultures. When working with Latino kids, sometimes the way Latino kids come across is a little different than we are used to. And a lot of our teachers take them the wrong way. So, understanding different cultures and backgrounds is important.

Principal T3 indicated that orientating staff members to the belief that all children can learn was an important practice. In addition, creating a sense of trust with groups of students that have been historically marginalized is important as well.

T3: The initial challenge is to get staff to not have low expectations for these groups. You have to get your staff on board to recognize that these kids can learn and succeed. The other part of that is the trust factor with marginalized groups. To gain trust of these groups of students is a challenge in itself. You have to break down the barriers because they may not have a lot of positive experiences with authority figures, and the trust element may not be there.

Principal T4 reported that, as a practice, special education students get T4's attention the most as they are identified as having an IEP. Using the subgroup reporting for state testing, T4 indicated they have only one other group that requires attention: English Language Learners.

T4: I would say special ed would be the one group, but we have already talked about that. I think special considerations get made that we do for them just based on the fact that their needs are a little bit different. But I think if their needs are different because they have an IEP that says they have a disability. I mean a kid that is low socio-economic, I'm not going to spend extra time working on their schedule just because they fall by the free and reduced lunch. I think that if, honestly, the only way I would ever have to look at those groups is if they came up as a sub group for PSSA and you would see that group isn't making it. But again we do have one student that is ELL, but that's not a sub group. And you know our free and reduced lunch sub group isn't a problem. If it became a problem, I guess I would have to look at it more. But as of right now it's not really something that I ever really think about too much in the district that I am currently in.

Question Three: What do you believe to be the challenges (if any) in leading schools in terms of providing equity to all students?

Alternative education principals' responses.

A1 reported two primary challenges. A1 reported that the student reintegrating eventually into a larger school would impact the continuance of care. A1 also reported that it is difficult at times for staff to embrace a philosophy of equity similar to that of A1.

A1: Honestly, I would say that one of the biggest issues we have is working within, next to, and in collaboration with a larger school tradition environment. Because I know when I send a kid back to a school with 700 kids, they are not going to get that attention. So I

think that is a concern with that continuance of care. Getting staff on board has been difficult. When I took this position, the person prior to my being here was not was not a team work person and was very critical from what I understand. We do have a set of beliefs within [our alternative education program], and we try everything we can to get everybody on board. However if there is a person who is not going to get on board, unfortunately, we've had to let a number of people go in the last two years that just didn't believe in what we are trying to do. They made it very apparent in staff meetings and trainings that it was a bunch of bs that they didn't need to learn about poverty. They felt that they didn't need to know we were there for them. So we have let some of those people go and I think people have seen that we are very strong in our belief system as to what we are going to try for these students and we are not willing to waiver. And it may not fit with their teaching model, but they need to expand on to recognize all the differences.

Alternative education principal A2 reported that a challenge in leading school's equity is getting teachers to recognize the importance of each individual student.

A2: It is a challenge for teachers sometimes to recognize that all students should get a fair shake. Fortunately it's a low percentage of our teachers that fit that category but we do have some. I think it's important that we provide professional development to all of us. The poverty kids learn differently than the regular so called kids. The old thing-do you know me well enough to teach me?" It's important that our teachers realize that. In our ELL kids, it's important to celebrate that.

Principal A3 indicated that the A3 was aware of her own background when dealing with diverse populations. The inclusion of the immediate community is important to A3.

A3: From my prospective, no. But then I am very, very careful and I have to look at the fact where my beliefs come from and where I come from as a white female that I am doing what I'm supposed to do. We have included people from the [local] community center. They come at the end of the day. And they're also talking with the students to make that connection with the neighborhood and building along that line. I'm not the only school that does that.

Principal A4 reported that the student returning from the alternative education program sometimes can present an administrative challenge due to the attitude and perception of the student. Success in the transition was due to the student assistance program intervention and the gradual re-integration of the student.

A4: Yes, staffing. Yeah, they have a lot harder time in not harboring priors. Transition is difficult. Again it is because they want to harbor the past. They don't want to see a kid as being different when they come back. What it does and what has really helped that is by having student assistance. And again when you do transition, you do slow successive approximations to them coming back. They come back for one period and then they're in alt ed 90% of the rest of their day. And then when they continue to be successful in the level system, they continue to attend. Their grades continue to be above 70%, plus they behave in the class. And they're trustworthy and walking eight minutes between here and the other building. Then they get more classes. But that is all determined by student

assistance. The case manager is still monitoring them, and they're working with the therapist still. All those school based, mental health still in place, everything is still in place. As we increase transition, we increase the amount of time they get to spend with the therapist. And that continues for two years after they are done. By diminishing, it's great.

Question Three: What do you believe to be the challenges (if any) in leading schools in terms of providing equity to all students?

Traditional school principals' responses.

Principal T1 indicated that it can be a challenge not all staff share T1's belief that providing equity is important. T1 believes that the school district could do more to embrace diversity.

T1: Um, that everybody doesn't think that way. And go back to the data. If you want to look at the data about the kids that are behavior problems because we have not addressed diversity. We meaning the district. And I have said that out loud. Which is why the charter schools will succeed because a couple of charter schools that have opened up recently are to meet the needs of the minority children. We also don't embrace multiculturalism. We did it when I was at [previous school] because we were the ELL middle school so we did three or four multi-cultural activities a year. And going to this new strategy of having ESL students in all the schools has not built relationships. I think it has kinda pulled them apart.

Principal T2 stated that was difficult to get teachers to embrace a different point of view.

T2: Well, having teachers that do not understand a point of view other than their own. Try to get the point across that when a student said something to you and maybe in a certain tone, it wasn't disrespectful. It was just that this is how they talk in their cultural setting. Principal T2 stated that it is difficult to get teachers to embrace a different point of view.

Traditional school principal T3 described that the school did a good job of providing equity within the school environment, especially with students new to the school. However, there were inequities in participation outside of the school experience that gave more affluent students an advantage.

T3: Within the school, I think we do a pretty good job with the buddy groups. We have a lot of kids who are more than willing to take care of students coming in from out of the area; getting them situated, getting them acclimated, and making sure they have somebody to eat with at lunch, and so on. I think we are ok there. But, again, going back to the extracurricular, when you have a kid who wants to play a sport and their parent is less than reliable about even getting them to practice let alone their games on a regular basis.

And you are going up again a kid who has had private lessons since they were four years old, there's no competition. And, that's too bad. I could on with this for a long time. We have a lot of athletic kids in our building. In a given population you are going to have

kids who are smarter, a certain amount of kids who are athletic, an amount of kids that are tall, fat, short, whatever. Our kids who are athletic are probably as athletic as any other school around here. But, because their families don't have the means to get them involved in things, they are never going to develop those skills. And, again, we are a school and we trying to educate kids. But when it comes to all those other things that are important in life. You know, we have kids who can sing. We have kids who can dance. We have kids who can do all these different things, but their families can't take advantage of those opportunities. They can't put them in the classes or sports practices that will help them benefit them to compete later on in high school.

Traditional school principal T4 described that the school wanted to create equity for each student but the reality was that some teachers would judge students based on previous interactions with the families or prejudge the students in general.

