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A STUDY OF COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN LOCAL ADMINISTRATORS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL AND NON-PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to develop a data base concerning the comparative effectiveness of communications practices used between directors of special education in Tennessee and "involved others" and to use this data base to construct a model for effective communication in Tennessee. The model developed may be used to improve the communication process and its products in the local special education programs of Tennessee.

Two questionnaires were developed and validated. One group of respondents consisted of all local directors of special education in Tennessee, and their questionnaire was designed to elicit their perceptions of communication within their programs. The second group represented 8 subgroups who are described in relation to the special education program as "involved others." The questionnaire administered to this group elicited their perceptions concerning communication in their special education programs and measured the extent of their knowledge of special education laws, regulations, and best practices.

An analysis of the responses of 78.01 percent of the former group and 52.63 percent of the latter produced the following major findings:

1. Both local special education directors and involved others in Tennessee prefer face-to-face personal discussions as the means of communicating special education information.

2. Personal discussions by telephone were chosen by both groups as the second most preferred communications procedure.

3. Small group meetings were the third most preferred communications procedure.

4. Teachers and principals also favored letters/memos, bulletins, and calendars as means by which the special education office may communicate some types of information, and most special education offices regularly use these printed forms of communication with principals and teachers.

5. Most of the involved others had little knowledge of special education laws, regulations, and best practices.

6. The central office directors of other programs had the most knowledge, school board chairpersons and parents had the least.

7. There was a signifcant relationship (at the .05 level) between the knowledge possessed by the involved others and communications effectiveness, attitudes, and levels of interaction.

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CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

I. Introduction

The success of any organization, regardless of its structure depends on the effective exchange of information within the organization. The effectiveness with which information is exchanged within a public school system may vary depending on the districts, schools, and participants involved. In part, this difference in communication effectiveness may be attributed to the communication-related policies and procedures of a school system, the structure of the system itself, and the characteristics of the people occupying the various positions in the system's hierarchy. It is possible that the degree of effectiveness of communication of specific individuals and groups within a system may have little or no effect upon the school system's operations. On the other hand, they may have substantial influence.

Past studies of communications effectiveness within organizations have examined a number of variables. For example, Houser and Waldart (1981) studied communication mode and load. Both Young and Emanuel (1977) and Licata and Hack (1980) studied informal versus formal modes of communication and found that the informal modes were

frequently more successful in solving organizational problems. Johnson and Licata (1983) attributed the success of informal communications networks to the order and stability of the school systems in which such networks have proved successful.

In examining communications flow, some researchers have produced conflicting findings and conclusions. Cuban (1984) provides support for the contention that top-down communication flow is most effective. Frank (1984), on the other hand, claims that, although the dominant flow of communication may be downward, interactive small-group communications are more effective.

White and Reavis (1981-82) found that school system personnel sometimes had difficulty communicating with those more than one level above or below them in the hierarchy because of perceived or real differences in knowledge levels or because of personality conflicts. The amount and complexity of the information transmitted was found by Lalor (1981) to be a possible inhibitor of communication effectiveness. Montgomery and Norton (1981) even found the genders of participants to be a significant variable in determining the success of communication efforts. Schaefer (1981) reported that the form in which information is presented is also a significant variable. The fact that so many different variables in the communication process have been identified as significant and that findings concerning

these variable have, at times, been contradictory leads one to the conclusion that more research is needed to identify the variables which have the most influence on the effectiveness of the communications process in educational organizations.

II. Statement of the Problem

Achieving effective communication is a challenge faced by all educational organizations. A particularly difficult situation exits, however, in regard to departments of special education. The implementation of complex federal and state laws concerning the education of the handicapped has resulted in a unique body of intricate rules, regulations, and procedures which must be enforced. Regular educators and the public are often unknowledgeable concerning these legal requirements, in spite of the fact that most of them have been in effect for over a decade. This lack of knowledge points to the existence of special problems of communication effectiveness in relation to departments of special education.

Evidence of the existence of problems relative to the enforcement of special education laws is provided by the large number of litigations between school systems and the parents of handicapped children. The prevalence of these litigations suggests that the exchange of information between local administrators of special education programs

and others who need to be knowledgeable about the needs and legal rights of handicapped students often has not been effectively accomplished. There is an apparent lack of knowledge on the part of others involved in implementing special education programs. These involved others include superintendents, school board chairpersons, other central office personnel, principals, special education teachers, other teachers, paraprofessionals working with handicapped students and parents of handicapped students.

Little research has been published concerning the communication effectiveness of directors of special education. Dependable data are needed concerning the communication practices which result in the most effective communication between the special education director and the involved others mentioned above. These data are needed to serve as a basis for developing a model of an effective communications process to be used between the director and the involved others.

III. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to develop a data base concerning the comparative effectiveness of various communications practices when they are used between directors of special education and involved others and to use this data base to construct a model for effective communication in this setting. The data base developed by

this study provided much-needed information which was not previously available concerning the communication procedures currently favored by special education directors in Tennessee and the relative effectiveness of those procedures. The model developed as a result of this study may be used to improve the communication process and the products of that process in the local special education programs of Tennessee. The specific objectives of this study were

1. To identify the communication practices used by local special education administrators in communicating special education information to involved others and vice versa,

2. To assess the effectiveness of each communication practice identified by measuring the quality of the resulting product,

3. To use the communications practices which were found to be most successful to develop a model for effective communication between directors of special education and involved others.

The specific questions to be answered by the study were

1. By what communication processes do special education directors and involved others exchange information?

2. Assuming that knowledge possessed is a product of the communication process, what level of knowledge do the

involved others have about special education laws, regulations, and best practices?

3. What elements would be included in an effective communication model for use by special education directors and others with whom they are involved in the implementation of the special education program?

IV. Definition of Terms

1. Communications: The exchange of information.

2. Communication Process: The actions or behaviors which transmit meaning from one individual or group to another.

3. Communication Product: Information which a respondent to the survey instrument used in this study has relative to special education as measured by a test of special education knowledge.

4. Involved Others: Any individual or group involved with the implementation of special education programs at the local level other than the director of special education, including the school board chairperson, superintendent, other central office program directors, principals, teachers, aides, and parents.

5. Local Education Agency (LEA): The basic administrative unit of a county or city which operates the public schools within its jurisdiction.

6. Special Education: "Specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents or guardians, to meet the unique needs of a handicapped child, including classroom instruction, instruction in physical education, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions." (Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual, Tennessee Department of Education, 1983).

7. Special Education Administrator: The director of special education and any other professional central office employee involved in the special education program.

8. Special Education Director: Any local school official recognized by the state education agency, the board of education, and the superintendent as being responsible for the management of a special education program and designated to be the recipient of communication from the state agency regarding the program.

V. Delimitations

1. The study was limited to Tennessee public school systems. Because of the requirements in the Public Acts of Tennessee, TCA 49-2912-2959 and TCA 49-1708, enacted in 1972 for the mandatory education of handicapped students, and because of the population from which the sample was drawn, the results obtained are applicable only to Tennessee and are not to be generalized throughout the entire nation.

2. The population surveyed was limited to the local special education directors and others involved in implementing special education programs at the local level. Because most special education activities are functions of unique federal and state laws, generalization to other educational programs may not be appropriate.

VI. Assumptions

In designing this study, the following assumptions were made:

1. Local administrators of special education programs and involved others are engaged in a cooperative endeavor which requires effective communication.

2. Effective communication between local special education administrators and involved others is essential to the successful planning, developing, and control of programs serving handicapped students.

3. Due to the similarities in the qualifications and responsibilities required of directors of special education in Tennessee, inferences may be made about local directors in all of the state's school systems based on the data collected in a portion of this group.

4. While LEAs may operate under various types of organizational structures, common characteristics do exist in the basic functions of local special education programs.

5. The questionnaire method facilitated the collection of data sufficient in quantity and quality to satisfy the purposes of the study.

6. The special education test of knowledge adequately measured the level of knowledge of the involved others.

VII. Organization of the Study

This study is reported in the following chapter format: Chapter I, Overview of the Study; Chapter II, Review of Related Literature; Chapter III, Methodology; Chapter IV, Presentation of Data; and Chapter V, Summary, Results, Conclusions, and Recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

I. Introduction

This review of literature includes background information on communications among school agencies, a study of interorganizational relationships, communication systems in education, and communication processes. It concludes with information on communications between local administrators of special education programs and other personnel responsible for implementing the special education program at the local level.

The communications processes used in any organization may influence the directions taken by the organization as a whole and specifically in its relationships among its personnel. Certain communications processes may be applicable to a small number of organizations and inapplicable to others. The best communications processes, however, are always those which produce the best end results, or products, for an organization.

For a number of reasons, the communications procedures practiced by program administrators in education will differ. These differences may be attributable to the levels of experience and education attained by these administrators, to the level of financial resources

available, to the number of system-wide personnel involved in the communications process, or to a combination of these factors and others. Clearly, many factors influence the educational administrator's choice of communication processes. Brown (1981) states that access to information is power. Those who can control the access to and the understanding and interpretation of information will possess survival skills for the future in any organization.

II. Background Information on Communications Among School Personnel

Informal communications systems, or grapevines, can be used by school personnel to help in problem solving (Young and Emanuel, 1977). The ability to solve problems can be a viable function of a successful communications network. A successful, informal, information exchange system is characterized by the credibility of the grapevine leader. Not only is the credibility of the grapevine leader a key element, but the individual's manner and willingness to transmit the information is important.

According to Licata and Hack (1980), organizational life must be understood in terms of information groupings, beliefs and norms. These informal structures continuously interact with the formal organization. This distinction has been studied analytically, and a great deal of valuable information on organizational practices has been produced

and used. Early studies in this area attended to the subversive issues associated with organization communication, but recent studies have emphasized the value of informal communication strategies, indicating that both urgent problems and minor ones can be resolved through the use of such strategies. These informal procedures are frequently employed when the organization's formal structures appear to be too cumbersome to provide efficient channels of communication.

Circumventing the organization's formal chain of communication can be viewed as a structural feature of the organization's communication process. Licata and Hack referred to all informal information exchange methods as "the grapevine" structure and attempted to illustrate the ramifications of this structure among principals and others as they functioned within the educational organization.

The researchers collected their data by interviewing principals and staff personnel. An unstructured interview was used for this purpose. The interviewer was permitted to expand on and pursue further information about the respondent's answers to the questions constructed for the interview. Licata and Hack directed their attention to describing the informal communications network, the nature of the informal interactions among principals, and the ability of the principals to adapt to their prescribed

roles. In their discussion of their findings, they reported that the grapevine interaction might be considered a latent function of informal interaction because it is seldom recognized. They emphasized, however, that the grapevine structure can be used for problem-solving activities.

According to Cooke and Rousseau (1981), the degree to which an organization possesses skills in problem-solving is related to its available resources and to its structures. They constructed an organizational problem-solving model for schools. The model incorporated system properties, as well as problems usually found in all systems. The role and limitations of system inputs and the level of organization outputs as functions of problem-solving were also considered. Specifically, the relationships among organizational structures, problem-solving skills, and outputs were examined. In the opinion of the investigators, those organizations which were unable to solve problems arising among these factors were in danger of losing their viability.

Cook and Rousseau discussed their research in terms of its implications for educators. They listed five sets of problems which are common to organizations: (1) input, conversion, and output, (2) input and output control, (3) subsystem coordination and resource allocation, (4) cross-system level integration and adaptation, and (5) preservation and perpetuation of the organization.

Hypotheses concerning the relationships stated were formed, and the researchers collected their information by interviewing teachers and searching demographic data sources.

Through analysis of the data they had collected, Cooke and Rousseau found the manner in which a system was organized influenced the system's products. High performance norms and vertical communication structures were associated with skills in problem-solving.

Summary: Young and Emanuel (1977) and Licata and Hack (1980) found that informal communication systems are often highly effective in an educational setting. Cooke and Rousseau (1981) found that formal systems of communication can also be effective.

Relevance: The questionnaires used in this study examined the respondents' perceptions concerning the effectiveness of both formal and informal communication within their own special education programs.

III. Interorganization Relationships

Numerous writers have examined interorganizational relationships, and their findings may be applied to educational organizations. Levine and White (1961) said that interorganizational relationships may be explained through two models based on exchange and power dependency. They operationally defined exchange as voluntary activities

between two organizations which are pursued for mutual benefit. Three factors were found to be crucial to successful cooperation in intraorganizational communications. First, both organizations must have access to elements which are beyond the system itself. Second, the influence of the individual organization on the stated objectives must be exerted. Third, the participating organizations must cooperate with one another to some degree. Clearly effective communications within an organization requires similar factors.

Geutzkow (1966) followed a power-dependency approach to the study of communications. Here, the motivation for cooperation differs between the participants. One of the participating organizations requires and seeks more cooperation than the other. In time, external pressure may be applied to the reluctant partner to force cooperation. Naturally, negotiation and conflict are typical interactive forms in this situation as the participants look for their own rewards at each other's expense. Geutzkow further contends that interrelationships are contingent upon the frequency of interactions among organizations and that the volume of interaction is dependent upon the cost of communication. He defines cost as including potential loss of prestige or position.

Benson (1975) added a political-economic component to this paradigm. In his opinion, organizations seek adequate

supplies of financial and personnel resources to fulfill their needs and to maintain their authority. Such resources may be acquired from the general political economy as well as from other organizations. When organizational relationships are balanced, the most desirable atmosphere for cooperation is formed. Limitations based upon the political climate must also be considered. A decline in the economy, in Benson's approach, would adversely affect the depth of the available resources; yet communications would appear to be resistant to changes of this type.

These approaches to studying organizational communications are not unique, because they exist in various combinations elsewhere according to Schmidt and Kochan (1977). Relationships between organizations are not inclined to be totally described by one model, nor is any single interaction between organizations likely to perfectly fit an already identified type. Combining two models into one, the writers said that both relationships may exist simultaneously. Thus, Schmidt and Kochan integrated the exchange and the power-dependency models to account for variations in the amount and type of organization interaction. They ultimately concluded that organizations tended to utilize communication processes which enhanced their own interests.

Interorganizational relationships may be formal or informal. Hall, et al. (1977) attempted to determine if

differences along this continuum were meaningful in terms of the results obtained. The writers found that the exchange component was emphasized under voluntary conditions, while the power component prevailed in formal settings. Informal relationships which are voluntary can become formal through agreement. In formal settings, the division of labor geared to assigned tasks was observed.

Molnar (1978) studied the comparative properties of organizations with regard to their relationships. Activities, services, and clients were identified for study purposes. Molnar found the comparative properties used had considerable influence on the organization's overall behavior. Relationships between organizations which had some facet in common tended to be more interdependent than those between organizations which did not maintain either a common field of service, common clientele, or a common geographic area.

Summary: Levine and White (1961) found that perceived levels of influence help to determine the effectiveness of communication activities. Geutzkow (1966) also identified levels of cooperation and the frequency of interaction as key factors. Benson (1975) found that the level of funding of a program did not greatly influence the effectiveness of communication within the program. Schmidt and Kochan (1977) combined the factors of perceived level of influence and degreee of interaction to explain the presence or absence of

effective communication. Hall, et. al. (1977) found that the degree of interaction was more influential in informal settings and perceived level of influence in formal settings. Molnar (1978) found that subgroups sharing a common goal were more likely to develop effective communications.

Relevance: The questionnaires used in this study examined the perceived levels of influence of each subgroup and their perceptions concerning levels of cooperation and frequency of interaction. The respondents should have constituted subgroups who shared a common goal, that of improving special education services within their systems.

IV. Communication Processes

Communication processes have been studied extensively in the commercial sector and in education. A number of variables have been examined in these studies. In some areas, a degree of consistency has been shown in the findings produced by research efforts. In other areas, inconsistency prevailed.

Communications processes between school districts and other governmental organizations might be influenced by the gender of the participants. While Montgomery and Norton (1981) stated that most investigators in the area believed that differences existed, documentation of the relationship

was lacking. The writers, therefore, conducted two studies to provide information on the subject.

