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Successful Implementation of 504 Plans : What are the Common Elements?

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Successful Implementation of 504 Plans

What are the Common Elements?

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In

Educational Leadership

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ABSTRACT

Successful Implementation of 504 Plans

What are the common elements?

Eugenia Webb-Damron

The objective of this qualitative research was to study the implementation of successful 504 Plans. Five students were determined to have successful plans based on parent and teacher perceptions as well as school achievement. The parents, teachers, administrators, and five students with successful 504 Plans participated in this study. Findings determined that there were four common factors in successful 504 Plans: communication, parental involvement, necessary accommodations, and student's willingness to work. Other factors unique to some of the cases (extended family, support services, and medication) also played a role in the success some students achieved.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to:

The love of my life who I miss every day. Without his love and support I would not have had the strength or time to do this, and without his companionship I would not have wanted to.

my mother who passed away long before it became a reality. She believed in me and gave me the courage to try, and try again.

my dad who gave a lot, and then gave some more.

my papa who couldn't understand what was taking me so long. .

my kids who've never known a time I wasn't going to school. I hope that you've learned to set a goal, and then work to achieve it.

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CHAPTER I

Successful 504 Plans

Jill has an average Intelligence Quotient (IQ), but she cannot do her class work. Joe has an average IQ, but he is failing third grade. Jeremy has an above average IQ, hindered by Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), and he is failing middle school. Andrew is a junior in high school who progressed from failing middle school to making the honor roll in high school. All four of these children have been tested for Special Education services, yet none of them qualify. What does Andrew have the other three children do not have? He has a 504 plan. This plan is designed to meet Andrew's needs through modifications and accommodations made in the classroom that provide him with an appropriate education. Schools throughout the nation are required to implement 504 Plans for students who have a diagnosed disability that prevents them from accessing the same learning opportunities as their peers (Henderson, 2001).

Teachers and school administrators constantly face decisions about educational plans for students with disabilities, and now the federal legislation known as No Child Left Behind holds teachers and school systems accountable for students who are not learning at a verifiable rate. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 provided certain education remedies (504 Plans) for such students. The concept and practice of "inclusion" has resulted in new challenges for teachers, administration, and parents to provide effective educational experiences for students. There are, to be sure, many opinions and practices in the development and implementation of individual 504 plans (Kizlick, 2003).

The success of these many practices and implementations is the focus of this study. What are the steps in developing successful plans? Who is involved? What

courses of action are necessary to develop a successful plan? Is it the implementation of the plan that makes it successful? What commonalities do successful plans share? The literature provides a wealth of information about the mandates of the law, yet very little research about the practice and success of the mandated 504 Plans. This study examined five 504 Plans that were determined successful for students by their teachers, parents, and school records. The goal of this research was twofold; first to understand the essential elements of each successful 504 Plan as a unique case and secondly to discover and understand commonalities that existed among successful 504 Plans. This understanding was sought in order to assist school administrators and teachers in their primary mission: ensuring the educational success of all students (Haller & Kleine, 2001).

Background

The Rehabilitation Act, PL93-112, which made provisions for persons with disabilities, was signed into law in 1973. Section 504 of this act safeguards the rights of persons with disabilities in many areas of their lives, including employment, public access to buildings, transportation, and education (Bateman, 1998; Crockett, 2002; DeBettencourt, 2002; Wright & Wright, 2002). Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act is a civil rights provision that prohibits discrimination against the disabled, including students. The regulations set forth through this provision require identification, assessment, procedural safeguards, and the provision of appropriate educational services at every school. Yet, many educators remain unclear in their understanding of the law, thus failing to ensure the requirements are met (ACSA 504 Task Force Committee, 1994). Education requires a community approach. Parents, teachers, and administrators must all work together to provide the best education possible (Bateman & Bateman,

2001; Wright & Wright, 2002). School administrators are recognized as the leaders in the educational community and are responsible for the education of all students by ensuring that legal mandates such as Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are met. This makes it necessary for administrators to not only be aware of the law, but enforcers of it as well (Wright & Wright, 2002).