T4: You know I think it goes back to that we want to treat every kid and give every kid equal opportunity. But I think a lot of it is a judgment on, as much as you hate to say this, but what does the kid look like when they walk in your room? What does he or she act like? Are they a motivated student? Are they smart? Do they have a good attitude? Are they polite? Are they dirty, or are they clean? You would like to think your giving every kid the same opportunity, but all those things, regardless of whether you want to admit it or not, play a part in how you deal with those kids. I think it is especially true for teachers when they're dealing with those kids. It is hard for them not to judge sometimes them by some of the things. Especially teachers who have been there a long time. They will say, "Oh I had that mother or I had that father and I knew what he was like." They

automatically think that is the road their son or daughter is going to go down. Or I know what kind of life they have. And you don't know. You'd like to think the kids can overcome challenges that they have regardless of their parents.

Question Four: Describe your training and principal preparation in dealing with diverse school populations.

Alternative education principals' responses.

Principal A1 reported that her knowledge came from two sources other than her principal preparation. A1 emphasized the importance of a mentor. A1 indicated that training as a guidance counselor was beneficial.

A1*: I, again, was very lucky to have good mentors. Being a guidance counselor gave me an opportunity to work within the classroom, work directly with kids, and also get more involved in the planning of their education, of their transitions, of special ed, all those kinds of things. My mentor from there was very education oriented. She taught me a lot and gave me an opportunity to stretch my wings and realize that I do have leadership abilities. If I am able to reach ten kids and affect change, being in a principal's role, gives me an opportunity to affect change. It is such a huge venue. So a lot of it was on the job, a lot of it was trial and error, a lot of it was supervision, a lot of it was me making mistakes, but I had a lot of support. And then going back to school, I think the classes were helpful. There were some classes that I could tell you, for example, my school law class was invaluable. So there were some educational pieces that were tremendously helpful in facing situations once I became a principal.*

A2 reported that there was little benefit to A2's administrative preparation for dealing with diverse school populations. A2 emphasized the importance of learning from those around one in mentor-like capacities.

A2: In a classroom or formal setting, again it was minimal. As you know, I'm a dinosaur and that goes back a while, and some of these classes I hope have changed between now and then. One of the things that I believe really helped me to become a leader is that I worked with some great, great people and, I took from them a lot of things that you just don't get in a typical classroom setting which is fine. I had some great teachers, some great people that I worked with, some great people that I coached with.

A3 reported with a one-word response when asked if the university/principal preparation program was sufficient in dealing with diverse school populations.

A3: No.

A4 indicated that the university /principal preparation was minimal. A4's formalized training was more in the area of special education.

A4: Minimal, that's all on the job training. More of a special ed, emotional support, and mental health background is what it has been.

Question Four: Describe your training and principal preparation in dealing with diverse school populations.

Traditional school principals' responses.

T1 stated that the training at the university and principal preparation level didn't exist. *T1: There really hasn't been any training; it's my roots that help me deal with a*

multi-cultural populations. The black leaders in the district will tell the administrators that I'm their diva because they don't look at me as white, but probably the only person that can sit at their table.

T2 reported that the university and principal preparation was poor.

T2: Probably poor as well. Like I said, we probably covered 100 topics or more very superficially. We didn't go into any real depth just like your teacher training. You took your teacher classes, and you knew a little bit going into it. But you really didn't learn how to teach until that first year. And that was you and 30 faces staring back at you.

T3 reported that there was little to be recalled from the university and principal preparation training.

T3: I don't know. I don't remember a lot of that training.

T4 reported that there was no training at the university or principal preparation level.

T4: Not one that I can tell you. No, there wasn't much to it.

Domain Five: Instructional Leadership

Question One: Describe your practices as an instructional leader in your school/program. What do you believe to be important while serving in this capacity?

Alternative education principals' responses:

Principal A1 reported that directly supervising the staff regularly, having an open door policy, and possessing a willingness to accept constructive criticism are three ways that A1 utilizes communication in terms of being an instructional leader.

A1: Regarding staff? I really believe in supervision. I believe in being visible. I try to get into each classroom. In the one building that I am at, at least once in the morning and once in the afternoon, I try and have lunch with the kids and the staff. I try to be around if they need to talk. I have an open door policy. The close and direct supervision I was talking about gives me an opportunity to really keep my finger on the pulse of what's going on in the classroom. I've always stressed to my staff that if I'm not doing something correctly or you feel that I could change, please come to me. I do value constructive criticism, and I think there is a good place for that as long as it is done in the correct manner. And, I've learned a lot from my staff as they have brought things to my attention.

A2 emphasized to students the importance of the role of education in economic success as an aspect of being an instructional leader. A2 also utilized guest speakers to emphasize the importance of education.

A2: Whenever an opportunity came about, I tried to stress to the kids how important it is to get an education. I brought in guest speakers, people in our community who were born into poverty and were able to get out of poverty and be successful. I always preached to the kids the importance of getting an education. I tried to explain to them and even bring

in articles from time to time that kids who don't graduate make this much money and those who graduate make this much money. I tried to show them the opportunity to make good money and have a good life.

Principal A3 reported that being an agent of change and an advocate for the alternative education program was instrumental to being an instructional leader. In addition, A3 described herself as a "data guru".

A3: I brought this up to [former school district curriculum coordinator] at one time and I truly believe at one point and time different administrators fall in different categories and I fell into the change category. I kind of fall in the change agent category. They wanted a strong program. They were looking for change. They were willing to give me leeway to start the program, work the program, continually redevelop it, and move forward with it. When [former school district curriculum director] left she told to me to make sure I continue to fight for what we need in that program, which was a wonderful piece of advice. As for instructional leadership, I guess you could say I was a data guru.

Principal A4 reported having to provide a framework and focus for the teachers, particularly in the area of assessment.

A4: Creating frameworks for them to follow. Providing structure, not just for the kids, but for the adults. That's probably the biggest and most important thing that I can do is provide a framework. Determine limits, how far they are allowed to let things go or how tightly they should be pulling. What needs assessed or what doesn't. What the reaction of the assessment is. Staffings. We have supervisor meetings because we have a new

challenge because we have middle school and high school together. So we have different administrators. We have high school administration, and we have the middle school administration. So, that is my central office duty is to coordinate.

Question One: Describe your practices as an instructional leader in your school/program. What do you believe to be important while serving in this capacity?

Traditional school principals' responses:

T1 reported that the current trend in T1's district is to create "manufactured learning" that diminishes the personality and preparation of the teacher. T1 opposed this trend.

T1: Overbearing! For me the most important thing is the knowledge base, the personality, and preparation of the teacher. Anybody that knows me knows that I don't believe in manufactured learning, and unfortunately that is the direction the school district I work for is headed.

T2 reported a belief that it is the administrator's responsibility to be the "lead teacher" in the building. Through structured discussions with faculty, T1 reports being able to lend whatever knowledge is appropriate for learning.

T2: Well, what the principal does as the lead teacher, we're all teachers at heart. I think we should be abreast of all the current trends in education. You know, for example, in this district differentiation it is UBD. The three of us lead the professional learning communities every Thursday where we talk about various topics: cell phones, to

instruction, to differentiation, to relationships, to classroom management. So, we're always at the forefront of bringing new ideas to people by being in the classroom, giving suggestions, and giving kudos. But, really what it boils down to is we're the lead teachers in the building.

T3 reported the improbability of being able to be an authority in all content areas. However, T3 believes that it is important to attend to the needs of teachers, and the role of instructional leadership was trusting the instructional staff and attending to their needs.