One study examined communication styles favored by men and women, and the second concentrated on predictions of good and poor communications by gender through different variables in terms of style. In the first study, significant differences emerged from males and females for precision, animation, and friendliness in communication styles. In the second study, significant differences were shown for precise and animated styles.

Overall, men seemed to be more precise and women, more animated. No variables, however, could be used to determine who would serve as a good communicator and who would not. Thus, similar behaviors were linked to effective communication skills, and the process of communication was not dependent on gender.

Yin and Gwaltney (1981) described the dissemination of staff development services, linking agent assistance, information retrieval, and organizational issues to school districts by an intermediate unit, a board of cooperative services, and a regional group. Successful collaboration took place when five factors were in operation: (1) service was oriented to the user, (2) services were supported externally, (3) the respective staffs formed meaningful interpersonal networks, (4) cooperation was mandated by the state, (5) mutual benefits resulting from cooperation

patterns would facilitate these actions and benefit those individuals concerned with the program.

Whitehead (1981) reported that countries with federal systems of government tended to have problems which limited the success of educational planning at all levels of instruction in the educational system. These problems included a lack of role clarification and poor coordination of policies and programs within and between levels.

Different written and personal communications were used by the Madison School District in a planned communications process (Schaefer, 1981). Internal and external publics were identified, and key communicators were targeted. A key communicator was defined as an individual who was believed and trusted by others.

Renfro and Morrison (1983) stated that anticipating and responding to change is a primary responsibility for organizations. Education fits in this category, and effective communication processes are necessary if the objective is to be fulfilled. Preparation could help educators to avoid crisis situations in their daily activities and to devote more time to important functions.

According to the investigators, change signals can be identified. These signals are ignored because of the vast amount of information which surrounds them and because of the human tendency to select that which can be handled. Renfro and Morrison, therefore, asked how information could

be disseminated in organizations and how its quality could be improved. Essentially, they sought to determine the factors involved in an effective communication process.

The investigators claimed that a scanning system can be used effectively to complete the communication process. A group of school administrators could, for example, form a scanning system which would help to complete the communication process because it would advocate the acceptance of communication efforts which otherwise might have been ignored. In addition, the work of insiders to facilitate communication would be more readily accepted than the efforts of those outside the system.

The scanning system is designed around four areas: (1) social, (2) technical, (3) economic, and (4) legislative. A set of files is created for each area although some concerns may cross two or more areas. Each member of the group is given one resource to review and asked to assign information to the appropriate area. While questions might be raised regarding the qualifications of the individuals to make these assignments, this problem is minor in comparison to be benefits acquired through the effective use of this system.

Schall (1983) was able to describe an organizational culture by examining its communications rules. The results produced by her research efforts were valid according to the opinions of insiders. Schall reported the examination of organizations as communication-based cultures had been

limited and that different research strategies had been used to produce the data. Schall concluded that additional study in the area would be worthwhile.

Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) stated the systems metaphor has underscored research in organizational communications. In the recent past, the concept of organizational culture has taken this role. Theoreticians and researchers, however, have concentrated their efforts on the structural features of the concept, rather than on the processes which it involves.

These investigators began their report by describing the state of communications theory in the 1960s and 1970s, showing how it had changed over time. Systems theory, for instance, had shown the value of comprehensive thinking about organizational structures and of dealing with structures and communications simultaneously.

The researchers noted that cultural structures were developed through the process of communications. They believed that a research approach built on this concept, however, was a limited one and that investigators should look at cultural performances as well as structures. These performances fitted into two categories, theatricality and accomplishment. Accomplishment was thought to be the desired form of performance.

Certain characteristics were found to be common to all communicative performances. First, these performances are interactional. They are not monologues. Second, they are contextual because they are embedded in reality. Third, performances are episodic, but have a unity about them. Fourth, they are improvisational because group members may take unique approaches to dealing with matters which come before them.

The researchers stated that cultural performances in organizations vary in accordance with the perceptions of the reviewer. Sociality is one form. In it, communicative performance is geared to formal modes of behavior and etiquette. At times, these rules are breached, but for the most part, performances tend to be smooth. This smoothness encourages cooperation among the participants. Intense interactions, however, are discouraged. Privacy is a key component in interactions on sensitive matters. Detailed sequences are linked to communication procedures which deal with sensitive matters.

Summary: Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) cited the need to study communications as a process. Montgomery and Norton (1981) found that gender was not a factor in the selection of a preferred communication process. Yin and Gwaltney (1981) identified levels of cooperation and mutual benefits resulting from cooperation as important factors in the effectiveness of the communication process. Whitehead

(1981) found that establishing a successful communication process between levels in a governmental organization was often difficult. Schaefer (1981) examined the combining of verbal and written communication processes. Renfro and Morrison (1983) and Schall (1983) emphasized the need for cooperation among insiders in the task of developing an effective communication process.

Relevance: The present study gathered data on the communication processes at work in relation to each special education program (i.e., governmental organization) and among those who should experience mutual benefits through cooperation. It paid particular attention to perceived levels of cooperation and to the use of a combination of verbal and written communication processes as described by Shaefer.

V. Communication Systems in Education

Education has adopted many of the theories and practices used in the commercial world. This adoption has become increasingly prevalent as educational organizations have become more complex. Effective communications techniques and strategies borrowed from the commercial world are necessary if educators are to be able to realize their objectives. One of the systems which has made its way from the commercial environment to that of education is that of relying upon bureaucratic organizational structures which

rely on complex formal communications systems to perpetuate their lives.

There are a number of factors which are involved in communication, however, whether the organization is bureaucratic or more decentralized. In some instances, for example, personnel at one level may find it difficult to communicate with those beyond the immediate level above them. The amount and complexity of the information being transmitted may limit the effectiveness of the attempt at communication. Personality factors may also have considerable bearing on how well communication processes can operate among a group of people.

Houser and Waldhart (1981) studied the influence of communication mode and communication load on individuals' perceptions of the quality of the decisions they made and on their satisfaction with them. Although the researchers conducted their study with undergraduates and local volunteers, their research seems to be pertinent to elementary- and secondary-level educators. In communication "underload," a condition in which people are receiving less communication than they could easily accept, the perceived quality of the decisions reached was higher than under other conditions. Satisfaction with these decisions was also higher. The participants showed more satisfaction with decisions reached through oral communications than with those reached through written communications. The written

mode, however, was associated with a higher quality of decision-making. Overall, the results of this study demonstrated that quality and satisfaction in decision-making were associated with load and mode of communication.

White and Reavis (1981-82) claimed that the communication problems which develop in business organizations also develop in schools. The investigators cited eight studies which identified problems existing between teachers and subject-matter supervisor and between teachers and their administrative supervisors. With this information, White and Reavis attempted to determine if there was a significant difference between superior-subordinate communications under conditions involving perceptual disagreement.

The researchers constructed an instrument designed to show the extent of perceptual disagreement between principals and teachers. This task was accomplished by citing the importance given to a problem or duty by a teacher. The rationale for the instrument was based upon previous research which had shown that covert disagreement was indicative of strong communication problems between the parties involved. While covert disagreement alone may be insufficient for substantial communication difficulties to develop, some evidence for this position may be found in the literature concerning communications.

In this particular study, ten principals and 127 teachers were the participants. Twenty dyads were formed. Each dyad was made up on a principal and one of his teachers. The teacher had either the highest or lowest disagreement score among the teachers from the principal's staff. Communications tasks were assigned to each dyad.

The Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed-Ranks Test was used to analyze the data. The analysis revealed that significant differences occurred for four of seven variables used in the study. White and Reavis concluded that superiors communicate with subordinates in a disconfirming mode under conditions of high convert perceptual disagreement.

Boyan (1982) discussed bureaucracy in schools and found that multiple hierarchies exist in educational institutions. As a result of these multiple levels, one may have to communicate through an administrative hierarchy and an instructional hierarchy to realize an objective. To add to the problem, these hierarchies may be in competition with each other, and this competitive state may lead to difficulties pertaining to the implementation of novel educational strategies. This finding has implications for interschool and intraschool communications.

Educational organizations may be described as open or closed. In the open system, the school is described as interdependent with its environment, including variable and permeable boundaries, and dealing with inputs and outputs

which create dependencies. These dependencies influence organizational functions. Closed systems show opposing characteristics.

The open and closed systems may be described as either rational or natural. In the rational system, organizations are created and designed for achieving objectives. Goal specificity and formal rules are important in this system. In natural systems, unplanned and spontaneous events are keystones. This type of organization is composed of groups which have different goals, but which keep a common interest in continuing the organization.

Johnson and Licata (1983) analyzed and described a communication infrastructure made up of urban principals. The investigators summarized the findings of an earlier study in the area and called attention to a limitation which they intended to resolve in their effort. The earlier study was conducted in a single school system, and Johnson and Licata took steps to replicate the findings.

School principals were asked to participate in the study by responding to a questionnaire. The items concerned the principal's interactions with the informal communications system in the school district. Among other tasks, respondents were asked to identify those in whom they confided, those with whom they enjoyed working, and those individuals whom they tried to ignore.

The results showed that similarities existed in the districts where the studies were conducted. In both settings, principals tended to move into their positions from jobs within the district. Johnson and Licata labeled this type of promotion system "sequence inbreeding." Informal discussion tended to take place in groups of two or three in both settings. Clanlike and guildlike associations were identified in both districts, but the membership differed. In the suburban district, clans were made up of elementary principals, while in the urban district, they included both elementary and secondary principals.

Generalizations pertaining to informal communication structures were noted in both settings. Informal interactions were based upon occupational socialization. Sponsorship appeared to be a meaningful variable here. Specifically, principals tended to interact with their former subordinates as the subordinates sought their former superiors. Johnson and Licata referred to sponsors acting as mentors in this situation.

The subjects discussed in these interactions indicated that new principals can learn proper techniques for dealing with problems through socialization with their peers. Consequently, the informal communications network contributed to order in the school district while allowing a sense of stability for the principal.

Job satisfaction was positively related to an individual's satisfaction in communicating with his supervisor and the supervisor's willingness to accept the subordinate's comments (Wheeless, Wheeless, and Howard, 1983) This study was conducted at the college level, and the investigators cautioned against generalizing the findings without additional research to substantiate their results. The results showed that the concept of participative decision-making may not be as effective in increasing job satisfaction as previously thought. This variable may be more sensitive to the supervisor's skill in effective communication as opposed to involving the subordinates in making decisions.

In discussing implementation strategies for district-wide objectives, Cuban (1984) mentioned the communication strategy which may be found in school districts. Generally, the criterion for an effective school is improved student performance on standardized tests. Other potential measures, however, may be more meaningful in terms of education. Schools exert efforts toward improving standardized test scores through a tight chain of command which stretches from the school board through the superintendent and the principals to teachers. This chain is supposed to help produce higher student scores on standardized tests.

Advocates of this system believe that the use of formal organizational tools will lead to compliance by those involved in the network and to optimal productivity on their part. District administrators tend to perceive themselves as possessing the best concept of district needs. Consequently, administrators working at this level favor top-down implementation, an approach looked on as being efficient and swift. These administrators set targets, develop controls, and reduce the leverage held by administrators and teachers serving under them in order to increase uniformity and improve student performance.

Two assumptions underscore the top-down strategy. The first assumption is based upon the position that a body of knowledge is available to meet the objective. The second is linked to the position that the administrator's ability in leadership will secure the objective. Educators, however, may find themselves cornered when external pressures reveal the inability of existing technology to meet the objective.

Cuban provided some support for the top-down sequence. This sequence does have some limitations. The primary limitation is the reliance on one individual, a limitation which can be opened through a bottom-up approach. Here, individual schools set their own objectives in line with district policies. This strategy incorporates mutual trust and encourages the development of team spirit in taking

steps to meet objectives. Cuban reports that this strategy has been successful.

In terms of the organization, the bottom-up strategy involves a loose linkage between district offices and schools and allows for greater latitude by principals. It is harder for district personnel to control subordinates because informal communication methods are exercised more frequently. Networks develop through the district, a fact which may reduce the superintendent's influence.

Frank (1984) surveyed 150 human resource professionals on communication effectiveness in their organizations. Interviews were held with 58 respondents. Frank reports that the respondents saw upward communication as least effective and commented on its influence on current interests in participatory management and decentralization. The dominant forms of formal communication were downward and horizontal. As to effectiveness, 59 percent of the respondents claimed that information about changes was at least somewhat effective, while communication in small group settings was rated similarly by 74 percent of the respondents. Frank concluded his report by saying that training programs could be used to help develop horizontal informational exchanges.

Summary: Houser and Waldhart (1981) found that participants were more satisfied with decisions which were arrived at through an oral, rather than a written, system of

communication and without the communication of large amounts of information. White and Reavis (1981-82) investigated problems in the communication system linking teachers and principals, while Wheeless, Wheeless, and Howard (1983) found that job satisfaction was positively related to the ability of subordinates to feel that they were successfully communicating with their supervisors. Boyan (1982) and Cuban (1984) examined the role of the instructional hierarchy in communications, while Johnson and Licata (1983) explored only the informal communication system among principals. Both Cuban and Frank (1984) looked at the direction of communication flow and found that the downward flow generally predominated.

Relevance: This study examined the level of respondent satisfaction with oral versus written communication. It also measured the amount of information which the involved others appeared to be receiving from the local special education office by testing their knowledge of common special education laws, regulations, and best practices. It also looked at informal communication systems, communication between principals and teachers, and the predominant direction of the flow of communication.

VI. Information on Communications Between Local Administrators of Special Education Programs and Other Personnel Responsible for Implementing the Special Education Program at the Local Level

The educational needs of handicapped students have been identified and supported through federal and state legislation (Meyers and Altman, 1982). Not only has this legislation been positive in its approach, it has taken a comprehensive strategy as well. As a result of this strategy, more students are coming under the aegis of handicapped education, which in turn has been broadened.

Most of the activities focusing on education for handicapped students occurred during the 1970s. In this decade, Public Law 94-142, titled Education for All Handicapped Children, and other critical legislation were enacted. Meyers and Altman called attention to the societal changes which accompanied this legislation.

The legislation has also encouraged the growth of bureaucracies as school districts have taken steps to comply with the law. Agencies have created policies which have been satisfied by such activities as publishing instructional manuals and setting up new jobs. As a result of these actions, regulations underlying special education have become strong and rigid. Programs for the handicapped may be deemphasized over time because of these reactions.

Meyers and Altman described some of the special education programs in force. The theme of communication within and beyond the programs ran through the writers' discussion. Special education personnel were advised to document their communications activities in order to support their claims.

At least one study found limited interactions involving special education directors and other school district personnel. One reason for this limited interaction could be the limited amount of time available for such interchanges. Harris (1969) found only a small number of special education curriculum supervisors were employed when she surveyed special education directors in Michigan. This shortcoming forced school district supervisors to take on this task for youngsters enrolled in special education programs. It would be reasonable to assume that special education directors would have to allocate some time here in order to familiarize curriculum personnel with the requirements for these youngsters. This time, of course, could be used to promote interactions and communication.

Harris surveyed 182 administrators to examine the roles and administrative activities of special education directors. Her findings showed it was possible to develop both general and in-depth roles by identifying the activities the respondents held to be important. The

administrators believed they should spend more time in curriculum and instruction, but they actually spent more of their time in staff relations and personnel matters.

Callahan (1975) found district level special education supervisors and their immediate superiors held similar points of view on the directors' roles and qualifications. The study was conducted in Florida and included personnel from the state's 67 school districts.

Taylor's data revealed a strong lack of communication within school districts for special education programs (1978). The researcher examined the role, function, and qualifications of district special education directors according to the perceptions of the directors of Florida's 67 school districts and 94 principals. The principals were randomly selected.

Taylor studied seven areas: (1) administration, (2) evaluation and research, (3) professional development, (4) interactions with federal, state, and local agencies, (5) degree, (6) experience, and (7) related course work. The directors sought more administrative authority than principals were willing to give them. Both groups judged that the directors should have degrees in special education. Finally, the data indicated that a school district's size influenced its special education program staff.