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Public Law 93-112 (PL 93-112) says

no qualified handicapped person shall, on the basis of handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity which receives monies or benefits from federal financial assistance. (Wright & Wright, 2002, p. 269)

The definition for a handicapped person under this law is, “any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, has record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such impairment” (Wright & Wright, 2002, p.268). These life activities are walking, talking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, caring for oneself, and performing manual tasks (DeBettencourt, 2002; Wright & Wright, 2002). The legislation further defines a physical or mental impairment as

- (1) any psychological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the organs: respiratory, including speech organs, cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitourinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin and endocrine
- (2) any mental or psychological disorder such as mental retardation organic brain syndrome, emotional and or mental illness, and

specific learning disorder (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights letter to the West Virginia Board of Education).

The definition does not set forth a list of specific diseases and conditions that constitute physical or mental impairments because of the difficulty of making any such list comprehensive. Section 504 expanded this to mandate the rights of all students with a physical or mental disability that substantially limits one or more of their life activities, students who had record of such an impairment, and those who are regarded as having such an impairment (Bateman & Bateman, 2001; Betz, 2001; Crockett, 2002; U.S. Department Office of Civil Rights letter to the West Virginia State Board of Education; Wright & Wright, 2002; Zirkel, 1996).

In order to comply with the regulations set forth through this act, educational plans called 504 Plans were mandated. These education plans are formal agreements between the schools and the students that explicitly state how the school system will meet the students' needs and guarantee that they are receiving adequate services (Wright & Wright, 2002). These 504 Plans ensure that students with special needs are provided with an education that allows them to grow, prosper, and become productive citizens (Fosse & Hosie, 1995).

In 1974, Public Law 94-142, Education of Handicapped Act was passed by the United States Congress. This act promised the nondiscriminatory education of handicapped students who were diagnosed with a disability recognized by the federal government. Since that time special education law, related to the Education of the Handicapped Act, has been extensively implemented. This does not, however, automatically qualify a student for special education services, and a student may need a

504 Plan, which is derived from The Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This act, however, has languished and only recently received limited public school implementation. Some school districts under-serve, limit, under-use, and resist change necessary for successful 504 Plan implementation, while others have made significant progress (Henderson, 2001).

In the context of No Child Left Behind legislation (Hamilton and Stetcher, 2003) and the pressure on teachers and administrators to guarantee the success of every student, the lack of required Section 504 implementation, coupled with increased public awareness of Section 504 issues, constitutes a compelling reason to identify successful 504 Plan implementation as well as to understand the phenomenon of 504 Plans (Fleischer, 1998). Smith (2001) averred that there is a resurgence of awareness of Section 504 as parents realize that their children, who do not qualify for special services under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) formerly known as the Education of the Handicapped Act, still need help in obtaining an appropriate education. In 1995, Fossey and Hosie reiterated Katsiyannis' 1994 findings that advocacy groups had worked to successfully increase the design and implementation of 504 Plans. This heightened awareness paralleled an increase in students diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), who need assistance but do not qualify under IDEA. Section 504 has become the global vehicle for accommodating children with needs such as ADD or other health impairments. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act is pivotal in encouraging teachers to support students who are otherwise not eligible for special education services (Blazer, 1999).

Statement of the Problem

Reid (1995) found that many parents and educators were unaware of the mandates of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and that many children were not being served or were underserved. The American School Counselor's Association (ASCA) formed a task force in 1994 which researched the practice of protecting the rights of the disabled. This task force reported that administrators must look carefully at the provisions of Section 504 since they are responsible for following the law and making certain that 504 plans are properly implemented (ASCA Task Force Committee, 1994).