T3: I think that's where certain leadership comes into play the most. I don't know a lot about science. I don't know a lot about a lot of things. I couldn't teach a lot of these subjects without a heck of a lot of preparation. So what you have to do is make sure you listen to your folks, find out what is bothering them and what they need. And do your best to make sure they have what they need and trust in their professionalism that they can get the job done with what you have given them. And then monitor to make sure they are doing it. And that's all you really can do unless you are some sort of genius who knows everything about every subject. You just have to be that person that they can go to when they have a problem or a need. And then you work to solve that problem while they are in there teaching without compromising their ability to teach.

T4 emphasized the importance of teacher evaluation in T4's role as instructional leader. T4 also believed that evaluating various data from different subject areas is important as well.

T4: Yes, I think doing formal observations and evaluations are important. Although I think sometimes that is a forced situation which is why I do think it is very important to be out and about walking the building. Even just going into the classroom for five or ten minutes unannounced. Because that's where you really see what teachers are like. I definitely think that especially in my school this year, looking at the data in some of the areas where you have kids who are highly proficient in one area. And then looking at reading and then they are doing terrible in writing, you have to wonder if it is the teacher in their instruction. I think it is important when grades come out look to see how many kids are failing in each teacher's class.

Question Two: What is your opinion of the current emphasis on data collection for school administrators?

Alternative education principals' responses:

A1 reported that data are useful in helping to justify the alternative education experience to the referring school. A1 sees this as different from how traditional schools would utilize various data results.

A1: I can only really speak to it from an AEP provider standpoint. For us to maintain our programs, data is critical. For me to be able to say to a school "you brought this student to me, this was their percentage of attendance at your school, this is what their percentage of attendance is now, this is what their grade point average is and this is why it changed." This is what we did. Here are some things that worked. For us to maintain our programs we have to show that we are doing what we say we are doing. We have

data behind it, or else we won't get funding. It is a little bit different than the traditional school setting. A2 described a belief in useful data.

A2: I just think there are times, and it seems to be at least in our district, under our former leader. He needed all kinds of data to make even the simplest decision and it just bogged you down. I mean, I'd go to the Superintendent, and I'd say we need another bus since we are overcrowded on this bus. He wanted to know how many numbers, what time they arrived, what is this, what is that. Just the simplest things that to the rest of us seemed so obvious that you get so bogged down with all of that. The important thing is that we are able to take the data and turn it into information. That's the important thing. You know, data rich, information poor. But I understand the importance of it, appreciate it, it's absolutely needed. I forget where I was and I walked into a principal's office and a sign behind him said, "In God we trust, all others bring data."

Principal A3 reported data use outside of instruction, including tracking attendance and documenting phone calls made to parents.

A3: I was a data guru in the fact that before we had a school wide system to track students, I had started a file maker which would allow me to have my teachers all on the same page to track students and better communicate. It's a data resource system and once you put data in, it's automatically saved. So looking at that, the strongest was the fact that teachers could do attendance and I would know immediately. We did personal phone calls to parents. But instructional leader wise looking at academics, it was important that we were doing the same things that the kids were getting at regular schools. Think of alternative ed. And the biggest complaint was that the kids come back

and there lost. Well you know what? They may still be lost. But I also can track, because we have individual tracking forms on every kid and again this is before IC came in and we still use it because IC doesn't do what we need it to do. But we track their Foresight scores. We break them down by anchors, and we look at what we're getting there. Our goal this year, we have been trying for 2 years, but our goal this year was really getting this data in the kids' hands so they could form their own goals.

Principal A4 did not offer specifics regarding A4's use of data other than to state it was important.

A4: Can't exist without it. It's not something you want, it's something you need. That's how you base decisions.

Question Two: What is your opinion of the current emphasis on data collection for school administrators?

Traditional school principals' responses:

T1 responded that the overemphasis on data has resulted in the neglect of the more humanistic side to working with children.

T1: It has its place but we have gone overboard with the data bullshit. Everybody falls for the jargon-data driven, digitize and all that happy horseshit. But we're forgetting about that little human being in front of us, and sometimes the data doesn't speak to the needs of the little child who perhaps has that mental health issue. What's the data gonna tell me about that? At this point the administrators that buy into it and, actually it's your

generation, they should evaluate the size of their ass because all they do is sit in front of the computer.

T2 reported that his building is good at collecting data. However, T2 reported skepticism over the actual use of the data as important.

T2: I think data are good to collect, but collecting data just for collection's sake is a waste of time. You have to take that next step, what are you going to do with it. I think in this building we are good at collecting data and putting graphs and charts together it looks all good. A good dog and pony show, but taking that next step, ok how are you going to use that data to really affect instruction? We sort of say we do it, but if I sat down say with all of our Math teachers and say how are you guys going to use that data to change the way you do things? I don't think it really transfers over to that.

T3 responded with a concern about testing too frequently that resulted in a compromise of instructional time.

T3: I think we are starting to over test. From what I hear from the elementary folks, I think we are testing too much. I think you can test too much. You can become overwhelmed with too much data. And the more you test, the less instruction there is. I think we are pretty good at the middle schools. I don't mind three Scantrons a year. I think that is pretty good. I don't know what else is out there that would be better than Scantrons. That kind of stuff. I just kind of take what they give me. But with a lot of these reading assessments that I hear going on all the time in elementary schools. They are

constantly being assessed and assessed and assessed. There has to be a point where it becomes too much.

T4 stated that an emphasis on data is a better practice than "gut decisions". The emphasis on data collection, according to A4, allowed for elimination of generalities and emphasizes specifics.

T4: It is important because I think that often times in the past we made a decision based on our gut. And it's like, the gut reaction or gut decision can be good in certain situations. But I also think that it can also lead to a lot of excuses as to why things are happening or why they don't happen. You can make a lot of generalities; well it's junior high, they're in seventh grade, they're in the big school now. But you have to look at the data and try to make them understand that why can the school district next to us that has seventh grade, why are their scores good and ours aren't? You have to look at the data, I think as administrators. We all know that is important and we look at that. As a young administrator, that was something that whole data decision making came out when I was starting my principal thing. So that was the basis for everything that we did.

Question Three: What have been the barriers to facilitating academic success for all students? Alternative education principals' responses.

A1 reported that one of the challenges in AEDY is to create academic integrity in the program that mirrors what the students would have achieved in the referring schools.

A1: We are accountable to all different counties across the state of Pennsylvania. I really am pushing so that people view grades from residential, AEP and the alternative type of school as just as valuable as the traditional school setting. Working as a guidance

counselor and seeing grades from other facilities, I didn't know what they really did in the math class. A lot of credits didn't count for anything. So I am really trying to add some credibility to our program.

A2 reported that attendance is a challenge in facilitating academic success. A second challenge comes from differences in perception of education based on race. Finally, A2 reported that for the majority of A2's students, there is not a strong support base at home.

A2: I think the biggest barriers are when they aren't with us; poor attendance, what they do before and after school, and negative influences in the neighborhood. Being in that situation and hearing the kids say, "Quit acting like a white man, quit studying like a white man." Trying to pull them down. For a lot of our kids, they do not have the typical situation where they go home and have dinner, talk about things with mom and dad, do their homework, have a nice bed to sleep in, and get up the next morning for breakfast.

A3 stated that while the teachers know where the students are academically, it is important for the students to be able to track and develop their own learning goals as well.

A3: We know where the kids are at academically, and the teachers have it so they know what areas they need to be working on. But the kids didn't have it, so the challenge is how do we get it into their hands cause research is telling you that the students need to be establishing their own goals? They need to be looking at where they're at. Rubric wise knowing what their performance levels are is big. So this year, we dabbled with it last year, but this year there's a huge project going on with it. We will review it and see how

it goes, and then they will tweak it and make it more kid friendly or whatever they need to do.