LaCour (1982) commented on the overlapping services provide by different agencies working in the same areas. Despite the existence of regulations designed to curb such practices, federal agencies tend to duplicate one another's services. In addition to providing similar services to some clients, other clients may receive no service at all. Consequently, interagency agreement is most important to make the most efficient use of resources.

LaCour, in an attempt to deal with this problem, suggested that organizational structures should follow functions. Thus, common functions such as testing or counseling could be handled by the unit designed for this purpose.

According to the writer, the issues creating problems for interagency agreement have been identified. These barriers included financial responsibilities, setting priorities, poor coordination between agencies at different governmental levels, budget coordination, inconsistent service, and differing positions on the confidentiality of information.

LaCour advocated cooperation as a means to improve the work flow. To circumvent the problem, the writer suggested that the working parties study the appropriate laws and regulations, become acquainted with the group leaders, find out how the groups worked, label the research which will be shared, and write out the responsibilities of each party.

According to Rowitz, "Networking is a process by which individuals link themselves to other individuals in order to share information, work, philosophy and so on" (Lipnack and Stamps, 1982). This process is necessary because handicapped Americans are going to find life more difficult as the result of more complex problems. Through networking, humanistic values can be maintained as technology grows.

Developing a uniform reporting system is the first step in the networking process. Data are required to understand changes in fields as well as approaches for change. Although the amount of information available is excessive in America, there are not enough data in some areas of special education. This lack of data makes planning difficult. The development of a worthwhile uniform reporting system for special education does not seem to be occurring.

Rowitz relied on McInnis (1984) to show the differences between networks and bureaucracies. Decentralization is a characteristic of networks as authority is vested in individuals who possess information. Another characteristic is flexibility in that policies and boundaries are not rigid. More meaningful interactions take place as people deal with each other as equals. Rowitz described networks as people-oriented as opposed to bureaucracies which are product-oriented.

Nutter, et al. (1984) examined the content and characteristics of the special education administrator's job

in an attempt to quantify the time allocations and efforts devoted to various aspects of the position. Questionnaires were distributed to special education directors, and Mitzenberg's strategy was used to gather information. According to the researchers, Mitzenberg made comprehensive observations of a small number of subjects. The researchers claimed that their study was the first designed to collect data of this type in their field. In addition, the researchers met with the subjects to validate their efforts.

Eight directors of special education were participants in the study. They represented small, medium, and large districts. A survey, observations, and a time-use form were used to collect information. The survey and time-use form were used in tandem. Thirteen major tasks and their subtasks were presented on the survey, and the directors were asked to rank them. The time-use form included 11 of the 13 major tasks, and the subjects were asked to take a work day and list the amount of time they spent on each.

Problem situations and giving support for learning and instruction were reported by directors as the most time-consuming tasks. Interagency conflicts, staff training, and public relations reportedly took relatively little time. The directors seemed to be satisfied with their situations aside from their salary levels. District size was not an influential factor in time use.

Providing methods for problem input was the subtask in the problem situation category which was ranked highest. This finding showed that the respondents were aware of the need for meaningful information exchange in this regard. The researchers claimed that the finding indicated that the directors saw time spent working in this category as time well spent.

Under the category of fiscal matters, the directors reported that they spent time negotiating with various agencies. This category subsumes communication across different interest groups.

Nutter et al. stated that the special education director's job is a demanding one with the individuals being asked to deal in areas, such as policy development, which were not in use a short time ago. The writers suggested that simulation activities be developed for use in training programs for directors of special education. Also deemed important to the training of special education directors was a knowledge of how to communicate within and outside the school system, since such communication related to program development and stability.

Smith and Tawney (1983) included some information on interagency relations in their discussion of compliance monitoring. Compliance monitoring is a procedure which may be employed to ascertain if handicapped youngsters are receiving an education which is responsive to their needs.

In this system, federal agencies monitor the states which, in turn, monitor local agencies. The writers were concerned with parental participation in the monitoring component, a matter encouraged by federal regulations, but not much promoted. Thus, Smith and Tawney focused their interest on the status of parental participation in monitoring.

With respect to the need for parental participation in the monitoring procedure, the authors noted that it was the efforts of parents and other advocates in communicating the needs of special education students which brought about the passage of the laws which are now being monitored. McCroskey called the federal government's emphasis on communication skills a blessing and a curse (1982).

Individuals working in communication support the acquisition of communication skills, but seem to have a great deal of difficulty in operationalizing their efforts. McCroskey reported that no consensus existed as to defining oral or written communication skills or as to operationalizing them.

McCroskey looked at the history of communication, commenting on the classical scholars who attempted to improve their followers' competence in speaking and writing, while defining their terms as well. Today, there is some research on effective communication and a great deal of linguistic competence. Neither interest, however, has had a major influence on communication.

Definitions of communication competence involve several variables. The emphasis in each definition depends upon the interests of the individuals promoting it. Demonstrating and illustrating the appropriate communication behaviors are crucial issues. McCroskey advocates a definition proposed by Weimann:

> The ability of an interactant to choose among available communication behaviors in order that he (she) may successfully accomplish his (her) own interpersonal goals during an encounter while maintaining the face and line of his (her) fellow interactants within the constraints of the situation (p. 2).

McCroskey discussed the components of Weimann's definition with regard to effectiveness and performance. He also took in other aspects of the communications process. In his conclusion, McCroskey supported efforts designed to discover how communications work. The investigator focused his attention on means and rules. Analyzing complex behaviors for the skills which could be learned was also deemed important. Identifying the factors which lead to positive or negative attitudes was considered to be crucial to communication research.

Wendt (1984) claimed that his Description-Interpretation-Evaluation (DIE) concept could help to improve interpersonal relations, conflict resolution, and intercultural communications. Specifically, descriptions can be looked on as sense statements which give data, but do not interpret them. Interpretation, on the other hand,

involves forming inferences or attributing meaning. Evaluation involves passing judgment.

The level at which individuals operate influences the success of communications. This paradigm occurs more frequently in cross-cultural interactions. Here, cues may not be familiar to one of the parties, and inappropriate conclusions may be drawn. Communication in interpretive or evaluative modes is most likely to lead to misinterpretation.

Wendt claimed he was successful in teaching DIE in a short workshop. Denying a scientific base for the program, Wendt called it an approach for dealing with human interactions which limits confusion, reduces conflict, and increases effectiveness.

Smith et al. (1984) studied communication networks among public school administrators after decentralization. Using interviews and observations, the writers looked at the effectiveness of the school district's formal communications network in terms of decision-making and innovation. Decentralization of a network appeared to have a negative influence on communication between departments and schools. This influence was thought to be stronger during periods of retrenchment.

According to Baum and James (1984), training programs can lead to improved communication skills. Here, the researchers studied the influence of social style training

on the communications skills of state agency workers. Through this program, participants could determine their social style in terms of their co-workers' perceptions. Efforts directed toward improving communications were described.

First impressions, according to the writers, were important in communications. An open, honest exchange of information was likely to emerge if a communicant was perceived as being warm and friendly during an initial meeting. In the case of neutral or negative impressions, "then the resulting interaction patterns are only going to be assessed occasionally and with caution" (p. 1).

In this study, a state agency worked with a university faculty. The writers, who commented on the increasing attention being given to communication skills during the past ten years, wanted to determine if they could improve these skills among the study's participants.

The assessment of perceived communication patterns started in 1954 when Odiorne reported on the Communications Audit. Three parts of the Audit were used to study organizational communication: (1) an in-depth interview with a 10 percent random sample, (2) a survey of 138 items, and (3) a critical incident survey based on communication experiences.

Baum and James called their efforts a qualified success. Most of the hypothesized changes did occur. The

magnitude of these changes, however, was not significant. The short period of time devoted to training, a half day, may have limited the program's effectiveness.

A pre-post design was used with the post administration taking place four months after the half-day session. This period of time may have contributed to a loss of skills.

Summary: Meyers and Altman (1982) emphasized the vital need for effective communication in special education programs. Harris (1966) found that special education directors perceived themselves as spending too much time communicating about personnel matters, while Nutter et al. (1984) later found the opposite to be true. Taylor (1978) revealed a strong lack of communication within Florida's special education programs. La Cour (1982) stressed the need for responsible individuals to have a knowledge of the appropriate laws and regulations. McInnis (1984) and Rowitz urged greater equality in the communication process, while Smith et al. (1984) found a centralized hierarchy to be conducive to effective communications. Smith and Tawney (1983) found inadequate parent participation in compliance monitoring, and Baum and James (1984) advocated training programs for the improvement of communication skills.

Relevance: The present study examined the perceptions of special education directors concerning their own communication emphasis, tested the need for greater knowledge of laws and regulations, looked at parental

involvement in communications in special education programs, and sought to develop a model for effective communication which could be used in a training program such as the one proposed by Baum and James.

In summary considerable research has been undertaken in the field of communications and some has examined communications in educational administration, but there has been little scholarly investigation of communications processes and outcomes within local special education programs, and no studies have been done of these communication factors in the local special education programs of the state of Tennessee.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the procedures utilized in identifying and selecting for study school systems and participants within those systems. It also details the procedures used in developing and validating the questionnaires used and collecting, tabulating, and analyzing the data produced by administering these questionnaires to the participants.

A descriptive study was conducted. Two questionnaires were developed for use in gathering data from selected members of public school systems in Tennessee which are involved in the implementation of laws designed to provide a free, appropriate, public education to all handicapped students. Data gathered by means of the questionnaires were analyzed to determine the viewpoints on key communication issues of local special education directors and involved others. The level of basic knowledge of the involved others regarding special education programs was also measured.

In order to secure the information needed to identify the communication procedures most frequently used between special education directors and others involved with the implementation of special education programs in Tennessee, the study involved:

1. obtaining limited information from all Tennessee school board chairpersons, all superintendents, and all local directors of special education;

2. selecting a stratified, random sample of school systems which would be representative of those throughout Tennessee and which would be willing to participate in the study in greater depth;

3. selecting a number of schools within the selected school systems to serve as willing participants in in-depth aspects of the study;

4. developing, field testing, and administering questionnaires which would provide data regarding the participants' reported exchanges of information and regarding the extent of the basic special education knowledge possessed by the involved-other group of participants; and

5. tabulating and analyzing the data.

II. Development of Questionnaires

A questionnaire (Appendix A) was designed to be completed by local directors of special education to determine the procedures which they use in communicating with others involved in implementing special education programs. Eight versions of this questionnaire were prepared, one for examining the director's communication

procedures in relation to each of the eight involved-others groups.

The questionnaire contained 18 specific categories of special education activities. These categories encompass the activities which state and federal laws require of all special education programs in public schools systems in Tennessee and were derived from information contained in the Administrative Policies and Procedures Manual for Special Education Programs and the Special Education Student Evaluation Manual published by the Tennessee Department of Education in 1983.

The directors were asked to assign to each category one of four possible values to indicate their perception of the importance of communicating information about this category of activities to the involved-others group specified in the questionnaire.

Each of the involved others received a questionnaire (Appendix B) designed to measure their basic knowledge of special education laws, regulations, and best practices, as well as to have them identify the communication procedures used between themselves and their special education director and to assess the level of effectiveness of these procedures. The basic knowledge portion of the questionnaire was based on the manuals previously cited. Each questionnaire was coded to identify

the school system with which the respondent was affiliated and its size.

Following the development of the initial questionnaires, they were field tested by a jury of 10 experts consisting of University of Tennessee faculty members in the College of Education, local special education directors, and special education teachers. On the basis of their suggestions, the questionnaires were revised to improve their clarity. The revised questionnaires were again field tested during April 1985. A cover letter (Appendix C), requesting an evaluation of the revised questionnaire and enclosing a postage-paid, self-addressed envelop was mailed to a total of twenty Tennessee State Department of Education special education personnel and local directors of special education. Suggestions which led to additional revisions were received from 14 (70%) of the respondents. This repeated field testing was done to establish the face validity and improve the validity of the questionnaires.

III. Participant Selection

Participants included all school board chairpersons, all superintendents, and all special education directors serving public school systems in Tennessee. The remaining participants were selected from a stratified random sample involving twelve school systems.

The group of twelve school systems selected accurately represented the percentage of school systems of varying sizes to be found in the state and equally represented all sections of the state. Four systems were selected from each Grand Division of the state: East, Middle, and West Tennessee. All nine developmental districts were represented. Four of the twelve systems had a student population (average daily attendance) of less than twenty-five hundred; four had student populations between twenty-five hundred and ten thousand, and four systems had in excess of ten thousand students. This student population information was drawn from the July 1984 Tennessee Education Association research report number R5: Tennessee Rankings Part I: Teachers and Their Working Conditions.

Approximately one-third of Tennessee's school systems are city systems; therefore, four of the twelve identified systems were city systems. Four schools within each of the twelve districts were selected to participate. From each of these twelve systems, a stratified random sample of four respondents was selected from each of the following groups: central office program directors, principals, regular education teachers, special education teachers, aides working with handicapped students, and parents of handicapped students.

When the sampling procedure was completed, the sample contained 141 school board chairpersons and an

identical number of superintendents and special education directors. The sample also contained 48 other central office program directors and an equal number of principals, regular education teachers, special education teachers, aides working with handicapped students, and parents of handicapped students. See Figure I for a profile of the sample surveyed.

IV. Collection of Data

Data concerning the exchange of information between special education directors and involved others and the level of knowledge of the involved others in Tennessee school districts were obtained through a survey completed by participants identified in the sample. The letter and a postage-paid, self-addressed envelope were sent to all school board chairpersons, superintendents, and special education directors. Each director was randomly assigned only two of the eight versions of the questionnaire concerning communication with involved others. This assignment resulted in a possible return of 282 questionnaires with as many as 35 questionnaires concerning each of the eight groups of involved others.

A cover letter and five questionnaires were mailed to each principal. The principals were asked to complete one of the questionnaire. They were also asked to select a regular education teacher, a special education teacher, an

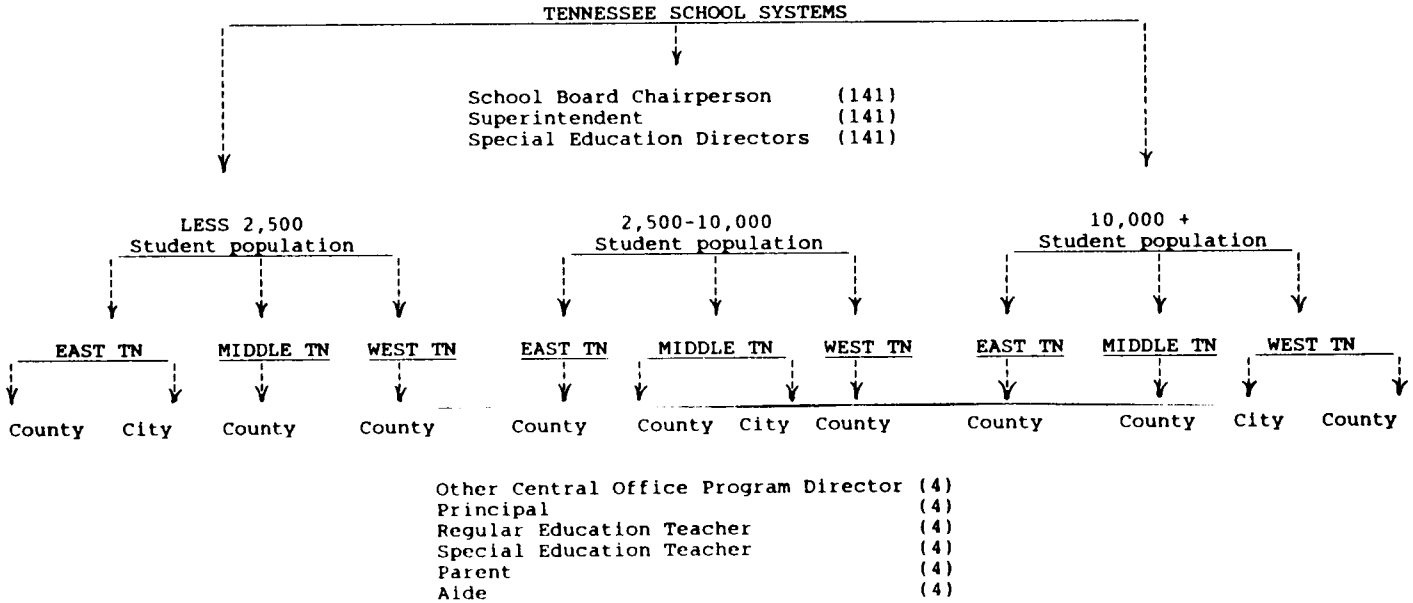

FIGURE I

A Profile of the Sample Surveyed

aide working with handicapped students, and a parent of a handicapped student enrolled in their school to reply to the appropriate version of the enclosed questionnaires. No special instructions were provided to the principals as to procedures to be used for selecting these respondents. A postage-paid, self-addressed envelope was included in the principal's package to facilitate the return of the questionnaires. See Appendix D for the letters directed to the participants.