The legal mandates of 504 Plans and the ways in which these mandates can be implemented were found while doing a literature search of 504 Plans. Examples of these findings are the ACSA 504 Task Force Committee report (1994), *A Principals Guide to Special Education* (Bateman & Bateman, 2001) and *Understanding the Differences between IDEA and Section 504* (De Bettencourt, 2002). However, a thorough literature review did not find a comprehensive list of what elements made a 504 Plan successful, or even a definition of successful 504 plans. In Wayne County, West Virginia, there has not been a study performed to identify the success of 504 Plans or to identify the constraints of these plans. Such a study would enable the county to better serve students with special needs and help ensure that legal guidelines are met.

Research Purposes and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to understand and describe effective practices in the implementation of 504 Plans and to analyze the common themes and components these successful plan share. Through a collective case study this research aimed to broaden the

knowledge base about factors that influenced successful 504 Plans (Johnson & Christensen, 2000).

In this study the terms successful and effective were used interchangeably. Successful 504 Plans were determined through teacher and parent perceptions of the plan as well as document collection of the child's school records.

Specifically this study answered the following research questions.

1. How were successful 504 Plans developed and implemented?
2. How were these successful 504 Plans perceived by teachers, parents, administrators, and others?

Significance to Administrators

“School principals are responsible for ensuring the appropriate education of all students, including those with disabilities. They must provide the leadership to develop the knowledge base and must have the competence to ensure compliance” (Katsiyannis, 1994, p. 6). Although IDEA was passed in 1990, many school administrators have limited knowledge about the needs of students or even of the law itself (Crockett, 2002; Wright & Wright, 2002). The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 (from which 504 Plans are guided), is even less known to administrators (ASCA Task Force Committee, 1994; Crockett, 2002). An example of this was found in a study by Powell and Hyle in 1997. Through observations they found that administrators had varying knowledge of special education law, and their interpretations of that law were even more diverse (ASCA Task Force Committee, 1994; Powell & Hyle, 1997). The initiatives of these administrators were thus devoid of the knowledge needed to facilitate practices that were legal and supported the needs of special education students (Crockett, 2002).

In her article “Special Education’s Role in Preparing Responsive Leaders for Inclusive Schools”, Crockett averred that special education adds value to leadership training by providing training and information about legal mandates and offering key principles in educating students with special needs, thus supporting the significance of this dissertation to educational administration (Crockett, 2002). Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) stated that educational research develops new knowledge about teaching, learning, and educational administration, therefore strengthening the need for this study. Crockett (2002) argued that what schools needed were responsive leaders who were knowledgeable about what students needed and who were committed to ensuring these practices took place. These leaders need to be responsive, influential persons who are committed to supporting learning for all students, regardless of their needs (Crockett, 2002).

Another factor necessary for successful education is professional development provided to the staff through the efforts of the administration. This directly affects the quality of the educational services provided; therefore, the administrators need to be aware of the laws and their mandates in order to provide necessary training to their staffs (Hubbard, 1999; Katsiyannis, 1994; Scotch, 2002).

Additionally, knowledge about Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the plans established because of this law falls into one of the four categories established by Haller and Kleine (2001) as essential general knowledge necessary for school administrators. These four types of knowledge essential to administrators for running effective schools will be addressed in this study. The first type of knowledge identified is local knowledge, the knowledge an administrator has about his or her school or the

school district. In this study knowledge about the customs and beliefs of a school will be gained through interviews and observations, thereby providing the local knowledge (Haller & Kleine, 2001) necessary for effective administrative practices. The purpose of this study was to further administrators' ability to serve children with 504 Plans by identifying components of successful 504 Plans and determining what factors have influenced the effectiveness of these plans.

Even though it was not the focus of this study, legal knowledge is the second type of knowledge that Haller and Kleine (2001) regarded as important to administrators. Legal knowledge was essential in deciding what to do for students (Haller & Kleine, 2001). This study enhanced administrator's knowledge about the legal implications by providing the background knowledge essential to fulfilling the law.