A4 described the difficulty in transitioning students back to their home school and the challenge of changing student and parent perceptions of the home school.

A4: The parental component, that's been difficult. Most folks are disengaged with the school system at that point. Trying to return them back to seeing that the school is not out to get them. In other programs, I'm working with is the student assistance side, having the proper student assistance program in place. A lot of kids are misplaced in alt ed in my opinion then having the support to be able to give them upon their return.

Question Three: What have been the barriers to facilitating academic success for all students?

Traditional school principals' responses:

T1 reported that time the biggest barrier to facilitating academic success. T1 elaborated to say that instructional time, in-service time, and common planning time for teachers is currently insufficient.

T1: Probably time, but let me explain what I mean by time. When I came into this district, we probably had the most limited amount of in-service days of any school district I've been in and I would venture to say across the United States. And the killer is, the teachers want the time to work together. And I have said to them, "I can't change your contract; you as a union have to agree. Open up that contract and don't just go for the bucks." They know we need time together. Their school day is probably the shortest in the whole of the United States. We start at 8:20 and the kids are dismissed 2:30. There's

the alleged common planning time which if from 2:30 to 3:10 which is so untrue because the teachers are always working with the children. And so thru no fault of their own, they have common planning time. They're just working with the kid which is so good that they are so student oriented.

T2 stated that there is a great deal of frustration dealing with a small percentage of the school population that is unmotivated but takes a great deal of T2's time.

T2: It's that 3% that you deal with all the time. The students that are unmotivated that come to school with issues, the baggage. In a classroom with 30 kids, all it takes is one kid to halt production. So, it's really that 3 % of kid that comes with all the baggage that you are dealing with. Of course, they are out in the population. They are the ones that are creating the issues.

T3 described the difficulty in prioritizing how to allocate funds appropriately to the instructional staff to provide instructional success for all students.

T3: I think budget stuff. You want to give everyone what they want, but when it comes down to it, you have to make decisions. You have to prioritize because you can't buy everything you want. Sometimes people want things that are ridiculous. You have to tell them, "No, I don't think that is worth it. I understand that you are the professional in the classroom and you may know more about that subject than me, but come on, that seems ridiculous."

Principal T4 described the biggest barrier to academic success as being the inflexibility of teachers to modify and adjust curricular and instruction practices that have been in place a long time.

T4: Well, I think some of the barriers are exactly what I just said. It is that those teachers that have the binders that they use the same thing every single year. They don't change it up. Because they are not basing it on what the kids need. So, they are basing it on, "This is what I want to teach. This is how I'm going to teach it." This is the lesson for that. I mean I think there is value in saying this. For instance, there is a teacher in my building; she uses the same power point every year when she teaches this certain topic. But at the end of the power point, what she does is, she'll use one last slide where she will evaluate herself on how it went. Next year I will remember the kids really didn't get this or add this into the slide. I don't think teachers have to reinvent the wheel every year and do something different every year. But you have to look at the kid's needs and what the kids understand and don't understand. Every group of kids is going to have a different dynamic. I think that the struggle is the inflexible teacher that cares more about the curriculum and what they are teaching than what the student needs.

Question Four: How would you describe your training or university principal preparation for this aspect of school leadership?

Alternative education principal's responses:

A1 stated that there was not a good response for that. A1 also reported minimal preparation.

A1: I really don't have a good answer for that. No, there wasn't a lot course work for that.

A2 reported that when A2 went through principal preparation, there was no discussion of anything related to instruction. A2 reported that in-service and continual learning staff development have provided the knowledge of the principal in the role of instructional leader.

A2: Back then, they didn't push it. When I was going through school, and that was before NCLB, back then the emphasis was running a good building, keeping things in order, maintaining discipline, rapport with parents and school board, working with union officials, custodians, some budgeting. But it was that type of day-to-day, nuts and bolts operation stuff of the building that was stressed. Back then, I never heard the term instructional leader. Fortunately, our district has done a pretty good job keeping us up-to-date, providing us with professional development, and resources and that sort of thing. I really have to hand it to them. So for any of us, even a dinosaur like me, there really is no excuse not to be abreast of those things and understand what is going on.

A3 indicated that there was a course in technology and only when standardized state testing (PSSA) became an issue, the school district began to embrace training for its principals.

A3: I took a computer class in my masters program. And without laughing too hard, it was on an old Mac 2E computer doing binary maps and looping programs. Other than that it was thru the school district with the advent of PSSA that we started looking at data. My first year as a principal, I couldn't find any data. So we had to project what we thought. I had to ask the teachers what they thought, and I started tracking the information. With the advent of PSSA, we had to be able to know were the kids were at.

We started tracking the information and at that point in time it was just 5th graders being tested with 3rd graders doing field test. So it's been numerous years, and I'm going to say that the district has moved a long way in training us and also providing a warehouse for this information. So by providing that warehouse we have our hands on it more readily.

A4 stated that the training for a role as an instructional leader was "proper", but did not emphasize students with exceptionalities. A4 also mentioned the training at the graduate level prior to achieving principal certification.

A4: For 85-90% of the kids it was proper for that, it did not look at the exceptionalities. On either end of the spectrum in my opinion, I don't think they put a major emphasis on gifted instruction. But they also didn't put any on behavioral. Very limited, you know. The amount of special ed that I had previously is quite beneficial, but it wasn't a requirement of my course work. I already had a master's in special ed before I became an administrator, post master's in school psyche. So I understood school law regarding the positive practices.

Question Four: How would you describe your training or university principal preparation for this aspect of school leadership?

Traditional school principals' responses.

T1 stated that there was a percentage of the coursework that was beneficial, but the influence and guidance of a mentor was more instrumental in preparation for the job. T1 also reported that formalized principal preparation programs do not adequately

prepare one for the relationship component that emphasizes the importance of rapport with all stakeholders.

T1: My undergraduate work, when I went into teaching, the undergraduate worked helped. As a graduate student going into administration, I had a wonderful mentor and advisor. So if I ran into obstacles, I could count on him. It was very, um, of the stuff I learned in graduate work, maybe 30% of it helped me prepare for the job. When I look back on it, and I always tell you this, they can never prepare you for the relationship part of the job. And I think establishing relationships for me if probably 75% of the work you do as an administrator because you have to establish with the teachers, upper administration, the parents, and the students. And they all have different demands in that time management and organizational skills are probably the three big items. I had a background. I took some course in Total Quality Management which was a much bigger help to me than what is going on these days.

T2 described the principal preparation process as "lacking" and too scattered to devote significant time to one topic.

T2: Principal preparation was probably lacking there. I look at the principal preparation as it was just paper thin coverage of 100 topics. You never delved deeply in just one topic.

T3's responded that he couldn't recall any training for preparing principals for a role instructional leadership.

T3: I don't recall any training for instructional leadership.

T4 stated that there was significant emphasis on data in relation to being an instructional leader. T4 indicated that a stronger background in observation and evaluating strong components of a lesson would have been more beneficial.

T4: I definitely think that was a big emphasis when I was going through my degree and getting my masters in leadership. I definitely think that, I guess the thing that it lacked, you know there was always that decision based on data, based on data, based on data. The thing that I don't know that they did was say, "Ok, let's look at science. What is good teaching in science? What is good teaching in math?" You just kind of had to know that and you had to say I can look at the data. And I can look at the numbers and say, "Well clearly the kids aren't getting something or are getting them." But when I go into a classroom and I want to observe a science lesson or I want to observe history lesson I ask what component makes for a good lesson? I think that comes more from experience then from what I ever learned. I mean, that would have been something that was really valuable to me.