A follow-up letter (Appendix E) was mailed to the non-respondents two weeks after the initial mailing date. Two weeks after the follow-up letter was mailed, a second copy of the questionnaire was mailed to the remaining non-respondents, along with a revised cover letter (Appendix F). A final follow-up was made by telephone to non-responding principals in an effort to make the study as representative of the population as possible.

V. Tabulation of Data

From the total population of school board chairpersons in the state (141), the first return and follow-up yielded 32 responses, representing a response rate of 22.69 percent. The second mailing yielded an additional 23 responses, representing a response rate of 16.31 percent and bringing the total number of responses to 55 for a total response rate of 39 percent.

From the total population of superintendents in the state (141), the first return yielded 62, a 43.97 percent rate of return. The second return yielded 24 additional responses with a 17.02 percent rate of return. Thus the total number of responses obtained from the superintendents was 86, a figure which constituted a 61 percent rate of return.

The total population of special education directors (141) returned 60 questionnaires (42.55 percent) on the first return and 41 questionnaires (an additional 29.07 percent) on the second return. The total number of director questionnaires returned was thus 101, constituting a 72 percent rate of return. Fifty-three (37.58 percent) of the directors returned both questionnaires, providing 161 questionnaires for tabulation. From the other central office personnel, the first return yielded 31 questionnaires (64.58 percent) and the second 4 (20.83 percent) for a total of 35 returns and a return rate of 72.91 percent.

Forty-eight principals were surveyed. The first return yielded 16 responses (33.33 percent) and the second 6 responses (12.5 percent) for a total of 22 returns and a 45.83 percent rate of return. Since the questionnaires for the 48 regular education teachers were to be returned with those of the principals, it was not surprising that their response rates were identical. What was surprising was the fact that the special education teachers and aides had

higher response rates than the principals had. The 48 special education teachers surveyed yielded 17 responses (35.41 percent) on the first return and 8 responses (16.66 percent) on the second for a total of 25 responses (52.08 percent).

Parents of handicapped students returned 15 responses (31.25 percent) on the first return and 5 responses (10.41 percent) on the second for a total of 20 responses (41.66 percent). Aides working with handicapped students returned 18 responses (37.50 percent) for the first return and 6 responses (12.50 percent) for the second, a total of 24 responses (50 percent). A total of 390 responses (54.85 percent) were tabulated. Twenty late returns were not tabulated for a total of 410 responses, a 57.66 percent return.

There were a number of factors which may have affected the percentage of returns. All of the rates of return could have been depressed by the fact that the initial mailing on Labor Day was so early in the school year. Many of the educators were probably still occupied with the routine activities of starting school. Since school board chairpersons are appointed in September, retiring chairpersons may have chosen not to participate. Some school board chairpersons also indicated that the superintendents and/or special education directors handled the problems and they did not need to know about special

education. One conscientious school board chairperson gave his questionnaire to the superintendent who promptly sent it to the special education director to complete.

School board chairpersons, like other members of lay groups, may not have had the interest or felt adequately informed to be able to respond. Other professionals, especially principals, may have feared reprisal due to the Comprehensive Education Reform Act. One principal, in fact, indicated a desire not to participate because of unsatisfactory experiences with teacher-evaluation rating forms used by the Tennessee State Department of Education's career ladder program. A follow-up investigation to non-respondents revealed that the above conclusions concerning the reasons for their failure to respond were accurate. An analysis of the late returns, however, indicated no significant differences between their responses and those which were returned on time.

VI. Analysis

Returned questionnaires were divided by groups of respondents (i.e., superintendents, principals, parents, etc.), then divided into groups within groups by school district size. The perceptions of special education directors were then compared with those of the other groups. Responses were categorized and analyzed focusing on differences among perceptions of respondents concerning the

role of the local office of special education in the communication process. Frequency distribution tables were compiled on each item's responses. The Pearson Correlation was used to compare the involved others' level of knowledge with selected communication processes.

VII. Summary

This chapter has presented the procedures by which school systems and participants were selected for the study, the questionnaires developed, and the data collected and analyzed.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA

I. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyze the data gathered for this study.

Questions of a specific nature to be answered by the study were

1. By what communication processes do special education directors and involved others exchange information?

2. Assuming that knowledge possessed is a product of the communication process, what level of knowledge do the involved others have about special education laws, regulations, and best practices?

3. What elements would be included in an effective communications model for use by special education directors and others with whom they are involved in the implementation of the special education program?

The remainder of this chapter is divided into three parts to facilitate data reporting. The first section is a presentation and analysis of the data obtained by administering the special education directors' questionnaire. The second section is a presentation and analysis of the data obtained by administering the

involved-others questionnaire. These data which provided an answer to the second research question and to one portion of the first research question. The third section compares the perceptions of special education directors with those of the involved others concerning the effectiveness of specific communications processes. These data completed the answer to the first research question. The answers to both of these research questions enabled the researcher to construct the model of communications required by research question three.

II. The Special Education Directors' Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire (See Appendix A) was to collect data from special education directors about their perceptions concerning the exchange of information which existed between them and the involved others. The questionnaires sent to special education directors in Tennessee consisted of eleven questions asking them to respond regarding their communications with randomly selected involved others. Each director was asked to complete a questionnaire about two of the eight involved-other groups. This questionnaire selection process was used to minimize the number of responses required by any one director. Statements about communication processes in general were also included in the questionnaire. More specifically, the special education directors were asked

about the transmission of information between themselves and involved others, the importance of providing information to the involved others, and their perceptions about the feedback received from the involved others.

Demographic Data

Demographic data concerning the special education directors was collected and analyzed in order to make certain that there was nothing unusual about this population which would tend to skew the data to be analyzed. Respondents were requested to report data concerning experience in special education, experience as a special education director, total experience in education, length of employment in their present school systems, and educational level attained. The following data summarizes the questionnaire responses received.

Special Education Directors' Experience Levels

A total of 101 special education directors returned 170 questionnaires for a 78.01 percent return. Sixty directors completed the demographic data on both of the questionnaires, and nine returns were not tabulated. The duplicated demographic data were not included in the tabulation. For this reason, the demographic data reported here reflects only the unduplicated count of 101. Fourteen directors (13.86 percent) had less than five years of special education experience; 29 (28.71 percent) had five to

ten years; 38 (37.62 percent) had ten to twenty years; 4 (3.96 percent) had between twenty and twenty-five years of experience in special education; and 16 (15.84 percent) did not respond to this item. For the 85 responding, the average special education experience was 10 years. No one reported more than twenty-five years of experience in special education. See Table I.

Many school systems do not have an individual identified as a special education director. Special education administrative duties are sometimes handled by the instructional supervisor, the school psychologist, or some other central office administrator. This fact could explain why 30 (29.70) did not respond to the question on experience as a special education director. Thirty-three, or almost one-third (32.67 percent), have been special education directors for less than five years; 20 (19.80 percent) have been directors for a period of five to ten years; and 18 (17.82 percent) have been directors for ten to twenty years. The mean number of years of experience of the respondents as special education directors was 6 years.

The distribution of special education directors by total experience in education revealed the average to be 21 years. Only 1 (.99 percent) had been in education less than five years; 12 (11.88 percent) had from five to ten years of experience in education; 57 (56.44 percent) had from ten to twenty years; 18 (17.82

TABLE I

Participants in Survey by Groups of Respondents in Tennessee

1985-86

	Special Education Directors	Board Chairperson	Superintendent	Other Program Directors	Principals	Reg. Ed. Teachers	Sp. Ed. Teachers	Parents	Aides	TOTAL
Possible Respondents	141	141	141	48	48	48	48	48	48	711
First Returns	60	32	62	31	16	16	17	15	18	
Second Returns	41	23	24	4	6	6	8	5	6	
Total Response	101	55	86	35	22	22	25	20	24	390
Percent of Returns	71.63%	39.00%	60.99%	72.91%	45.83%	45.83%	52.08%	41.66%	50.00%	54.85%
Returns not Tabulated	9	--	--	--	2	3	3	1	2	20
Total Percent of Returns	78.01%	39.00%	60.99%	72.91%	50.00%	52.08%	58.33%	43.75%	54.16%	57.66%

percent) had from twenty to thirty years; and 8 (7.92 percent) had over thirty years of experience in education. Five (4.95 percent) failed to answer this item. See Table II.

Eighteen years was the average amount of tenure which the respondents had in their current school systems. Eleven (10.89 percent) of the special education directors had under five years in their LEA; 22 (21.78 percent) had been with their LEA five to ten years; 46 (45.55 percent) ten to twenty years; 13 (12.87 percent) twenty to thirty years; and 3 (2.97 percent) had been employed by their present LEA for over thirty years. Six (5.94 percent) did not respond to this question. Table III reports the tenure data.

Special Education Directors' Educational Levels Attained

Only 1 (.99 percent) responding to this item had a bachelor's degree; 18 (17.82 percent) had attained a master's degree; 51 (50.50 percent had completed work beyond a master's degree; 18 (17.82 percent) had acquired an education specialist's degree; 9 (8.91 percent) had earned a doctorate; and 1 (.99 percent) had completed postdoctoral work. Three (2.97 percent) did not respond to this item. See Table IV.

TABLE II

Distribution of 101 Special Education Directors by Experience in Tennessee, 1985-86 School Year

Type of Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Special Education		
Under 5 years	14	13.86
5-10 years	29	28.71
10-20 years	38	37.62
20-30 years	4	3.96
Over 30 years	--	--
No Response	16	15.84
Present Position		
Under 5 years	33	32.67
5-10 years	20	19.80
10-20 years	18	17.82
20-30 years	--	--
Over 30 years	--	--
No Response	30	29.70
Total		
Under 5 years	1	.99
5-10 years	12	11.88
10-20 years	57	56.44
20-30 years	18	17.82
Over 30 years	8	7.92
No Response	5	4.95

TABLE III

Distribution of 101 Tennessee Special Education Directors by Tenure in School System, 1985

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Under 5 years	11	10.89
5-10 years	22	21.78
10-20 years	46	45.55
20-30 years	13	12.87
Over 30 years	3	2.97
No Response	6	5.94

TABLE IV

Distribution of Educational Level Completed by Special Education Directors in Tennessee, 1985

Highest Educational Level Completed	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor's	1	.99
Master's	18	17.82
Master's Plus	51	50.50
Educational Specialist	18	17.82
Doctorate	9	8.91
Postdoctorate	1	.99
No Response	3	2.97

Value of Providing Information to Involved Others

A majority of the local directors (62.03 percent) rated all of the categories related to special education laws and regulations as being needed by and usually communicated to the involved others. On the other hand, 11.92 percent indicated that all of the categories of information were needed, but not communicated.

The primary purpose in presenting the 18 categories of special education information to the local directors for their value rankings was to determine their perceptions of the overall value of communicating with others who have input into and responsibility for implementing programs for handicapped students. See Table V. Five categories were identified by all special education directors as information which was needed by and provided to all special education teachers. These categories were (1) the dates on which reports would be due, (2) due process procedures, (3) criteria for the identification of handicaps, (4) M-team procedures, and (5) graduation requirements for special education students. Four categories were perceived by all of the directors as information needed by and provided to the principals. These categories were (1) referral procedures within the LEA, (2) M-team procedures, (3) graduation requirements, and (4) the work schedules of special education personnel. Only M-team procedures were identified by all of the special education directors as

TABLE V

Summary of Responses of Special Education Directors Concerning the Value of Selected Communication Categories to Involved Others

	Not needed		Needed	
	Not communicated	But communicated	Not communicated	communicated
	%	%	%	%
Child Find Activities	13.75	10.63	9.38	66.25
Staffing Patterns	21.94	8.39	11.61	58.06
Minimum rules, regulation, and best practices	8.86	6.33	12.03	72.78
Calendar for reporting deadlines	39.24	10.13	12.03	38.61
Due Process procedures	6.37	7.01	10.19	76.43
Attendance and discipline policies	5.70	3.80	9.49	81.01
Equal Educational Opportunities	13.38	8.28	5.10	73.25

TABLE V (Continued)

	Not needed		Needed	
	Not communicated	But communicated	Not communicated	communicated
	%	%	%	%
Program development and evaluation	15.79	7.89	17.11	59.21
Interagency collaboration	38.46	10.90	21.79	28.85
Referral procedures, within LEA	11.32	4.40	9.43	74.84
Referral procedures, other agencies	30.38	10.76	20.89	37.97
Criteria for identification of handicaps	10.76	8.86	12.66	67.72
M-Team procedures	5.70	6.33	8.23	79.75
Procedures for IEP development	10.76	10.13	13.29	65.82
Graduation requirement for sp. ed. students	11.04	3.25	11.69	74.03

TABLE V (Continued)

	Not needed		Needed	
	Not communicated	But communicated	Not communicated	communicated
	%	%	%	%
Census	30.57	9.55	14.01	45.86
In service activities	20.25	6.33	10.13	63.29
Personnel schedules	31.41	10.90	8.33	49.36
TOTAL	18.02	8.03	11.92	62.03

being needed by and reported to all of the parents. None of the other categories attracted a consensus from the directors concerning their values.

III. The Involved-Others Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire (See Appendix B) was to collect data from the involved others about the exchange of information which existed between them and the local special education office. The generalized term "special education office" was used because involved others may have little contact with the director of special education in large school systems employing several special education administrators. In small systems which do not employ a special education director, "the special education office" could imply the office of the superintendent, the principal, or a resource teacher.

The questionnaire sent to those in the involved-other sample consisted of ten questions asking them to respond regarding their communications with the special education office. With the exception of the value question, the involved others were asked the same questions which the directors were asked. In addition, the involved others were requested to complete a twelve-item level of knowledge questionnaire (See Appendix B).

Of the 570 potential participants, 300 responded for a 52.63 percent return. By groups, the response rates ranged

from a high of 72.90 percent for the central office program directors to a low of 39.00 percent for the school board chairpersons.

IV. Reported Communication Processes and Product

This final section reports the results of the survey with regards to the following specific research questions:

Question 1: By what communication processes do special education directors and involved others exchange information?

Communication Methods

Respondents were requested to provide information about the methods used in communication between themselves and others involved in implementing the special education program. Each method was rated by the respondent as a total portion of the communication process. Respondents assigned a percentage to the method based upon their perception of its proportion of responsibility for achieving the total communication process.

With the exception of the use of bulletins, responses from special education directors showed no appreciable differences existed in their perceptions of the extent of use of the various methods for communicating with involved others. The responses for the total effort indicate that the majority of the communication process was believed to occur in the form of personal discussion.

Specifically, 45 percent of this personal discussion occurred during individual conferences, while 19 percent occurred in group meetings. An estimated 18 percent of the communications effort was conducted by telephone. Written communications comprised 16 percent of the total communications, with letters/memos and bulletins account for 15 percent and 1 percent respectively. The remaining 2 percent were third-person communications, such as special education director to superintendent to school board chairperson or director to principal to regular education teachers. See Table VI.