Ethical knowledge, the third type of knowledge imperative to administrators, is the knowledge that helps administrators make decisions; it aids them in knowing what the moral or right thing to do is (Haller & Kleine, 2001). Once the knowledge about successful development and implementation of 504 Plans is expanded through this study, the likelihood of the replication of successful 504 Plans will increase. Writing 504 Plans is mandated by law; going beyond the letter of the law to provide the best education possible for students is the ethical thing to do. This study gave administrators the knowledge needed to help write and implement successful 504 Plans.

Lastly Haller and Kleine listed administrators' knowledge of consequences as essential to the success of a school. Knowledge from research such as that proposed in this study provides administrators with guidelines and similar experiences upon which to base their decisions. Haller and Kleine (2002) affirmed that the person or persons in

charge must know that the decisions they make affect not only students but themselves as well. This study of five cases, each from different schools, expanded the knowledge base concerning how to make 504 Plans more successful and thus provided administrators information about the consequences of decisions made in similar situations.

In a similar format Crockett (2002) developed a framework for administrators to ensure the intent of the law is met in special education. The four principles considered were ethical practice, individual consideration, equity under the law, and effective programming. This study examined five individual students' experiences with 504 Plans; the knowledge generalized from the cases enhanced school administrators' ability to provide the best possible education for all students based on these four principles.

Ethical practice requires that principals ensure the pursuit of universal educational access for all students. This study allowed school administrators to see the ethical decisions made in successful 504 Plans. An example of an ethical implementation of a 504 Plan might be a teacher providing a copy of her written notes to a student. The student's plan may state that he have a student take notes for him in class, but the teacher knows he will learn more from her notes. The law does not mandate that she provides her notes; she does it because it is the right thing to do. An ethical practice such as this may be the difference between a student passing the class or excelling.

Also, Crockett (2002) contended that individualization is necessary for students to achieve. Reviewing the case studies of students with successful 504 Plans will enable administrators to see how teachers are meeting the individual needs of students, and what they as leaders can do to expand this practice. School administrators who provide

training to teachers and enable them to develop skills and the ability to be attentive to the learning and behavioral needs of individual students promote successful 504 Plan experiences.

Equity under the law mandates that principals provide an appropriate education to students based upon what the law mandates. This study showed the extent and ways in which certain school administrators with responsibility for successful 504 Plans were meeting the mandates of the law.

Effective programming is the responsibility of principals. The study of students with successful 504 Plans looked at the implementation of these plans and the role of principals and supervisors as they empowered teachers, led skillfully, and supervised and evaluated educational programs to ensure that they met the individual needs of students both in general education and special education classes. Leaders have to set high standards for student performance, support research-based strategies, and target positive results for learners with special needs (Crockett, 2002).

This model of administrative planning for special education is in accord with the implementation of 504 Plans. Administrators need to understand the applicability of Section 504 to daily activities at the school level. Schools are serving more and more students with attention deficits and learning disabilities; this increase in numbers requires that the principals have an understanding of the services that are to be made available to students who may qualify if their impairment affects their ability to benefit from regular education (Crockett, 2002; Zirkel, 1994). The United States Office of Civil Rights has made many rulings that have brought Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to the attention of school districts (Crockett, 2002; Fleischer & Zames 1998; Zirkel, 1994).

An extensive literature search produced a plethora of information about the legal mandates of 504 Plans and their “new” found existence. However, the search did not result in findings about the success of such plans or what factors influence this success. The National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) also reported that the results of literature review documented that there was very little empirical research on testing accommodations for students with disabilities (Thurlow, Hurley, Spicuzza, & Erickson, 1996). It is for this reason that a study of the factors that influence the effectiveness of 504 Plans was valuable to administrators. The results of this research study added to the knowledge about the successful implementation of 504 Plans and that this knowledge was of assistance to school administrators attempting to enhance the achievement of students with 504 Plans.