Chapter Five

Summary

Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth (AEDY) is difficult to define due to its lack of a clear, consistent description and its confounding history. From its primary origins in the 1960s as experimental programs to its current philosophy and design for serving defiant and disruptive youth, AEDY programs have expanded greatly. In Pennsylvania, AEDY programs are designed to serve students who are persistently and severely disruptive to the school environment. The number of programs nationwide and in Pennsylvania has risen in the last decade (Education Law Center-Pennsylvania, 2010). Often times, the individuals who oversee such programs are certified school principals. However, there is very little formalized leadership research on AEDY in the current school leadership research literature. A more comprehensive analysis of the beliefs and practices that AEDY principals engage in will reduce this research gap in understanding AEDY's leadership complexity.

In an effort to understand and conceptualize AEDY leadership, this study examined the beliefs and practices of AEDY principals in comparison to the beliefs and practices of traditional school principals. Five leadership domains were taken from the current research literature of alternative education and the research literature of school administration served as the areas by which AEDY principals' and traditional school principals' beliefs and practices were assessed. The leadership domains examined were special education, mental health knowledge and service, servant leadership, social justice, and instructional leadership. The research questions for each domain are as follows:

6. What are the leadership practices and beliefs of AEDY principals with regard to servant leadership?
7. What are the leadership practices and beliefs of special education knowledge and delivery of service of AEDY principals?
8. What are the leadership practices and beliefs of AEDY principals in the area of mental health knowledge and delivery?
9. What are the leadership practices and beliefs of AEDY principals in areas of social justice?
10. What are the leadership practices and beliefs of AEDY principals in the area of instructional leadership?

Despite the proliferation and of AEDY programs, there is inadequate formalized research devoted to AEDY leadership. This is due in part to the diverse historical progression of AEDY programs. In the early 1960s, programs that were labeled alternative were not designed to serve disruptive youth, but rather to challenge the *status quo* of existing school philosophies through innovation and idealism (Raywid, 1981). Such programs did not last due to mismanagement or financial difficulty (Kim & Taylor, 2008). In the 1970's programs that were labeled as alternative education served students who were generally not succeeding in the regular school environment. During the 1980's, due primarily to shifts in political ideology and research that suggested that student achievement in programs labeled as alternative education were not meeting learning standards, alternative education evolved into serving students who were defiant and disruptive. Raywid's work in the 1990's of classifying alternative education into distinct

categories helped in creating alternative education to its present form of serving defiant and disruptive youth. In Pennsylvania, there are currently 614 programs that are designated as Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth. Yet for such a number of programs and students placed in such programs, there is insufficient research on AEDY leadership, program characteristics, and program effectiveness.

The purpose of this research was to examine the practices and beliefs of AEDY principals. By generating a comparison between alternative education principals and traditional school principals, a distinguishing conceptualization of alternative education leadership resulted. Five domains of leadership were examined in this study: servant leadership, special education, mental health, social justice, and instructional leadership. These domains were selected because of their recurrence in alternative education literature and the current school leadership literature. The domains of leadership are not isolated facets of leadership, but rather components that combine to form a more complete picture of AEDY leadership.

The primary data collection method for this qualitative study was the standardized open-ended interview. Four AEDY principals and four traditional school principals from northwestern Pennsylvania were asked a series of questions in a standardized open-ended interview format. For both groups, four similar responses out of a possible four were coded as unanimous agreement. Three similar responses out of four were coded as having strong agreement. If there were two similar responses out of four, they were coded as some agreement. One similar response of four was coded as little agreement. Finally, no similar responses among the four were coded as no agreement.

Conclusions

Overall, differences were found in the practices of alternative education principals compared with those of traditional school principals. However, there were similarities found in the beliefs of alternative education principals compared with traditional school principals. The comments below address what have been determined to be the most salient features of AEDY leadership.

Domain One: Servant Leadership

Question One: Using Greenleaf's definition of placing the needs of others before your own, to what degree does stewardship and servant leadership lay a role in your leadership style? Why do you believe this to be or not to be important?

There was strong agreement among the alternative education principals that servant leadership was important to their administrative philosophy. They reported that putting the needs of others ahead of their own was important. Traditional school principals had some level of agreement as only one did not recognize servant leadership as part of his administrative belief system.

The majority of alternative education and traditional school principals' beliefs supported a high degree of stewardship in their leadership style. The majority believed that servant leadership was important to their administrative belief system. Only one principal believed that stewardship and servant leadership were not important.

Question Two: What practices do you undertake to create and enhance a positive school climate?

There was little agreement among the alternative principal practices in creating and enhancing a positive school climate. Two principals cited practices relative to alternative education: creating a strong parallel curriculum to the home school and utilizing students' level progress to enhance school climate. The other two principals described a team approach as being important to creating a positive school climate and the emphasis of fundamental respect issues as establishing a positive school climate. There was no agreement among the traditional school principals as to their practices in school climate. Their descriptions ranged from the pains that budget cuts have caused and visibility in the building to working with teachers to create student-centered learning environments and managing staff to think globally.

There was no agreement between the two groups in describing their practices to create and enhance a positive school climate. They unanimously reported that a positive school climate was important to their leadership.

Question Three: What have been the barriers to creating a positive school climate? How did you handle those barriers?

There was some agreement among the alternative education principals that their teachers were often a barrier, as they were reluctant at times to embrace new concepts or a departure from traditional ways of doing things. Two cited either no barriers were present or that continual staffing changes were a barrier to creating a positive school

climate. The traditional school principals cited budgetary cutbacks, overall energy required to manage the building, maintaining a good reputation, and instilling leadership to the teachers as barriers.

There was little agreement in the responses from either group. They described a wide range of barriers and practices in creating a positive school climate.

Question Four: Do you believe that school climate affects student achievement? How?

There was strong agreement among the alternative school principals that school climate affected achievement. However, there was variation as to what issues affected the school climate. Responses included safety of the building and students, attendance, the results of students' achieving for the first time, and behavior models being utilized. The traditional school principals had strong agreement regarding school climate affecting student achievement. Like the alternative education principals, there responses varied as to what issues as to how the school climate affected achievement. Responses included internal changes to the building, feeling of safety, school spirit, and the role of teachers in affecting school climate.

There was strong agreement between the two groups' beliefs that school climate affects student achievement. There was little agreement as to how the school climate affects student achievement.

Domain Two: Special Education. What are the practices and beliefs of special education knowledge and delivery of service of AEDY principals compared to traditional school principals?

Question One: How does the presence of special education students affect your leadership in your building?

There was strong belief among the alternative education principals that the presence of special education students in their programs did not have much of an impact on their leadership. They were unanimous in their responses that the only leadership impact was the importance of specialized knowledge required in cases that involved special education students and disciplinary infractions. The traditional school principals had little agreement regarding the impact of special education students on their leadership. Two principals reported that special education students impacted them in the area of time devoted to special education students. One principal reported that it enhanced collaboration among the staff. One principal described the importance of special education student scheduling to maximize their learning efforts and production on standardized state testing.

Both groups of principals reported that the presence of special education students had little effect on their leadership. The only belief areas that affected leadership were discipline and the special education student, amount of time devoted to special education students, the importance of collaboration of regular education and special education

teachers, and the impact of appropriate scheduling to ensure maximum performance as a subgroup on state standardized testing.

Question Two: What do you believe have been the rewards of working with IEP students? What are the challenges?