The responses of the involved others also showed no appreciable differences existed among them in relation to their most frequently used methods of communication with the office of special education. Like the special education directors' responses, those of the involved others indicated that they perceived the majority of the communication effort as taking the form of personal discussions.

Specifically, 33 percent of the personal discussion was reported by the involved others to occur in individual conferences, 17 percent in group meetings, and 17 percent by telephone. Written communication was perceived by the involved others as comprising 30 percent of the total communication effort, with letters/memos and bulletins totaling 27 percent and 3 percent respectively. The

TABLE VI

Special Education Directors and Involved Others' Communication Methods in Tennessee, 1985-86

	Special Education Directors		Involved Others	
Category	%	T	%	T
Bulletins	10.00	1	19.54	3
Letters/memos	65.00	15	63.98	27
Group meetings	58.75	19	59.00	17
Telephone	58.13	18	52.87	17
Individual Conferences	80.50	45	70.11	33
Other	8.75	2	8.05	3

T = % of time rounded to the nearest %

remaining 3 percent of the communication effort was attributed to third-person communications. See Table VI.

More specifically, 70 percent of the special education directors used individual conferences 50 percent of the time to communicate with school board chairpersons, whereas just over one-third (38.46 percent) of the school board chairpersons used individual conferences 19 percent of the time to communicate with special education directors. Special education directors utilized a variety of methods for communicating with superintendents, but a majority (88.46 percent) used individual conferences 73 percent of the time. A majority of the superintendents (84.34 percent) used individual conferences 49 percent of the time when communicating with directors of special education. Some superintendents (68.67 percent) reported communicating with the directors by letter or memos 68.67 percent of the time, while 61.54 percent of the directors used letters or memos to communicate with their superintendents 7.00 percent of the time.

Special education directors and other central office program directors both reported utilizing letters and memos 13 percent of the time to communicate with one another. With regard to the extent of use of the various modes of communication, the patterns were similar among special education teachers, parents, and aides. All special education directors, however, indicated they they used

letters or memos, group meetings, and individual conferences most often for communicating with special education teachers. See Table VI.

Direction of Communication Flow

Over half of the local special education directors indicated that communication originated from them to the involved others, with 12.99 percent indicating that information originated from them and 43.51 percent indicating that communication originated more often with them than with the involved others. Another 40.26 percent believed that the exchange of information was equal in each direction. Only 3.25 percent of the special education directors responded that communication was mostly to them from school board chairpersons, regular education teachers, and parents. No director reported that communication originated from the involved others exclusively. Thus the directors either credited themselves with originating communication or perceived the flow of communications as being equal in each direction.

One half (50.80 percent) of the involved others indicated that communication originated equally from both directions. Another 25.60 percent indicated that the special education office originated most of the communication. Only 6.40 percent indicated that the communication was from them to the director of special education. See Table VI.

TABLE VII

Direction of Flow of Information Between Tennessee Special Education Directors and Involved Others 1985-86

	Special Education Directors		Involved Others	
Category	#	%	#	%
From special education to respondent	20	12.99	21	8.40
Mostly from special education to respondent	67	43.51	64	25.60
Equally both directions	62	40.26	127	50.80
Mostly from respondent to special education	5	3.25	22	8.80
From respondent to special education	0	--	16	6.40
TOTAL	154		250	

Perceived Effectiveness of Communication

The special education directors indicated that overall communications with the involved others was effective. See Table VIII. The involved others also considered the overall communication process with the local special education office to be effective. See Table IX.

A total of 39.49 percent of the special education directors considered communication effective, and 38.85 percent considered it very effective. Only 1.27 percent did not know about communication effectiveness, and it was the opinion of 20.38 percent that communication needed improvement. Special education directors indicated that communication was most effective with superintendents, but were less sure about the effectiveness of communications with school board chairpersons, and parents.

Responses from the involved others indicated that 47.08 percent considered communication with the special education office to be effective, and 33.07 percent considered it very effective. It was the opinion of 17.51 percent that communication needed improvement, and only 2.33 percent did not know about communication effectiveness. Superintendents indicated the highest level of satisfaction with communication effectiveness, and school board chairpersons were the least satisfied. Table X reports the percentages of the local directors and the involved others in relation

TABLE VIII

Responses of Special Education Directors Concerning Overall Effectiveness of Communication With Involved Others

Category	Board Chairperson		Superintendent		Other Program Directors		Principals		Reg. Ed. Teachers		Sp. Ed. Teachers		Parents		Aides		TOTAL	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
Very Effective	6	33.33	15	57.69	12	57.14	9	50.00	4	16.67	6	50.00	5	21 74	4	26.67	61	38.85
Effective	5	27.78	9	34.62	6	28.57	7	38.89	14	58.33	5	41.67	9	39.13	7	46.67	62	39.40
Needs Improvement	6	33.33	2	7.69	3	14.29	2	11.11	6	25.00	1	8.33	9	39.13	3	20.38	32	20.38
Do Not Know	1	5.56	0	--	0	--	0	--	0	--	0	--	0	--	1	6.67	2	1.2
TOTAL	18		26		21		18		24		12		23		15		157	

TABLE IX

Responses of Involved Others Concerning Overall Effectiveness with the Special Education Office

Category	Board Chairperson #	Board Chairperson %	Superintendent #	Superintendent %	Other Program Directors #	Other Program Directors %	Principals #	Principals %	Reg. Ed. Teachers #	Reg. Ed. Teachers %	Sp. Ed. Teachers #	Sp. Ed. Teachers %	Parents #	Parents %	Aides #	Aides %	TOTAL
Very Effective	11	21.15	40	48.78	12	38.71	5	26.32	5	27.78	4	17.39	4	21.05	4	30.77	85	33.07
Effective	22	42.31	35	42.68	16	51.61	11	57.89	8	44.44	13	56.52	10	52.63	6	46.15	121	47.08
Needs Improvement	15	28.85	7	8.54	3	9.68	3	15.79	4	22.22	6	26.09	4	21.05	3	23.08	45	17.51
Do Not Know	4	7.69	0	--	0	--	0	--	1	5.56	0	--	1	5.26	0	--	6	2.33
TOTAL	52		82		31		19		19		23		19		13		257	

TABLE X

Responses of Tennessee Special Education Directors and Involved Others Concerning the Effectiveness of Communications, 1985-86

	Special Education Directors		Involved Others	
Category	#	%	#	%
Very Effective	61	38.85	85	33.07
Effective	62	39.49	121	47.08
Needs Improvement	32	20.38	45	17.51
Do Not Know	2	1.27	6	2.33
TOTAL	157		257	

to their perceptions concerning the effectiveness of the communications process.

Feedback

The feedback process suggests a two-way flow of information. Feedback occurs when the effects which a communication effort had on the recipient can be determined. In regard to feedback, participants were asked to respond concerning the following aspects of the communication participation of the involved others:

(1) attitudes about providing information
(2) feelings of responsibility for exchanging information
(3) amount of influence on programs for the handicapped
(4) amount of interaction aimed at improving services
(5) degree of understanding of other's problems in implementing programs for the handicapped.

Most of the special education directors (79.25 percent) indicated that they perceived the involved others as having positive attitudes about communications. A majority of the directors (71.34 percent) perceived the involved others as demonstrating feelings of responsibility for the exchange of information by providing all relevant information to the special education office. See Tables XI and XII.

Although the special education directors had about equally high opinions of the attitudes and demonstrated

TABLE XI

Responses of Tennessee Special Education Directors and Involved Others Concerning Attitudes Toward Communications, 1985-86

Category	Special Education Directors #	Special Education Directors %	Involved Others #	Involved Others %
Positive Attitude	126	79.25	213	82.24
Needs Improvement	27	16.98	35	13.51
Do Not Know	6	3.77	11	4.25
TOTAL	159		259	

TABLE XII

Responses of Tennessee Special Education Directors and Involved Others Concerning Responsibility for Communications, 1985-86

Category	Special Education Director #	Special Education Director %	Involved Others #	Involved Others %
Respondent provides all relevant information	112	71.34	167	66.01
Respondent provides required information only	41	26.11	82	32.41
Respondent provides no information	4	2.55	4	1.58
TOTAL	157		253	

sense of responsibility of all of the involved other groups, the directors credited only 34.64 percent of the involved others with having considerable influence on the special education program. See Table XIII.

The special education teachers reported a much lower opinion of the communication practices of involved others. For example, these teachers reported that only 33.99 percent of the involved others have much interaction with them and that the parents are not a part of this group. See Table XIV.

Although the special education directors rated the involved others highly in terms of their communication efforts and attitudes, approximately one-fifth (19.08 percent) felt that the involved others understood the problems of the directors. See Table XV.

The involved others generally credited the special education office and special education administrators with positive attitudes and demonstrated feelings of responsibility for exchanging information. They also credited them with considerable influence on the special education program. A majority of the involved others (82.24 percent) reported that the special education office demonstrated a positive attitude about providing them with information. They were inclined to think that the special education office behaved responsibly in regard to communications since 66.01 percent reported that all

TABLE XIII

Responses of Tennessee Special Education Directors and Involved Others Concerning Influence on Programs for Handicapped Children, 1985-86

Category	Special Education Directors		Involved Others	
	#	%	#	%
Substantial	53	34.64	181	69.62
Moderate	81	52.94	61	23.46
None	12	7.84	4	1.54
Do Not Know	7	4.58	14	5.38
TOTAL	153		260	

TABLE XIV

Responses of Tennessee Special Education Directors and Involved Others Concerning Interaction Between Special Education Directors and Involved Others, 1985-86

Category	Special Education Director #	Special Education Director %	Involved Others #	Involved Others %
Much Interaction	52	33.99	113	44.66
Some Interaction	79	51.63	105	41.50
Little Interaction	18	11.76	24	9.49
No Interaction	4	2.61	11	4.35
TOTAL	153		253	

TABLE XV

Responses of Tennessee Special Education Directors and Involved Others Concerning Understanding of Problems, 1985-86

Category	Special Education Director #	Special Education Director %	Involved Others #	Involved Others %
Understand Completely	29	19.08	140	55.10
Understand Somewhat	82	53.95	87	34.00
Needs Improvement	32	21.05	23	9.00
Do Not Understand	9	5.92	4	1.57
TOTAL	152		254	

relevant information was provided to them by the office. Only a small group (1.58 percent) of school board chairpersons and regular education teachers implied that the special education office provided them with no information. See Tables XI and XII.

More than half of the involved others (69.62 percent) credited the special education administrators with having substantial influence on the special education program. See Table XIII. Only a few superintendents and other central office program directors (1.54 percent) indicated that special education administrators had no influence on programs for handicapped students. Almost half (44.66 percent) of the involved others indicated that they had considerable interaction with the special education office, and 55.12 percent felt that the office completely understood their problems. See Tables XIII and XIV.

The ratings assigned to the special education office by the involved others in relation to the office's degree of influence and openness to interaction with the involved others were very positive. These ratings support the response obtained from the majority of that group to the effect that special education administrators understood their problems. Less than 2 percent (1.57 percent) indicated that special education administrators did not understand their problems. See Table XV.

In order to make certain that the questionnaires had not overlooked any considerations in regard to communications which might be important to the study's participants, participants were invited to identify strengths and problems in communication which they perceived in their own programs.

When their responses were analyzed, they were found to represent four general categories of concerns:

1. Statements relating to organizational structure, including inadequate staffing, time, and cooperation;

2. Statements about the structure of the communication system in general and more specifically about transmission, reception, and policies;

3. Statements about the feedback of information; and

4. Statements about the content or subject matter which is communicated.

After these classifications had been identified, the responses were placed in the appropriate classifications to facilitate further analysis. Selected responses by the special education directors and involved others in which they identify strengths and problems within their programs are in Appendix G. The response total exceeds one hundred percent because some respondents identified more than one strength and/or problem.

Problems Identified

The responses indicated that conditions within the organizational structure created the greatest communications problems. Approximately seventy percent of the responses identified a lack of time and personnel as the greatest contributors to communication problems. Moreover, limited cooperation by and access to personnel was reported, as well as apathy.

The second most frequent problem cited occurred in the transmission and reception of communications along with inadequate policies affecting the flow of information. Approximately one-third of the respondents reported that the largest contributing factor in the reception of communications involved a lack of understanding on the part of the receivers concerning programs, policies, and terminology. Problems cited in regard to the reception of information also included a lack of understanding of the importance of some aspects of the situation and a lack of cooperation caused by a sense of competition. While respondents were fairly specific in identifying problems relating to the reception of communications, they were very nebulous in describing problems related to the transmission of information, generally observing that they were problems of a type which was beyond everyone's control.

Fifteen percent of the special education directors indicated that the greatest communication problems were with

receiving feedback from the involved others. They attributed this lack of feedback to the use of third-person communication systems. They felt that there was a breakdown in the exchange of information when the information was passed along by a third person. The success of the information exchange was often judged by the group in terms of the amount of feedback it elicited.

Less than five percent of the special education directors indicated that communication problems originated from the complexity of the content of special education information. Nevertheless, the directors indicated that they had some difficulty in keeping track of changes in the guidelines for the enforcement of special education laws and in communicating those changes to the involved others. They also complained of an overload of information.

Strengths Identified

A variety of strengths were cited by the study's participants. The strength which was most often cited was a willingness to communicate. Comments were also offered concerning evidence of positive attitudes, cooperation, knowledgeable personnel, and mutual trust. Many respondents cited accessibility through daily, informal contact and through regular staff meetings. Sharing of the same office by various personnel was identified as a communications system strength by some participants who worked in small or middle-sized systems. A strong special education staff was

identified as a major strength by some of the involved others. Specific strengths which were attributed to the staff included the preparation and distribution of helpful bulletins and calendars and the use of recorded messages.

Question 2 What level of knowledge do involved others possess about special education laws, regulations, and best practices?

The involved others were asked to respond to twelve items which were designed to measure both their general and specific knowledge. Each of these multiple-choice items had four possible answers to choose from, but only one of the four was correct.

Table XVI reports the mean for each group of participants. Not surprisingly, the professionals scored higher on this test of knowledge than did the nonprofessionals. Other central program directors scored highest, followed by superintendents and special education teachers. Lay persons were the least knowledgeable, with school board chairpersons ranking next to the lowest and parents the lowest in knowledge. The mean scores on the items were 8.12 for small-system participants, 8.40 for middle-sized-system participants, and 7.94 for large-system participants.

Since the gathering of data concerning the knowledge level of the involved others was based on the assumption that knowledge possessed is a product of the communication

TABLE XVI

Mean Scores of Involved Others on a Test of Knowledge Regarding Special Education Rules and Regulations in Tennessee, 1985-86

Category	Board Chairperson	Superintendent	Other Program Directors	Principals	Reg. Ed. Teachers	Sp. Ed. Teachers	Parents	Aides	TOTAL
Respondents	52	83	31	19	19	23	19	15	261
Mean	6.92	9.11	9.90	8.16	7.37	8.61	6.47	7.40	

process, an effort was made to examine the data to determine if this was a valid assumption. The special education directors' responses to each question about communication were compared to the level of knowledge of the involved others in relation to the same issue. The responses to each question concerning feedback were analyzed separately, then collapsed and analyzed again.

For purposes of this analysis, the Pearson Correlation was used to compare selected responses made by the special education directors to the levels of knowledge possessed by the involved others on the same issues. This measure of correlation was chosen because it takes into account every response in both distributions and is considered the most stable of the measures of correlation. The resulting correlation coefficients are reported in Table XVII, and were considered to be significant at the .05 level. The following significant coefficients are reported: communication effectiveness, .0085; attitudes, .0506; and interaction, .0392. Nonsignificant coefficients are related to responsibility, .0849; influence, .1355; understanding, .1078; and feedback, .0564.