Methods

This research was phenomenological in its perspective. The phenomenon of the implementation of effective 504 plans was the research focus. As a phenomenological design, access was gained to the conceptual world of the participants in order to understand their experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Five case studies of students with successful 504 Plans were conducted to gain the qualitative data that is necessary to identify the factors that are salient in effective 504 Plans. Pseudonyms were provided for each student and for the county in which they were schooled. The research methods proposed for this study were qualitative in nature and relied primarily on the collection of non-numerical data such as words and pictures (Johnson & Christenson, p. 312). This study was interested in the phenomenon of successful 504 Plans, which required the researcher to analyze more than one case study

to determine the commonalities among successful 504 Plans (Stake, 1998). This use of five case studies is called a collective case study (Denzin & Lincoln 1998), but coined as “multi site qualitative research” by Herriot and Firestone (1983). I simultaneously examined five successful 504 Plans during the second semester of the school year but concentrated on each study as a single case (Stake, 1998). The emphasis of this study was twofold; first I gained optimal understanding of each case or effective 504 Plan as a unique case. How were plans being implemented and what were the perceptions of the plan? Secondly, I identified the commonalities across the cases in order to understand the factors that influenced them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

I selected five students, each from a different school in a rural county, with successful 504 Plans to participate in the study. I used pseudonyms when naming schools, students, and administrators. Successful was defined as the student making academic progress. This was gleaned through parent, teacher, and administrator perceptions of the plan as well as examination of the student’s school records. This type of sampling is known as purposeful sampling. The goal is to select cases that are “information rich” (Patton, 2001). These cases suited the purpose of this study and were valuable in achieving an in-depth understanding of the factors that influenced successful 504 Plans (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003). These five cases were chosen because they were perceived as successful and met the needs of the study (Stake, 1998).

The nature of qualitative research requires the researcher to gather non-numerical data in an attempt to better understand the phenomenon being observed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Data in this study were obtained through participant observations, interviews, and document collection accomplished during the second semester of the

2003 – 2004 school year. Producing compelling and relevant qualitative research begins with awareness, appreciation, and acceptance of the research participants and their experiences (Chenail, 1992). The case studies, with the rich descriptions gathered through interviews, observations, and documents (Johnson & Christensen, 2000), provided a holistic description of each student's experiences. The common themes across these cases were identified through a cross-case analysis (Johnson & Christensen, 2000), thus determining what factors effective 504 Plans have in common.

Limitations

Merriam, (1995), Guba and Lincoln, (1981), and Patton (1991) avowed that qualitative research typically has high levels of internal validity due to the use of multiple sources of data; peer reviews; statements of the researcher's experiences, assumptions, and biases; and the researcher's submersion into the situation while collecting data over a period of time which allows it to be comprehensive. On the other hand, the research findings of this study had limited external validity or generalizability as defined by Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003). This lack of generalizability was due to the case study design which calls for a small, purposefully chosen, sample. However, the generalizability of case studies increased with the use of more than one site. Including cases located in several different schools gave this study greater range, thus increasing what Merriam, (1995) called "reader generalizability."

A disadvantage of collective case studies is that the depth of the study of each individual case will be decreased because of the number of cases to be studied (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The amount of time spent on each case must be shorter because

there are now more cases to be studied. The choice becomes one between depth of insight and breadth of the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2004).

Another disadvantage with a study such as this is that the research was done with an established pattern of world views and knowledge held by the researcher (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). These pre-established views and prior experiences may make the researcher see what she wants to see or overlook something obvious. For example, I have a son who has a 504 Plan which has thus far been successful in his education. I have pre-existing knowledge of why I think it is successful and needed to guard against seeing those elements. I made every effort to bracket (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p. 364) or suspend these preconceptions. Bracketing, as explained by Johnson and Christensen (2004) is the setting aside of one's feelings or experiences of the phenomenon being studied. This suspension of learned feelings allows one to see the experience as it is (Johnson & Christensen).