Alternative education principals reported no difference in their beliefs regarding the rewards of working with special education students compared with regular education students. They believed that celebrating their successes and achievements were the same as celebrating successes and achievements of regular education students. The alternative education principals stated that the challenges were ensuring individualized IEPs, the restriction of a 45 day-only placement, orientating faculty to student disabilities, or no challenge at all. The traditional school principals had little agreement in their description of the rewards. They described the rewards as getting to know parents better, watching students grow academically, reaching their potential, and doing well on a daily basis. There was little agreement in the challenges. Two of the responses included understanding discipline and motivating students. Two principals reported that the challenge of working with special education students was ensuring that they made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on the state standardized tests.

There was little difference between the two principal groups regarding their beliefs of the rewards and challenges of working with special education students. There was only a slight difference between the two as two of the traditional school principals were concerned with special education students as a testing subgroup.

Question Three: Using Ryan's (2006) definition of inclusion as "A collective process oriented philosophy that includes all students and ensures fair representation." What have been your practices in creating inclusive learning environments?

The alternative education principals reported some agreement that their inclusion practices were based on alternative education program characteristics. These characteristics included small class size, adherence to emerging regulations, and the social skills curriculum. One principal reported the importance of creating a similar curriculum experience. The traditional school principals had some agreement in their responses. The four traditional school principals had strong agreement about the interaction of their faculty with special education students and regular education students in creating an inclusive environment.

There was some difference in the practices between the two groups. Alternative education principals reported more concern with programmatic characteristics and their benefit to including all students. By contrast, traditional school principals were more concerned with their faculty in terms of relationships, collaborative learning, and creating different perceptions and expectations in working with students.

Question Four: Describe your training or university preparation as an administrator for dealing with special education students.

Alternative education principals had little agreement in their training as a principal for working with special education students. Two reported the influence of

mentors, while the other two reported little or no training in their respective preparation programs. Traditional school principals reported strong agreement in their lack of training with only one principal citing the benefits of an advance degree in counseling as the only formalized learning experience.

There was strong agreement between the two groups in their beliefs that their principal preparation programs were insufficient in their training in the area of special education. The only difference was that some of the alternative education principals had the benefit of mentors in this area.

Domain Three: Mental Health knowledge and delivery of services

Question One: Describe your role and practice as an administrator in delivery of mental health services to support students.

There was some agreement among the alternative education principals that connection of students to the proper service providers was their primary role. One principal stated that experience as a certified mental health counselor provided an advantage in the practice in serving students' mental health needs. There was strong agreement from the traditional school principals that their role and practice was primarily to refer students to the appropriate mental health personnel.

There was strong agreement between the two groups that their role was primarily to facilitate the connection between students and mental health personnel. There was only

one principal that described a more active role in assisting students based on her mental health training.

Question Two: What have been your practices in the building in the area of mental health with students?

The alternative education principals had strong agreement that their practices were essentially referring students with mental health issues to either the student assistance program or directly to a mental health specialist. There was strong agreement from the traditional school principals that their primary role was facilitating students to the appropriate mental health agency or counselor.

Both groups of principals had strong agreement when asked to describe the practice of facilitating the students' needs to the appropriate mental health provider or agency. Both groups reported the importance of having such supports as essential to facilitating potential student successes.

Question Three: What do you believe to be the challenges that students with mental health issues present to your school/program? What is your role in those challenges? Why?

There was no agreement among alternative education principals as to the challenges that students mental health presented to their programs. Responses ranged from understanding medication and the perception of students being over-diagnosed with mental health issues to the complexities of mental health issues and difficulty of home supports due to geographic location.

The traditional school principals had strong agreement that the challenges were the students themselves. There was also strong agreement that another challenge was that the teachers often do not have a strong understanding of the mental health issues that these students present.

There was some difference between the two groups' beliefs concerning the challenges that students with mental health issues present. Traditional school principals reported some agreement with some of the alternative principals that the students themselves presented the challenge. However, the traditional school principals were uniform in their concern that they had with students with mental health issues and how their interaction with the faculty occurred.

Question Four: Describe your training or university principal preparation in the areas of mental health.

The alternative education principals reported some agreement that their principal preparation program minimally trained them in the area of student mental health issues. One principal reported some degree of training. The traditional school principals were in strong agreement that their training in the principal preparation program was non-existent.

Both groups had strong agreement that their principal preparation programs had little or no training in the area of mental health. Only one of the eight reported to have had any level of education in this area.

Domain Four: Social Justice

Question One: Do you believe that your school presents equitable opportunities for all students? Is this important? Why or why not?

There was strong agreement among the alternative education principals' beliefs that equity for students was important. Two reported the importance of equity in terms of curriculum access while the other two reported that students accepting each other and providing them a voice in the school were their most important equity issues. There was strong agreement among traditional school principals concerning equity for students. Two described external factors that contributed to inequity outside of school. One reported the importance of students having a voice while the remaining principal thought that equity practices were ensured due to a lack of minority students.

There was strong agreement between the two groups' beliefs regarding the importance of equity for all students. The alternative education principals and the traditional school principals had minor differences in their responses, but were in the support of equity for all students.

Question Two: Describe your practices in working with traditionally marginalized groups of students.

The alternative education principals had no agreement among their practices with minority groups of students. Their responses included the practice of building relationships, coordinating assistance with outside agencies, monitoring statistics of incoming students in terms of marginalized groups, and utilizing the student assistance

program to assist with marginalized groups. The traditional education principals also had no agreement in their practices. Their practices ranged from developing specific student programs and using professional learning communities to establishing trust and monitoring state test progress.

There was no agreement between the two groups in practices working with traditionally marginalized groups. The majority of principals described how practices of equity were specific to their respective building or program.

Question Three: What do you believe to be the challenges (if any) in leading schools in terms of providing equity to all students?

There was some agreement among the alternative principals in describing the challenges of providing equity to all students. They reported that getting the staff to recognize the importance of providing equity was a significant challenge. One administrator reported that her own background enhanced her level of awareness in overcoming challenges. There was also some agreement from the traditional school principals in reporting that getting teachers to embrace a more equity based philosophy was the primary challenge. One principal cited external factors outside the school create the biggest obstacle to creating equity for all students.

There was little difference between the two groups in their beliefs of the challenges of providing equity in their school or program. The majority of principals responded that the primary challenge was creating a shift in their teachers' thinking to embrace what they believed to be the merits of equity.

Question Four: Describe your training and principal preparation in dealing with diverse school populations.

The alternative education principals had strong agreement that their principal preparation program was insufficient in the preparing them to work with diverse populations. Two of the principals described the importance of mentors, while the other two answers ranged from minimal preparation to no preparation at all. The traditional school principals had strong agreement that their principal preparation program in dealing with diversity was non-existent.

There was no difference between the two groups' beliefs relative to their experiences at the university level in terms of diversity. Both groups reported that their training was poor or non-existent.

Domain Five: Instructional Leadership

Question One: Describe your practices as an instructional leader in your school/program. What do you believe to be important while serving in this capacity?

There was no agreement among the alternative education principals in their reported practices as instructional leaders. The responses were based in supervision of teachers, emphasizing education to the students, acting as a change agent, and providing structure to staff and students. There was no agreement in the responses provided by

traditional school principals either. The responses were based on handling perceived manufactured curriculum, acting as the lead teacher, providing supports to teachers, and observation of teachers.

There were strong differences in the practices between the two groups in instructional leadership. Both groups had a wide range as to their leadership practices in this area.