Thus the coefficients indicated that when special education directors perceived communication in their programs as being effective, attitudes toward communication as being positive, and the rate of interaction as being frequent, those in the involved others group possessed a

TABLE XVII

Pearson Correlation Between Selected Tennessee Special Education Directors' Perceptions of Communication Processes and Levels of Knowledge of Involved Others, 1985-86

Processes	r	Pearson
Effectiveness	.84321	.0085*
Attitude	.70555	.0506*
Sense of Responsibility	.64382	.0849
Influence	.57551	.1355
Interaction	.73143	.0392*
Understanding	.61068	.1078
Feedback	.69350	.0564

* Significant at the .05 confidence level

higher level of knowledge of these matters. Special education directors' perceptions concerning the other variables examined, however, did not have a correlational relationship to the knowledge of the involved others. In other words, even when special education directors perceived those involved in their programs as taking responsibility for communicating information; as having influence over the program; as having an understanding of special education laws, regulations and best practices; and as participating in feedback, the involved others still were not generally found to be knowledgeable in these areas.

This chapter has presented and analyzed the findings which provided the answers to research questions one and two and which permitted development of the model required by research question three.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Summary

The purpose of this study was to develop a data base concerning the comparative effectiveness of various communications practices when they are used between directors of special education and involved others and to use this data base to construct a model for effective communication in this setting. The study focused on the role of the local special education offices as they interacted with involved others in an effort to implement their special education programs. The data base developed by this study provided much-needed information which was not previously available concerning the communication procedures currently favored by the special education directors of the state of Tennessee and others with whom they are professionally involved, as well as needed information about the relative effectiveness of those procedures.

The general procedures for the study included the use of two data collection instruments. One instrument was a questionnaire for special education directors. There were eight versions of this questionnaire, one relating to each of the eight groups of involved others with whom the directors must interact professionally. A second instrument

data concerning their perceptions of the communication situation in relation to special education in their respective LEAs and measured their knowledge of special education laws, regulations, and best practices.

Out of a possible 282 questionnaires, 170 were returned by special education directors for a 78.01 percent rate of return. Questionnaires were completed and returned by 55 school board chairpersons, 86 superintendents, 35 other central office program directors, 24 principals, 25 regular education teachers, 28 special education teachers, 21 parents, and 25 aides, a total of 300 returns which represented a return rate of 52.63 percent of the potential participants in the involved-other sample.

The responses to the questionnaires were statistically analyzed using in part, the statistical package commonly known as SAS. The Spearman Correlation procedure was used to analyze the relationships between the observed frequencies of selected responses from the special education directors and the levels of knowledge of special education laws, regulations, and best practices of the involved others. The .05 level of significance was used. These data were presented in Chapter IV.

II. Results

The collection and analysis of the data in this study yielded the following results:

Demographic Data

The majority of the special education directors (56.44 percent) had between ten and twenty years of experience in education, and 37.62 percent of them reported the same range of experience in special education. A total of 32.67 percent reported less than five years of experience as special education directors. Almost half (45.55 percent) had been with their present school systems between ten and twenty years. Over half (50.50 percent) had completed academic work beyond the master's level.

Research Question One

BY WHAT COMMUNICATION PROCESSES DO SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTORS AND INVOLVED OTHERS EXCHANGE INFORMATION?

A variety of methods was reported, but the study revealed that a majority of the total communication process occurred in the form of personal discussions, regardless of whether the communication was initiated by the directors or by the involved others. The largest percentage of the communication time was reportedly spent in individual conferences, regardless of whether the directors or the involved others chose the means of communicating. Special education directors reporting using individual conferences as their preferred means of communication 45 percent of the time, and involved others reported using such conferences 33 percent of the time.

The question of whether a demonstrated knowledge of special education laws, regulations, and best practices by the involved others is an indication of an effective communication process was examined. The Pearson Correlation procedure revealed a significant relationship at the .05 level between the involved other's levels of knowledge and the assignment of high values by the special education directors to the aspects of the communications process labeled overall communication effectiveness, attitudes about communications, and interaction aimed at improving services.

Research Question Two

ASSUMING THAT KNOWLEDGE POSSESSED IS A PRODUCT OF THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS, WHAT LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE DO THE INVOLVED OTHERS HAVE ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION LAWS, REGULATIONS, AND BEST PRACTICES?

In response to the twelve items of knowledge, other central office program directors, with a mean score of 9.90, proved to be the most knowledgeable group among the eight involved-other groups. Parents of the handicapped students, with a mean score of 6.47, were the least knowledgeable.

Research Question Three

WHAT CHARACTERISTICS WOULD BE INCLUDED IN AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS MODEL FOR USE BY SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTORS AND OTHERS WITH WHOM THEY ARE INVOLVED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM?

These characteristics are described in the Conclusions section of this chapter and the total model is presented in the Recommendations section of this chapter.

III. Conclusions

The conclusions drawn from the study are solely based upon the analysis of the data gathered during the course of the study. The following conclusions were drawn in relation to research question number one, which concerned the communication processes most often used in relation to special education programs in Tennessee:

1. Both the special education directors and the involved others use a variety of methods of exchanging information, and both have found the method of face-to-face conversation to be the most effective, with telephone conversations as second most effective.

2. The use of bulletins, letter, memos, and calendars by the directors to communicate information to involved others seemed to be relatively effective, especially when the recipients were other professionals in education, such as teachers and principals.

3. Directors of special education should select their means of communication with the preferred means of communication of the recipients in mind. In Tennessee, it would appear that most recipients will prefer to receive the information in a personal conversation. Professionals may

be willing to accept the previously mentioned printed information as a reasonable substitute when personal conversations are not possible, but nonprofessionals may find it difficult to assimilate and use the information contained in printed communications.

4. Where the advantages of personal conversation as a means of communication are desired but time is limited, small group meetings would appear to provide an opportunity for a reasonably effective exchange of information.

5. Directors of special education in Tennessee greatly value feedback from the involved others after giving them information, and, at the time of this study, were far from satisfied with the extent of the feedback they were receiving. This lack of sufficient feedback to the directors from the involved others apparently results from the fact that the flow of communication tends to be more from the director to the involved others than in the reverse direction.

The following conclusions were drawn in relation to research question number two, which concerned the level of knowledge of the involved others concerning special education laws, regulations, and best practices and whether or not that knowledge was the product of the effectiveness of communication procedures used in the state's special education systems:

1. Few people, other than special education directors,

who are involved in the implementation of special education programs in the state of Tennessee possess extensive knowledge of special education laws, regulations, and procedures.

2. The local special education directors themselves have some difficulty in keeping abreast of the latest changes in special education regulations and in promptly and effectively communicating these changes to the involved others.

3. School board chairpersons in Tennessee are particularly lacking in knowledge of special education and are, therefore, likely to represent a real challenge to the special education directors' abilities to communicate effectively.

4. The one group among the involved others which is even more likely to be difficult to communicate with than the school board chairpersons is the group of parents of special education students because this group has the least knowledge of special education.

5. Concerning the relationship between the effectiveness of the communication system which exists within a special education program and the level of knowledge gained by the involved others in that program, it appears that several conclusions can be drawn:

A. The amount of knowledge which involved others possess concerning special education is positively related

to the perceived effectiveness of the communication system used by the special education program.

B. The existence throughout the special education program of positive attitudes toward communication can result in a greater acquisition of special education knowledge by involved others.

C. A high level of interaction between the special education director and the involved others can result in the acquisition of greater knowledge of special education by the involved others.

D. Although the special education directors are eager for feedback from involved others, the lack of such feedback is not an indication that the involved others have not understood the information communicated.

6. It is safe to conclude that a model can be constructed, based on the conclusions drawn from this study, which can be used by the special education directors of Tennessee to improve the quality of their communications with involved others who participate in the implementation of their programs.

7. Such a model would have the following characteristics:

A. It would require the special education director to use personal conversations as extensively as possible as the means of communicating special education information.

B. It would place great emphasis on the importance of communicating special education information to school board chairpersons and parents by means of personal conversations and would mandate a major effort to improve the knowledge of special education of these two groups of involved others.

C. It would rate small group meetings as the second most desirable means of communicating special education information.

D. It would permit the use of some letters, memos, calendars, and bulletins for communicating information to other professionals involved in the program. It would not view these printed means of communication as suitable for use with school board chairpersons and parents because of their lack of sufficient knowledge of special education to understand such communications.

E. It would provide for means by which special education directors could gain feedback from those to whom they are communicating information and would encourage more use of a two-way flow of communication, not because these characteristics would enhance the understanding of the involved others, but because it would give the directors a better means of assessing the degree of understanding and knowledge possessed by the involved others so that a lack of understanding or knowledge can be remedied.

F. The model would call for directors of special education to receive from the State Department of Education's special education office more assistance in keeping abreast of changes in special education laws, regulations, and best practices and training in communicating this information to involved others.

IV. Recommendations

This study has collected and analyzed data and drawn conclusions about the communication of special education information between local special education offices or directors and involved others in Tennessee. On the basis of these conclusions, the following recommendations are offered:

1. The Tennessee State Department of Education should provide leadership in the development of guidelines and provide inservice education to local special education directors in order to aid them in effectively communicating special education information to involved others in their programs.

2. The Department specifically needs to develop a detailed model for effective communications in special education in Tennessee, and the model should possess all of the characteristics cited in the Conclusions section of this chapter.

3. A follow-up study should be done after the model is

introduced to determine whether it is being widely used and whether it is proving to be effective in improving communications in local special education programs. The follow-up study should collect data similar to that collected by this study, so that the findings of this study can be used to create a pretest-posttest statistical study to measure the growth of communication effectiveness in special education in Tennessee.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SPECIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR'S QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Listed below are a number of categories in which you are involved in implementing services for handicapped children in your school system. Please use the following code to indicate your opinion on the value of each category in communicating with the school board chairperson. Please place the number 1, 2, 3, or 4 in the blank provided at the left of each category.

   1. Information not needed, not communicated.
   2. Information not needed, but communicated.
   3. Information needed, not communicated.
   4. Information needed, not communicated.

CATEGORIES

_____ Child Find Activities

_____ Staffing patterns

_____ Minimum rules, regulations, and best practices

_____ Calendar for reporting deadlines

_____ Due Process procedures

_____ Attendance and discipline policies

_____ Equal Educational Opportunities

_____ Program development and evaluation

_____ Interagency collaboration

_____ Referral procedures, within LEA

_____ Referral procedures, other agencies

_____ Criteria for identification of handicaps

_____ M-Team procedures

_____ Procedures for IEP development

_____ Graduation requirement for special education students

_____ Census

_____ Inservice activities

_____ Personnel schedules

_____ Other _____

2. Indicate which of the methods below you use to communicate with the school board chairperson by checking the appropriate blanks in the left column. Check each method used. In the space provided to the right of each method checked, estimate the percentage of the total communication effort represented by each method.

_____ Bulletins	_____% of total
_____ Letters or memos	_____% of total
_____ Group meetings	_____% of total
_____ Telephone	_____% of total
_____ Individual conferences	_____% of total
_____ Other _____	_____% of total

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

CHOOSE THE MOST APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO THE FOLLOWING SITUATION:

3. Direction of flow of information between you and the school board chairperson regarding services.

_____ From you to the school board chairperson

_____ Mostly from you to the school board chairperson

_____ Equally both directions

_____ Mostly from the school board chairperson to you

_____ From the school board chairperson to you

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

4. Attitude of school board chairperson about providing information to you.

_____ Positive attitude

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

5. The school board chairperson's feelings of responsibility for exchanging information with you.

_____ School board chairperson provides all relevant information

_____ School board chairperson provides only required information

_____ Do not communicate with school board chairperson

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

6. How would you describe the overall effectiveness of communication between you and the school board chairperson?

_____ Very effective

_____ Effective

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

7. How well do you believe the school board chairperson knows and understands the problems of implementing a program for handicapped children?

_____ Understands completely

_____ Understands somewhat

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Not at all

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

8. Amount of interaction between you and the School board chairperson aimed at improving services.

_____ Much interaction

_____ Some interaction

_____ Very little interaction

_____ No interaction

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

9. Amount of actual influence the school board chairperson has on the programs for handicapped children in your district.

_____ Substantial

_____ Moderate

_____ None

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

10. What would you consider to be the greatest problem(s) in providing information to the school board chairperson?

11. What would you consider to be the greatest strength(s) in providing information to the school board chairperson?

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:

1. Experience: Special Education _____

   Present Position _____

   Total years in education _____

2. Number of years in present school system _____

3. Education: Bachelor's _____ Bachelor's plus _____

   Master's _____ Master's plus _____ Educational

   Specialist _____ Doctorate _____ Postdoctorate _____

1. Listed below are a number of categories in which you are involved in implementing services for handicapped children in your school system. Please use the following code to indicate your opinion on the value of each category in communicating with the superintendent Please place the number 1, 2, 3, or 4 in the blank provided at the left of each category.

   1. Information not needed, not communicated.
   2. Information not needed, but communicated.
   3. Information needed, not communicated.
   4. Information needed, not communicated.

CATEGORIES

_____ Child Find Activities

_____ Staffing patterns

_____ Minimum rules, regulations, and best practices

_____ Calendar for reporting deadlines

_____ Due Process procedures

_____ Attendance and discipline policies

_____ Equal Educational Opportunities

_____ Program development and evaluation

_____ Interagency collaboration

_____ Referral procedures, within LEA

_____ Referral procedures, other agencies

_____ Criteria for identification of handicaps

_____ M-Team procedures

_____ Procedures for IEP development

_____ Graduation requirement for special education students

_____ Census

_____ Inservice activities

_____ Personnel schedules

_____ Other _____

2. Indicate which of the methods below you use to communicate with the superintendent by checking the appropriate blanks in the left column. Check each method used. In the space provided to the right of each method checked, estimate the percentage of the total communication effort represented by each method.

_____ Bulletins	_____% of total
_____ Letters or memos	_____% of total
_____ Group meetings	_____% of total
_____ Telephone	_____% of total
_____ Individual conferences	_____% of total
_____ Other _____	_____% of total

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

CHOOSE THE MOST APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO THE FOLLOWING SITUATION:

3. Direction of flow of information between you and the school board chairperson regarding services.

_____ From you to the school board chairperson

_____ Mostly from you to the school board chairperson

_____ Equally both directions

_____ Mostly from the school board chairperson to you

_____ From the school board chairperson to you

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

4. Attitude of superintendent about providing information to you.

_____ Positive attitude

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

5. The superintendent's feelings of responsibility for exchanging information with you.

_____ Superintendent provides all relevant information

_____ Superintendent provides only required information

_____ Do not communicate with superintendent

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

6. How would you describe the overall effectiveness of communication between you and the superintendent?

_____ Very effective

_____ Effective

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

7. How well do you believe the superintendent knows and understands the problems of implementing a program for handicapped children?

_____ Understands completely

_____ Understands somewhat

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Not at all

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

8. Amount of interaction between you and the Superintendent aimed at improving services.

_____ Much interaction

_____ Some interaction

_____ Very little interaction

_____ No interaction

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

9. Amount of actual influence the superintendent has on the programs for handicapped children in your district.

_____ Substantial

_____ Moderate

_____ None

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

10. What would you consider to be the greatest problem(s) in providing information to the superintendent?

11. What would you consider to be the greatest strength(s) in providing information to the superintendent?

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:

1. Experience: Special Education _____

   Present Position _____

   Total years in education _____

2. Number of years in present school system _____

3. Education: Bachelor's _____ Bachelor's plus _____

   Master's _____ Master's plus _____ Educational

   Specialist _____ Doctorate _____ Postdoctorate _____

1. Listed below are a number of categories in which you are involved in implementing services for handicapped children in your school system. Please use the following code to indicate your opinion on the value of each category in communicating with the other office program directors. Please place the number 1, 2, 3, or 4 in the blank provided at the left of each category.

   1. Information not needed, not communicated.
   2. Information not needed, but communicated.
   3. Information needed, not communicated.
   4. Information needed, not communicated.