Question Two: What is your opinion of the current emphasis on data collection for school administrators?

The alternative education principals reported a strong belief in data collection. The differences were in the attainment of the data, but all four believed that data collection was important. The traditional school principals had strong agreement that data collection was a good practice. However, three reported caution not to overemphasize data or the collection of data just for collection's sake.

There was some agreement between the two groups' beliefs that data collection is part of their leadership philosophy. Traditional school principals reported more concerns with an overemphasis on the practice of collecting data

Question Three: What have been the barriers to facilitating academic success for all students?

There was no agreement among the alternative school principals as to the barriers in facilitating student academic success. Responses included establishing program

credibility, the students' negative experiences, needing to have student develop more ownership in learning, and the difficulty in student transition to their home school. There was also no agreement among traditional school principals. Their responses included time constraints, unmotivated students, budget concerns, and teachers being resistant to change.

There were no similarities in the beliefs of the barriers to facilitating student academic success between the two groups. Each group responded with different barriers.

Question Four: How would you describe your training or university principal preparation for this aspect of school leadership?

There was some agreement among alternative education principals regarding their training as instructional leaders in their principal preparation programs. Three principals indicated little or no training, while one reported some degree of training was proper but should have included more regarding students with exceptionalities. There was some agreement among traditional school principals. Three reported little or no training in their programs. Only one principal emphasized training in this area.

There was little difference in how the two groups viewed instructional leadership in their principal preparation programs. Only two principals reported sufficient training in this area.

Discussion

There are currently no studies in the research literature that compare alternative education principals' beliefs and practices with traditional school principals' beliefs and practices. There is research that supports leadership being viewed by examining a leaders' belief system and beliefs about education. Each of the leadership domains created for this research came from the literature as being relevant to today's school administrator.

Domain One: Servant Leadership

What are the leadership practices and beliefs of AEDY principals different or similar to those of their traditional school colleague in regard to servant leadership?

Greenleaf's (1970) assertion that the leader takes care of others' needs first is paramount to understanding how servant leadership operates. In addition, "principals who embrace their role as servant leader will focus on creating school settings in which people are working toward a shared vision and honoring collective commitments to self and others" (DuFour, 2001, as cited in Taylor et al., 2007, p. 402). There was strong agreement among the alternative education principals that servant leadership was inherent in their leadership belief system.

There is research to suggest that there is a correlation between servant leadership and school climate (Black, 2008; Cohen et al., 2009; Hoyle, 2002; Lambert, 2004; Miears, 2004). There was little agreement among the AEDY principals' reporting of their

practices in establishing a positive school climate. The practices ranged from creating team work and creating similar curriculum to emphasizing respect and using the level system.

Quinn et al. (2006) described in their research the importance in assessing alternative education program quality teachers and students who were open to new and innovative ways of doing things according to the scales of planning, action, and school climate. Three of the AEDY principals cited that their primary challenge was with their teachers. Half of the AEDY principals reported teachers' reluctance to embrace new thinking was a challenge to creating school climate. Half of the AEDY principals reported either no barrier or a constantly shifting teaching staff was a barrier.

Cohen et al. (2009) contend that there is "compelling empirical research that shows that a positive and sustained school climate promotes students' academic achievement and healthy development" (p. 45). The AEDY principals unanimously believed that their school climate affected student achievement. The issues that affect the school climate were reported differently to each program.

Domain Two: Special education

What are the practices and beliefs of special education knowledge and delivery of service of AEDY principals compared to traditional school principals?

Unruh et al. (2007) acknowledged hundreds of studies and projects to help special education students succeed in learning environments with their regular education peers. However, often overlooked is "the growing practice of placing students with disabilities –

often those with the most significant behavioral challenges-in alternative schools or programs outside of general education settings" (p. 1). This research concerned itself with the practices and beliefs of alternative education principals in working with special education populations.

Alternative education principals reported strong agreement in their belief that the presence of special education students did not have much impact on their leadership of their programs. AEDY principals were unanimous that having knowledge of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was an important practice in leading IEP students in an alternative education program in terms of discipline with special education students. The principals reported a belief that special education students did not receive any unique treatment or service than the regular education students in the program.

The AEDY principals believed that the rewards and challenges of working with IEP students were the same as working with regular education students. Contrary to the research of Lehr (2004), AEDY principals did not describe the quality or lack of appropriately certified personnel as a challenge. Rather, the AEDY principals reported that their challenges were concerned with students receiving appropriate IEPs and orientating staff to the students' individual needs. AEDY principals validated the finding of Bear, Quinn, and Burkholder (2001) who cited the importance of having a case-management approach to services and the assistance of on-site counseling services. The AEDY principals' reporting were consistent with the findings of DiPaola (2003) who found that AEDY programs are successful when there exists an "integrated system of

academic and social supports designed to help students with disabilities succeed within the least restrictive environments" (p. 5). Carpenter-Aeby (2005) also found that counseling and therapy were integral parts of successful programs. The AEDY principals believed this to be important as well. Despite the research that suggested that the number of special education students is increasing, this was not mentioned by any of the AEDY principals as a challenge or concern.

There was strong agreement among the AEDY principals that their principal preparation program did not adequately train them in the area of special education. Instead, some of the principals relied on the role of a mentor in helping them to gain knowledge in this area.

Domain Three: Mental Health knowledge and delivery of services.

What are the practices and beliefs of AEDY principals compared to traditional school principals in the area of mental health knowledge and delivery?

The number of students requiring mental health intervention services is on the rise. "According to the Surgeon General's Report on Mental Health (1999), an estimated one if five students will experience a mental health problem during the school years, with 11% experiencing a significant mental health impairment" (Colorado Department of Education, 2002, p. 5). It is widely acknowledged in AEDY research that behavioral and mental health services for students in alternative education can vary widely (Atkins et al., 2003; Carpenter-Aeby & Aeby, 2005: Hadderman, 2002; Sugai, 2003). This research

concerned itself with examining AEDY's principals beliefs and practices in the area of mental health.

AEDY principals strongly agree that that it was important in their role as principal of the program to help facilitate proper service attainment for their students. They also strongly agreed that the facilitation of services were a strong leadership practice in their program. Often times these services were mental health agencies, counseling from within the program, and case management. Their responses validated the work of Carpenter-Aeby et al. (2005) who found that counseling, therapy, group work, case management, and family-community involvement were credited as integral parts of effective AEDY programs.

Mental illness in adolescence is especially pertinent to leaders of AEDY programs. There is research that suggests that "rates of delinquency are higher among youth with certain types of emotional disorders— for example, depression or anxiety co-morbid with substance use disorders— and among youth with chronic and multiple disorders (seriously emotionally disturbed youth)." (Grisso, 2008, p. 143). This research was also concerned with the challenges that students with mental health issues presented to AEDY principals. There was no consensus in the reporting of their practices. Each response was unique as a practice, yet uniform in their response in their belief that the challenge centered on the student.

Domain Four: Social Justice

What are the practices and beliefs of AEDY principals in areas of social justice when compared to traditional school principals?

Theoharis (2007) stated that social justice leaders "make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision" (p. 223). This research examined the practices and beliefs of AEDY principals in leading groups of students who have been traditionally marginalized from the traditional school setting. Adding to the complexity of the issue of social justice is that alternative education students are excluded from their traditional school due to the nature of their placement in the program.

There was strong agreement among the AEDY principals' that equity for all of their students within the program was important. Half of the principals believed that the optimum way to ensure equity was for alternative education students to the same curriculum as other schools in their district. Half of the principals described the importance of providing them a voice in the school in providing equity. The practices of AEDY principals described four different practices in working with traditionally marginalized groups of students. Each practice emerged as a positive theme that has helped to facilitate student progress in the program. The identification of positive themes of the program is consistent with the research of Kim and Taylor (2008) that encouraged the use of identifying positive themes to lessen the negative perception of AEDY programs.

One of the greatest challenges facing AEDY programs is the stigma attached to them, thereby suggesting that they exist as "dumping grounds or warehouses for at-risk students who are falling behind, have behavior problems, or are juvenile delinquents" (Kim & Taylor, 2008, p. 207). The AEDY principals did not describe such a stigma of their program was a challenge. There was some agreement among them that their biggest challenge was orientating the staff to embrace a more equity-orientated approach in dealing with students. This reported challenge validates the work of Kim & Taylor (2008) that described deficit thinking that existed by some staff in working in an alternative education program.

There was strong agreement from the AEDY principals that their principal preparation program did not address social justice issues. They unanimously reported that there was no training in dealing with diverse populations.

Domain Five: Instructional Leadership

What are the practices and beliefs of instructional leadership of AEDY principals compared to traditional school principals?

AEDY programs are often "highlighted in the dropout literature because of the presence of several key characteristics commonly associated with alternative schools that 'answer' the call for schools to attend to the needs of students at risk" (Lange & Sletten, 2002, p. 10). The AEDY principals had no agreement as to their practices as instructional leaders. They described practices in supervising teachers, emphasizing education's importance to students, providing structure to staff, and acting as a change agent.

One of the most prevalent themes in educational administrative literature today is the focus on data collection. "Because of the uniqueness of alternative schools, it is important that teaching professionals and administrators stay abreast of best practices applicable to the students they serve" (Menendez, 2007, p. 19). This research concerned itself with identifying the beliefs of AEDY principals in the area of data collection. The AEDY were unanimous in their reporting of a strong belief as to the importance of data collection. There were some reported differences in how and what data were collected.

In order to ensure academic success, quality alternative education programs should "have many of the same high expectations, standards, and outcomes believed in more traditional school settings" (Leone and Drakeford, 1999, p. 86). Furthermore, part of the call for equity lies in ensuring that alternative education programs have access to academic resources that respond to higher standards and expectations in ways that support its mission and structure (Kraemer et al., 2001). As AEDY students traditionally have been largely identified as having academic concerns in addition to their behavior difficulties, this research identified barriers in the facilitation of academic success. There was no agreement among the AEDY principals as to what the barriers were in creating students' academic successes. The responses included establish strong program credibility, minimizing students' past negative experiences, having students develop more ownership of their learning, and being mindful of good transition practices.

There was some agreement among the AEDY principals that they were not sufficiently prepared as instructional leaders by their principal preparation program. Only

one principal believed that the principal preparation program dealt sufficiently with training as an instructional leader.

Theoretical recommendations

There needs to be more theoretical work developed and enhanced to include leaders of alternative educational programs. Theories of educational leadership abound in the literature, but few focus or make mention of the work in relation to administrators of AEDY programs. Including alternative education in theory work would add to the dimensions of this area of leadership. There is a need in the literature to have a more theoretical model of AEDY leadership developed. An examination of the influence of the context of why the practices of AEDY principals differ from traditional school principals is needed. An examination of the influence of the context of why the practices of AEDY principals differ from those of traditional school principals is needed.

Research recommendations

There is a demonstrated need for more research that focuses on the role of the principal of AEDY programs. While there is research in the literature that focuses on the programs themselves, the research is scare in focusing on the leaders of AEDY programs. Future research could include areas not addressed in this study, including the experiences of AEDY principals in relation to their experiences with other schools in their district, practices of reducing deficit thinking of AEDY programs, and measuring principal effectiveness for those who lead AEDY programs. In addition, further studies could

describe the leadership practices and beliefs beyond the five domains presented in this research. Further study could include a purposeful examination of the unique leadership practices of AEDY principals. Since this study consisted of the beliefs and practices of white male and female AEDY principals, there is a need for more study of the practices and beliefs of minority principals who oversee AEDY programs. A study with a methodology other than interviews to examine the beliefs and practices could be developed to include ethnography, survey, or quantitatively based studies that examine data sources and their interaction of AEDY principals.

Practice recommendations

This study recognized that there were deficits in principal preparation programs that indicate need to include more focus on the domains of leadership that were outlined in this study. Specifically, there needs to be more focus on the areas of special education, mental health knowledge and service delivery, and leadership for diverse school populations. Principal preparations programs could be enhanced to focus attention on practices that are unique to AEDY principals. Another practical implication recommendation is to have further interaction with at-risk population leaders to interact more strongly within the community to provide the leaders an opportunity to showcase the effectiveness and work being done in their programs. Professional development could address the practices that were found unique to AEDY principals. More structured formalized leadership learning opportunities unique to AEDY need to be created and sustained.

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February 19, 2012

Dr. Robert Beebe, Principal Investigator
Mr. Timothy Stoops, Co-investigator
Department of Educational Foundations, Technology, Research, and Leadership
UNIVERSITY

RE: HSRC Protocol Number: 085-2012
Title: An Examination of the Beliefs and Practices of Alternative Education Principals

Dear Dr. Beebe and Mr. Stoops:

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed the abovementioned protocol and determined that it is exempt from full committee review based on a DHHS Category 3 exemption.

Any changes in your research activity should be promptly reported to the Institutional Review Board and may not be initiated without IRB approval except where necessary to eliminate hazard to human subjects. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects should also be promptly reported to the IRB.

The IRB would like to extend its best wishes to you in the conduct of this study.

Sincerely,

Peter J. Kasvinsky
Dean, School of Graduate Studies and Research
Research Compliance Officer

PJK/cc

c: Dr. Richard McEwing, Chair
Department of Educational Foundations, Research, Technology & Leadership

Servant Leadership

1. To what degree does stewardship and servant leadership (using Greenleaf's definition of placing the needs of others before your own) play a role in your leadership style? Why do you believe this to be or not to be important?
2. What practices do you undertake to create and enhance a positive school climate?
3. What have been the barriers to creating a positive school climate? How did you handle those barriers?
4. Do you believe that school climate affects student achievement? How?

Special education

1. How does the presence of special education students affect your leadership of your building/program?
2. What do you believe are the challenges in working with disabled students? What have been the rewards?
3. What have been your practices in creating inclusive learning environments? Inclusive learning environments defined as (Ryan, 2006): A collective process oriented philosophy that includes all and ensures fair representation.
4. Describe your training or university preparation for dealing with disabled students.

Mental Health

1. Describe your role as an administrator in delivery of mental health services to support students.
2. What have been your practices in the building in the areas of mental health with students?
3. What do you believe to be the challenges that students with mental health issues present to your school/program? What is your role in those challenges?
4. Describe your training or university preparation in the areas of mental health.

Social Justice

1. Do you believe that your school presents equitable opportunities for all students? Is this important? Why or why not?
2. Describe your practices in working with traditionally marginalized and underrepresented groups of students.
3. What are the challenges in leading schools in terms of providing equity for all students?
4. Describe your training as an administrator in dealing with diverse school populations.

Instructional Leadership

1. Describe your practices as an instructional leader in your school/program. What do you believe to be important while serving in this capacity?
2. What is your opinion of the current emphasis on data collection for school administrators?

3. What have been some barriers to facilitating academic success for all students?
4. Describe your training or university preparation for this aspect of school leadership.