CATEGORIES

_____ Child Find Activities

_____ Staffing patterns

_____ Minimum rules, regulations, and best practices

_____ Calendar for reporting deadlines

_____ Due Process procedures

_____ Attendance and discipline policies

_____ Equal Educational Opportunities

_____ Program development and evaluation

_____ Interagency collaboration

_____ Referral procedures, within LEA

_____ Referral procedures, other agencies

_____ Criteria for identification of handicaps

_____ M-Team procedures

_____ Procedures for IEP development

_____ Graduation requirement for special education students

_____ Census

_____ Inservice activities

_____ Personnel schedules

_____ Other _____

2. Indicate which of the methods below you use to communicate with the other central office program directors by checking the appropriate blanks in the left column. Check each method used. In the space provided to the right of each method checked, estimate the percentage of the total communication effort represented by each method.

_____	Bulletins	_____% of total
_____	Letters or memos	_____% of total
_____	Group meetings	_____% of total
_____	Telephone	_____% of total
_____	Individual conferences	_____% of total
_____	Other _____	_____% of total

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

CHOOSE THE MOST APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO THE FOLLOWING SITUATION:

3. Direction of flow of information between you and the other central office program directors regarding services.

_____ From you to the other central office program directors

_____ Mostly from you to the other central office program directors

_____ Equally both directions

_____ Mostly from the other program directors to you

_____ From the other program directors to you

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

4. Attitude of other program directors about providing information to you.

_____ Positive attitude

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

5. The other program directors's feelings of responsibility for exchanging information with you.

_____ Program directors provide all relevant information

_____ Program directors provide only required information

_____ Do not communicate with other program directors

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

6. How would you describe the overall effectiveness of communication between you and the other program directors?

_____ Very effective

_____ Effective

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

7. How well do you believe the other program directors know and understands the problems of implementing a program for handicapped children?

_____ Understands completely

_____ Understands somewhat

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Not at all

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

8. Amount of interaction between you and the other program directors aimed at improving services.

_____ Much interaction

_____ Some interaction

_____ Very little interaction

_____ No interaction

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

9. Amount of actual influence the other program directors have on the programs for handicapped children in your district.

_____ Substantial

_____ Moderate

_____ None

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

10. What would you consider to be the greatest problem(s) in providing information to the other program directors?

11. What would you consider to be the greatest strength(s) in providing information to the other program directors?

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:

1. Experience: Special Education _____

   Present Position _____

   Total years in education _____

2. Number of years in present school system _____

3. Education: Bachelor's _____ Bachelor's plus _____

   Master's _____ Master's plus _____ Educational

   Specialist _____ Doctorate _____ Postdoctorate _____

1. Listed below are a number of categories in which you are involved in implementing services for handicapped children in your school system. Please use the following code to indicate your opinion on the value of each category in communicating with the principals. Please place the number 1, 2, 3, or 4 in the blank provided at the left of each category.

   1. Information not needed, not communicated.
   2. Information not needed, but communicated.
   3. Information needed, not communicated.
   4. Information needed, not communicated.

CATEGORIES

_____ Child Find Activities

_____ Staffing patterns

_____ Minimum rules, regulations, and best practices

_____ Calendar for reporting deadlines

_____ Due Process procedures

_____ Attendance and discipline policies

_____ Equal Educational Opportunities

_____ Program development and evaluation

_____ Interagency collaboration

_____ Referral procedures, within LEA

_____ Referral procedures, other agencies

_____ Criteria for identification of handicaps

_____ M-Team procedures

_____ Procedures for IEP development

_____ Graduation requirement for special education students

_____ Census

_____ Inservice activities

_____ Personnel schedules

_____ Other _____

2. Indicate which of the methods below you use to communicate with the principals by checking the appropriate blanks in the left column. Check each method used. In the space provided to the right of each method checked, estimate the percentage of the total communication effort represented by each method.

_____ Bulletins	_____% of total
_____ Letters or memos	_____% of total
_____ Group meetings	_____% of total
_____ Telephone	_____% of total
_____ Individual conferences	_____% of total
_____ Other _____	_____% of total

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

CHOOSE THE MOST APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO THE FOLLOWING SITUATION:

3. Direction of flow of information between you and the principals regarding services.

_____ From you to the principals

_____ Mostly from you to the principals

_____ Equally both directions

_____ Mostly from the principals to you

_____ From the principals to you

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

4. Attitude of principals about providing information to you.

_____ Positive attitude

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

5. The principals's feelings of responsibility for exchanging information with you.

_____ Principals provide all relevant information

_____ Principals provide only required information

_____ Do not communicate with principals

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

6. How would you describe the overall effectiveness of communication between you and the principals?

_____ Very effective

_____ Effective

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

7. How well do you believe the principals know and understand the problems of implementing a program for handicapped children?

_____ Understand completely

_____ Understand somewhat

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Not at all

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

8. Amount of interaction between you and the principals aimed at improving services.

_____ Much interaction

_____ Some interaction

_____ Very little interaction

_____ No interaction

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

9. Amount of actual influence the principals have on the programs for handicapped children in your district.

_____ Substantial

_____ Moderate

_____ None

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

10. What would you consider to be the greatest problem(s) in providing information to the principals?

11. What would you consider to be the greatest strength(s) in providing information to the principals?

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:

1. Experience: Special Education _____

   Present Position _____

   Total years in education _____

2. Number of years in present school system _____

3. Education: Bachelor's _____ Bachelor's plus _____

   Master's _____ Master's plus _____ Educational

   Specialist _____ Doctorate _____ Postdoctorate _____

1. Listed below are a number of categories in which you are involved in implementing services for handicapped children in your school system. Please use the following code to indicate your opinion on the value of each category in communicating with the regular education teachers. Please place the number 1, 2, 3, or 4 in the blank provided at the left of each category.

   1. Information not needed, not communicated.
   2. Information not needed, but communicated.
   3. Information needed, not communicated.
   4. Information needed, not communicated.

CATEGORIES

_____ Child Find Activities

_____ Staffing patterns

_____ Minimum rules, regulations, and best practices

_____ Calendar for reporting deadlines

_____ Due Process procedures

_____ Attendance and discipline policies

_____ Equal Educational Opportunities

_____ Program development and evaluation

_____ Interagency collaboration

_____ Referral procedures, within LEA

_____ Referral procedures, other agencies

_____ Criteria for identification of handicaps

_____ M-Team procedures

_____ Procedures for IEP development

_____ Graduation requirement for special education students

_____ Census

_____ Inservice activities

_____ Personnel schedules

_____ Other _____

2. Indicate which of the methods below you use to communicate with the regular education teachers by checking the appropriate blanks in the left column. Check each method used. In the space provided to the right of each method checked, estimate the percentage of the total communication effort represented by each method.

_____	Bulletins	_____% of total
_____	Letters or memos	_____% of total
_____	Group meetings	_____% of total
_____	Telephone	_____% of total
_____	Individual conferences	_____% of total
_____	Other _____	_____% of total

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

CHOOSE THE MOST APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO THE FOLLOWING SITUATION:

3. Direction of flow of information between you and the regular education teachers regarding services.

_____ From you to the regular education teachers

_____ Mostly from you to the regular teachers

_____ Equally both directions

_____ Mostly from the regular teachers to you

_____ From the regular teachers to you

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

4. Attitude of regular education teachers about providing information to you.

_____ Positive attitude

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

5. The regular education teacher's feelings of responsibility for exchanging information with you.

_____ These teachers provide all relevant information

_____ These teachers provide only required information

_____ Do not communicate with these teachers

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

6. How would you describe the overall effectiveness of communication between you and the regular education teachers?

_____ Very effective

_____ Effective

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

7. How well do you believe the regular education teachers know and understand the problems of implementing a program for handicapped children?

_____ Understands completely

_____ Understands somewhat

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Not at all

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

8. Amount of interaction between you and the regular education teachers aimed at improving services.

_____ Much interaction

_____ Some interaction

_____ Very little interaction

_____ No interaction

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

9. Amount of actual influence the regular education teachers have on the programs for handicapped children in your district.

_____ Substantial

_____ Moderate

_____ None

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

10. What would you consider to be the greatest problem(s) in providing information to the regular education teachers?

11. What would you consider to be the greatest strength(s) in providing information to the regular education teachers?

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:

1. Experience: Special Education _____

   Present Position _____

   Total years in education _____

2. Number of years in present school system _____

3. Education: Bachelor's _____ Bachelor's plus _____

   Master's _____ Master's plus _____ Educational

   Specialist _____ Doctorate _____ Postdoctorate _____

1. Listed below are a number of categories in which you are involved in implementing services for handicapped children in your school system. Please use the following code to indicate your opinion on the value of each category in communicating with the special education teachers. Please place the number 1, 2, 3, or 4 in the blank provided at the left of each category.

   1. Information not needed, not communicated.
   2. Information not needed, but communicated.
   3. Information needed, not communicated.
   4. Information needed, not communicated.

CATEGORIES

_____ Child Find Activities

_____ Staffing patterns

_____ Minimum rules, regulations, and best practices

_____ Calendar for reporting deadlines

_____ Due Process procedures

_____ Attendance and discipline policies

_____ Equal Educational Opportunities

_____ Program development and evaluation

_____ Interagency collaboration

_____ Referral procedures, within LEA

_____ Referral procedures, other agencies

_____ Criteria for identification of handicaps

_____ M-Team procedures

_____ Procedures for IEP development

_____ Graduation requirement for special education students

_____ Census

_____ Inservice activities

_____ Personnel schedules

_____ Other _____

2. Indicate which of the methods below you use to communicate with the special education teachers by checking the appropriate blanks in the left column. Check each method used. In the space provided to the right of each method checked, estimate the percentage of the total communication effort represented by each method.

_____	Bulletins	_____% of total
_____	Letters or memos	_____% of total
_____	Group meetings	_____% of total
_____	Telephone	_____% of total
_____	Individual conferences	_____% of total
_____	Other _____	_____% of total

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

CHOOSE THE MOST APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO THE FOLLOWING SITUATION:

3. Direction of flow of information between you and the special education teachers regarding services.

_____ From you to the special education teachers

_____ Mostly from you to the special teachers

_____ Equally both directions

_____ Mostly from the special ed. teachers to you

_____ From the special ed. teachers to you

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

4. Attitude of special education teachers about providing information to you.

_____ Positive attitude

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

5. The special education teacher's feelings of responsibility for exchanging information with you.

_____ These teachers provide all relevant information

_____ These teachers provide only required information

_____ Do not communicate with these teachers

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

6. How would you describe the overall effectiveness of communication between you and the special education teachers?

_____ Very effective

_____ Effective

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

7. How well do you believe the special education teachers know and understand the problems of implementing a program for handicapped children?

_____ Understands completely

_____ Understands somewhat

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Not at all

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

8. Amount of interaction between you and the special education teachers aimed at improving services.

_____ Much interaction

_____ Some interaction

_____ Very little interaction

_____ No interaction

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

9. Amount of actual influence the special education teachers have on the programs for handicapped children in your district.

_____ Substantial

_____ Moderate

_____ None

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

10. What would you consider to be the greatest problem(s) in providing information to the special education teachers?

11. What would you consider to be the greatest strength(s) in providing information to the special education teachers?

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:

1. Experience: Special Education _____

   Present Position _____

   Total years in education _____

2. Number of years in present school system _____

3. Education: Bachelor's _____ Bachelor's plus _____

   Master's _____ Master's plus _____ Educational

   Specialist _____ Doctorate _____ Postdoctorate _____

1. Listed below are a number of categories in which you are involved in implementing services for handicapped children in your school system. Please use the following code to indicate your opinion on the value of each category in communicating with the parents Please Please place the number 1, 2, 3, or 4 in the blank provided at the left of each category.

   1. Information not needed, not communicated.
   2. Information not needed, but communicated.
   3. Information needed, not communicated.
   4. Information needed, not communicated.

CATEGORIES

_____ Child Find Activities

_____ Staffing patterns

_____ Minimum rules, regulations, and best practices

_____ Calendar for reporting deadlines

_____ Due Process procedures

_____ Attendance and discipline policies

_____ Equal Educational Opportunities

_____ Program development and evaluation

_____ Interagency collaboration

_____ Referral procedures, within LEA

_____ Referral procedures, other agencies

_____ Criteria for identification of handicaps

_____ M-Team procedures

_____ Procedures for IEP development

_____ Graduation requirement for special education students

_____ Census

_____ Inservice activities

_____ Personnel schedules

_____ Other _____

2. Indicate which of the methods below you use to communicate with the parents by checking the appropriate blanks in the left column. Check each method used. In the space provided to the right of each method checked, estimate the percentage of the total communication effort represented by each method.

_____ Bulletins	_____% of total
_____ Letters or memos	_____% of total
_____ Group meetings	_____% of total
_____ Telephone	_____% of total
_____ Individual conferences	_____% of total
_____ Other _____	_____% of total

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

CHOOSE THE MOST APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO THE FOLLOWING SITUATION:

3. Direction of flow of information between you and the parents regarding services.

_____ From you to the parents

_____ Mostly from you to the parents

_____ Equally both directions

_____ Mostly from the parents to you

_____ From the parents to you

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

4. Attitude of parents about providing information to you.

_____ Positive attitude

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

5. The parents's feelings of responsibility for exchanging information with you.

_____ The parents provide all relevant information

_____ The parents provide only required information

_____ Do not communicate with the parents

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

6. How would you describe the overall effectiveness of communication between you and the parents?

_____ Very effective

_____ Effective

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

7. How well do you believe the parents know and understand the problems of implementing a program for handicapped children?

_____ Understands completely

_____ Understands somewhat

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Not at all

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

8. Amount of interaction between you and the parents aimed at improving services.

_____ Much interaction

_____ Some interaction

_____ Very little interaction

_____ No interaction

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

9. Amount of actual influence the parents have on the programs for handicapped children in your district.

_____ Substantial

_____ Moderate

_____ None

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

10. What would you consider to be the greatest problem(s) in providing information to the parents?

11. What would you consider to be the greatest strength(s) in providing information to the parents?

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:

1. Experience: Special Education _____

   Present Position _____

   Total years in education _____

2. Number of years in present school system _____

3. Education: Bachelor's _____ Bachelor's plus _____

   Master's _____ Master's plus _____ Educational

   Specialist _____ Doctorate _____ Postdoctorate _____

1. Listed below are a number of categories in which you are involved in implementing services for handicapped children in your school system. Please use the following code to indicate your opinion on the value of each category in communicating with the aides Please Please place the number 1, 2, 3, or 4 in the blank provided at the left of each category.

   1. Information not needed, not communicated.
   2. Information not needed, but communicated.
   3. Information needed, not communicated.
   4. Information needed, not communicated.

CATEGORIES

_____ Child Find Activities

_____ Staffing patterns

_____ Minimum rules, regulations, and best practices

_____ Calendar for reporting deadlines

_____ Due Process procedures

_____ Attendance and discipline policies

_____ Equal Educational Opportunities

_____ Program development and evaluation

_____ Interagency collaboration

_____ Referral procedures, within LEA

_____ Referral procedures, other agencies

_____ Criteria for identification of handicaps

_____ M-Team procedures

_____ Procedures for IEP development

_____ Graduation requirement for special education students

_____ Census

_____ Inservice activities

_____ Personnel schedules

_____ Other _____

2. Indicate which of the methods below you use to communicate with the aides by checking the appropriate blanks in the left column. Check each method used. In the space provided to the right of each method checked, estimate the percentage of the total communication effort represented by each method.

_____ Bulletins	_____% of total
_____ Letters or memos	_____% of total
_____ Group meetings	_____% of total
_____ Telephone	_____% of total
_____ Individual conferences	_____% of total
_____ Other _____	_____% of total

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

CHOOSE THE MOST APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO THE FOLLOWING SITUATION:

3. Direction of flow of information between you and the aides regarding services.

_____ From you to the aides

_____ Mostly from you to the aides

_____ Equally both directions

_____ Mostly from the aides to you

_____ From the aides to you

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

4. Attitude of aides about providing information to you.

_____ Positive attitude

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

5. The aides's feelings of responsibility for exchanging information with you.

_____ The aides provide all relevant information

_____ The aides provide only required information

_____ Do not communicate with the aides

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

6. How would you describe the overall effectiveness of communication between you and the aides?

_____ Very effective

_____ Effective

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

7. How well do you believe the aides know and understand the problems of implementing a program for handicapped children?

_____ Understands completely

_____ Understands somewhat

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Not at all

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

8. Amount of interaction between you and the aides aimed at improving services.

_____ Much interaction

_____ Some interaction

_____ Very little interaction

_____ No interaction

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

9. Amount of actual influence the aides have on the programs for handicapped children in your district.

_____ Substantial

_____ Moderate

_____ None

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

10. What would you consider to be the greatest problem(s) in providing information to the aides?

11. What would you consider to be the greatest strength(s) in providing information to the aides?

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:

1. Experience: Special Education _____

   Present Position _____

   Total years in education _____

2. Number of years in present school system _____

3. Education: Bachelor's _____ Bachelor's plus _____

   Master's _____ Master's plus _____ Educational

   Specialist _____ Doctorate _____ Postdoctorate _____

APPENDIX B

INVOLVED OTHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey # _____

1. Indicate which of the methods below are used by the special education office to communicate with you by checking the appropriate blanks in the left column. Check each method used. In the space provided to the right of each method checked, estimate the percentage of the total communication effort represented by each method.

_____	Bulletins	_____ % of total
_____	Letters or memos	_____ % of total
_____	Group meeting	_____ % of total
_____	Telephone	_____ % of total
_____	Individual conferences	_____ % of total
_____	Other _____	_____ % of total

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

2. How would you describe the overall effectiveness of the exchange of information between the special education office and you?

_____ Very effective

_____ Effective

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

3. How well do you believe the special education office knows and understands the problems of implementing a program for handicapped children?

_____ Understands completely

_____ Understands somewhat

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Not at all

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

4. Amount of interaction between the special education office and you aimed at improving services.

_____ Much interaction

_____ Some interaction

_____ Very little interaction

_____ No interaction

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

5. Direction of information flow between the special education office and you.

_____ From you to the special education office

_____ Mostly from you to the special education office

_____ Equally both directions

_____ Mostly from the special education office to you

_____ From the special education office to you

6. Amount of actual influence the special education office has on the programs for handicapped children in your district.

_____ Substantial

_____ Moderate

_____ None

_____ Do not know

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

7. Your perception of the attitude of the special education office about providing information to you.

_____ Positive attitude

_____ Needs improvement

_____ Do not know

Additional Comments:

8. Your perception of the office of special education's responsibility for providing information to you.

_____ Special education office provides all relevant information

_____ Special education office provides only required information

_____ Special education office provides no information.

Additional Comments:

9. What would you consider to be the greatest problem(s) communicating with the special education office?

10. What would you consider to be the greatest stength(s) communicating with the special education office?

Survey # _____

DIRECTIONS: Please circle or underline the most appropriate answer. Use present level of information without consulting references.

1. Tennessee legislation provides for the mandatory education of handicapped children ages

   A. Four through twenty-one years, including three year old deaf.

   B. Four through twenty-one years, including three year old blind

   C. Four through twenty-one years, including three year old autistic.

   D. Birth through twenty-one years, all identified handicapped.

2. With the exception of emergencies, a handicapped child may

   A. Be suspended only by the school board chairperson

   B. Be suspended only by the school principal

   C. Be suspended only by an M-Team recommendation

   D. Not be suspended from school for any reason.

3. IEP means

   A. Independent Evaluation Program

   B. Individualized Education Progress

   C. Individualized Education Program.

4. Parental signature is required

   A. On annual reviews

   B. On progress reports

   C. Prior to initial assessment

   D. On all of the above.

5. M-Team means

   A. Management team

   B. Multidisciplinary team

   C. Multi-management team

   D. Master management team.

6. L.D. means

   A. Language Delayed

   B. Language Disadvantaged

   C. Learning Disability

   D. Learning Delayed.

7. Any certified special education student who has earned the necessary units of credit for high school graduation or satisfactorily completed an IEP, made passing scores on all components of the Proficiency test, and had satisfactory records of attendance and conduct will be awarded

   A. Special Education Certificate

   B. Diploma of Special Education

   C. High School Certificate

   D. Regular high school diploma.

8. Local special education programs are monitored by the state department at least

   A. Quarterly

   B. Annually

   C. Every three years

   D. Every five years.

9. The Tennessee Department of Education's method of obtaining the official record of handicapped children and youth in each local system is know as

   A. Attendance

   B. Census

   C. Quota

   D. Register.

10. The progress of each identified handicapped child, in each subject area, shall be reported to the parents at least

   A. Every six weeks

   B. At teachers' discretion

   C. When child is re-evaluated

   D. Annually at M-Team meeting.

11. A child who has an autistic condition which is manifested by severe communication and other developmental and education problems is considered

   A. Language Impaired

   B. Mentally Retarded

   C. Other Health Impaired

   D. Emotionally Disturbed.

12. A child who has significant impaired adaptive behavior in the school environment and home/community environment as well as low intellectual functioning is considered

    A. Mentally Retarded

    B. Multi-handicapped

    C. Learning Disabled

    D. Emotionally Disturbed.

APPENDIX C

FIELD TEST COVER LETTERS

To: Special Education Directors

Subject: Field testing of research questionnaire

From: E.F. Shuford

Date: 25 March 1985

One of the problems facing local special education directors is the development and maintenance of effective communications between the special education central office professional staff and others involved with implementing programs for handicapped children. A study is being conducted to determine the "state of the art" regarding communication processes between the special education office and these "involved others" (school board chairperson, superintendent, other central office program directors, principals, teachers, aides, and parents).

The enclosed questionnaire is designed to be mailed to one of the "involved others." The special education office is defined as the special education employee who reports to the special education director.

As a special education director you can help with field testing of this study. Please examine this questionnaire and test of knowledge. Your cooperation in evaluating these will be greatly appreciated. The purpose of this is to improve the final instrument. As you are completing the questionnaire, please anticipate such problems as clarity of instructions, wording of items, time involved in completion. Also, please review the test of knowledge for difficulty level, clarity of instructions, etc.

It is not necessary for you to sign the questionnaire but respond in the additional comments space and return by 30 April 1985.

Thank you.

APPENDIX D

LETTERS TO PARTICIPANTS

To: Special Education Directors

Subject: Special Education Questionnaire

From: E.F. Shuford

Date: September 6, 1985

A survey is being conducted to investigate the exchange of information between local special education directors and others involved with implementing programs for handicapped children. It is anticipated this study will provide insight into how information is exchanged and how it might be improved in the future. Your assistance with this portion of the study will provide information which can improve services for handicapped children.

Enclosed are two questionnaires designed to determine your interaction with these persons. Please respond immediately and return in the enclosed self-addressed prepaid envelope.

Complete confidentially will be observed. No school district or individual will be specifically identified. The return of these questionnaires will be taken as an indication of your informed consent to participate. Thank you for your cooperation.

To: Principals

Subject: Special Education Questionnaire

From: E.F. Shuford

Date: September 15, 1985

A survey is being conducted to investigate the exchange of information between local special education directors and others involved with implementing programs for handicapped children. It is anticipated this study will provide insight into how information is exchanged and how it might be improved in the future. Your assistance with this portion of the study will provide information which can improve services for handicapped children. Please:

1. Complete the principal's questionnaire.

2. Distribute and ask the following to complete the appropriate labeled questionnaire and return to you: (a) regular education teacher, (b) special education teacher, (c) aide working with handicapped children, (d) parent of a handicapped child.

3. Return all questionnaires in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope immediately.

Complete confidentially will be observed. No school district, school, or individual will be specifically identified. The return of these questionnaires will be taken as an indication of your informed consent to participate. Thank you for your cooperation.

To: Teachers, Parents, Aides

Subject: Special Education Questionnaire

From: E.F. Shuford

Date: November 15, 1985

A survey is being conducted to investigate the exchange of information between local special education directors and others involved with implementing programs for handicapped children. It is anticipated this study will provide insight into how information is exchanged and how it might be improved in the future. Your assistance with this portion of the study will provide information which can improve services for handicapped children.

Please respond and return to your principal immediately Complete confidentially will be observed. No school district, school, or individual will be specifically identified. The return of these questionnaires will be taken as an indication of your informed consent to participate. Thank you for your cooperation.

APPENDIX E

FOLLOW-UP LETTER

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE 37996-3400

To: School Board Chairpersons, Superintendents, Special Education Supervisors and Other Central Office Program Supervisors

From: E.F. Shuford

Subject: Special Education Questionnaire

Date: October 7, 1985

Recently you received in the mail a questionnaire regarding communications between the local special education office and others involved with implementing programs for handicapped children. In the event you have misplaced the questionnaire, I am enclosing a second copy with this letter.

Your participation in a study of communication between these groups is vital to determining the needs of local special education directors. I hope that you will take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire and return it to me as soon as possible.

Thank you for your time and assistance.

APPENDIX F

FOLLOW-UP COVER LETTER

To: Survey Participants

Subject: Special Education Questionnaire

From: E.F. Shuford

Date: September 22, 1985

Recently you received in the mail a questionnaire regarding communications with special education personnel. Please take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire and return in the envelope provided.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
KNOXVILLE TENNESSEE 37996-3400

To: School Board Chairpersons, Superintendents, Special Education Supervisors and Other Central Office Program Supervisors

From: E.F. Shuford

Subject: Special Education Questionnaire

Date: October 7, 1985

Recently you received in the mail a questionnaire regarding communications between the local special education office and others involved with implementing programs for handicapped children. In the event you have misplaced the questionnaire, I am enclosing a second copy with this letter.

Your participation in a study of communication between these groups is vital to determining the needs of local special education directors. I hope that you will take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire and return it to me as soon as possible.

Thank you for your time and assistance.

APPENDIX G

STRENGTHS AND PROBLEMS WITH COMMUNICATIONS

APPENDIX G

Strengths and Problems with Communications

Strengths

1. Communication System

Reception of Information

Aides are receptive to information and want to help in improving services.

Willingness of Superintendent to listen and act appropriately.

Superintendent open to suggestions, fair in his recommendations and supportive of the programs.

Good comprehension and professional attitude.

School Board Chairperson is understanding.

Knowledge of School Board Chairperson and parents.

School Board Chairperson listens.

Special Education teachers very open minded and want to be aware of latest.

Most parents are willing to listen when it concerns their children.

Aides and Principals willing to listen.

Transmission of Information

Full acceptance with minimal clashes.

By working closely together we communicate all aspects of all the programs in order to coordinate all efforts.

Small system - ease of communicator.

Small system - easy access and close contact.

Office next to Superintendents - easy access.

Small town - information made available in a variety of ways.

Small central office - daily contact if necessary.

Monthly memos to special education teachers and constant rounds to schools.

Policies Affecting Communication

Administrative commitment.

Parents awareness of their rights.

Requirements of due process have been most helpful.

Share the same office suite with other program directors.

Small system - can have individual conferences when needed.

Small system - work as a team.

School Board Chairpersons concern and willingness to help despite not having full support of the board.

Meet daily with Superintendent for thirty minutes to one hour to exchange information and plan a course of action.

Central Office staff meetings enable me to share needed information concerning program implementation.

> There is hope that if one keeps plugging at the system, one's suggestions would eventually be heard. I am worried that the Better Schools Program is going to make the handicapped education more of a busy work than an inspiration, more of a chore than service to the children. I am optimistic that parent's involvement will help improve the program.

2. Organization Structure

Time

When time is available School Board Chairperson is willing to listen and provide needed help.

All together much of the time.

Personnel

Concerned, dedicated teachers.

Parents sincere and honest.

Positive caring attitude of personnel.

A strong Special Education staff.

Size of staff.

Total involvement of the Principal.

Mutual trust.

Teachers with adequate knowledge.

Cooperation

Mutual understanding.

Good rapport.

Support and cooperation.

Given responsibility and confidence of superintendent to implement programs as needed and required.

Great cooperation and support on part of principals.

Cooperative attitude - willing to work together to serve students.

3. Feedback

Face to face talks.

Networking three supervisors and teachers advisory committee.

Supervisors have an answering service and a prerecorded weekly message.

Use of teacher advisory council.

4. Content

Our Principals are always ready to help develop Special Education programs.

The S-team concept.

Problems

1. Communication System

Reception of Information

Hard for regular education teachers to understand problems associated with developing programs for handicapped.

Teachers are not interested in special education programs unless it involves them directly.

Parents who cannot understand the purpose of the program or their childrens' weakness.

Getting them (other Central Office personnel) to believe the importance of interaction of all programs.

Parents with limited skills.

Principals are responsible for all programs - often feel special education receives priority.

Regular education teachers' understanding special education terms.

Lack of interest.

Getting them (Principals) to understand that everything is mandated by law.

Illiteracy of parents prohibit sending letters.

Superintendent knows little of the laws relating to Special Education and why we must follow definite guidelines. Knows little about the budget process as related to special education.

Transmission of Information

Parents without phones.

Rural schools that are different in enrollment sizes; therefore, different in communication needs.

Difficult to contact parents individually.

Policies Affecting Communication

The priority is with "pressing emergency situations" and does not leave enough time to provide information about ongoing programs.

Division of responsibilities.

My Superintendent and Principal communicate with School Board Chairperson instead of me.

Scheduling.

2. Organizational Structure

Time

Most of our principals teach full-time. They do not have time for much communication.

Time for interaction.

Time and resources.

The pressures of time and the multifaceted position I hold do not allow adequate time to discuss many issues until they become a problem.

Realistically, School Board Chairperson does not have time to digest much beyond rules, regulations and finances.

Time and demands of schedules.

Too many meetings that take up your time.

Not having the time to get my teachers together for group meetings.

Personnel

I can get information to them (regular education teachers) easily enough. The problems come from getting them to utilize the information they have.

School Board Chairperson not interested in the program.

He (Superintendent) does not take the program seriously and expects it to be run with minimum funding and no input from him.

Teachers/aides relationship is critical and many times aides feel torn between reporting teachers errors, or answering to three different bosses: teachers, principal, supervisor.

Cooperation

Parental expectation of what the program can provide.

Parents not willing to attend meetings.

Availability (School Board Chairperson) may see him once a month.

Education of the handicapped is not a major concern of our board.

Access to Superintendent.

3. Feedback

Changes at state level that comes to us at our meetings and to him (Superintendent) at his meetings are not always related the same - sometimes due to the "change itself" and sometimes due to repeating second hand - means I'm sometimes behind.

When an immediate problem occurs; it would be nice to have immediate feedback from an expert.

4. Content

Amount of information and paperwork is overwhelming for everyone.

Some (Principals) dislike nature of information in regard to rules and laws concerning programs for handicapped.

Time and mental system overload. One can only digest so much.

Keeping them (Special Education Teachers) abreast with changes in state laws, reforms, and policies.

VITA

Elizabeth Parkey Fugate was born on May 17, 1947, in Middlesborough, Kentucky. Her childhood was spent in Claiborne County, Tennessee. She received the Bachelor of Science in Home Economics in 1969 and a Master of Science in Educational Curriculum and Instruction in 1973 from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Employment experiences have included serving as a mobile classroom teacher for a rural-based, early childhood program during the early 70s. In the late 70s, she directed ESEA Title III and IV-C innovative programs for rural school systems in East Tennessee.

She is currently employed as the Preschool Facilitator and teacher of the vision handicapped for the Claiborne County School System, Department of Education.

In 1980 and again in 1984, she was awarded a six weeks' Fulbright grant for study in India. She is a member of the Fulbright Alumni Association, Pi Lamba Theta and Kappa Delta Pi, as well as the Council for Exceptional Children, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the Tennessee Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National Council of Social Studies Teachers, the Tennessee Education Association, and the Claiborne County Education Association.