Reliability, concerned with the probability that these same findings would show up again, is problematic to qualitative research because unique situations and events can not be replicated (LeCompte & Priessle, 1993). Problems of uniqueness and idiosyncrasy are bases for the claim that no qualitative study can ever be replicated. However, researchers whose goals are generation, refinement, comparison, and validation of constructs and postulates may not need to replicate situations. Moreover, because human behavior is never static, no study is replicated exactly, regardless of the methods and designs used (LeCompte & Priessle, 1993, p. 332).

LeCompte and Preissle (1993) declared that although no study perfectly attains external reliability, it is especially more difficult with phenomenological studies.

“Ethnographers can enhance the external reliability of their data by recognizing and handling five problems: researcher status position, informant choices, social situations and conditions, analytic constructs and premises, and methods of data collection and analysis” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 334).

In efforts to maximize the external reliability of my study, I had to recognize how my position as an administrator may have caused interviewees to say what they thought I wanted to hear, or to change implementation practices when I was observing; thus only another Wayne County administrator may have the same findings. Recognizing this and explaining my purpose to interviewees helped me to lessen the deleterious effect this role had on my research. I approached the parents, teachers, and administrators with the idea that I already thought the plans were successful, and that I wanted to document this. This should lessen the likelihood that they will modify their practices during the study.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that qualitative researchers should be concerned with whether the data collected is consistent with the findings and interpretations of the researcher, and that, if it is, the findings can be considered reliable. In an effort to guarantee the findings were consistent with the data I collected, I used both data triangulation and methods triangulation, which are both described extensively in chapter three.

What Makes a 504 Plan Successful?

Whereas there are no empirical studies of effective or successful 504 plans, several factors have been reported to make school programs generally successful. One factor that is found to be evident in successful school programs is parental participation. In 1999 when Brown and Thomas studied Wheeler School in Kentucky, they found that

parental involvement made a difference in the success of all children in the school. The faculty recognized parents' role as the child's first teacher and understood that this role continued throughout the educational process (Brown & Thomas, 1999). A partnership was formed between the parents and the teachers to plan for the child's continuous development and learning. This partnership began with conversations between the parents and the teacher about the child's needs and strengths. Parental and professional partnerships have long been lauded as important to effective special education (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1998). Policymakers should consider parents' involvement essential to educational progress (Crockett, 2002; Wright & Wright, 2002).

Another factor in successful school programs is teacher knowledge and skills. In relation to effective 504 implementations, teachers need to have expertise about the laws of special education and Section 504 to ensure they follow the proper procedures. Also, they need to possess the skills to manage students with serious behavior problems who may be in the regular classroom and need accommodations to manage these behaviors. Teachers need to understand the intra- and inter-individual differences of learners to best teach to their learning style. Students with teachers who know how to instruct students with learning problems fare better than those without such teachers (Crockett, 2002).

In 1998 the Council for Exceptional Children appointed a Presidential Commission on the Conditions of Special Education Teaching and Learning to identify the obstacles that might obstruct quality teaching and to develop an action agenda to ensure that students with special needs would be provided an education under optimal learning conditions (Coleman, 2001). This commission found that there were multiple

variables that influenced teacher effectiveness when working with students with special needs.

Caseload and class size was the primary concern of teachers. Teachers said a large number of students in class along with students in regular education to monitor made their job an arduous task. Paperwork was the second major concern of teachers. Individualized Education plans (IEPs), which are required under IDEA, are eight to sixteen pages long. This, plus the other paperwork involved in the process of placement creates an overwhelming task. Sufficient time for consultation and planning was the third highest ranked concern of the teachers questioned by the *Council for Exceptional Children* commission. Teachers felt they did not have time to consult with the regular education teacher in a way that would meaningfully benefit the teachers or the students. Finally, support of the administration was of significance. Teachers who reportedly had support of the administration felt they had a lighter work load, while those who did not have administrative support felt frustrated (Coleman, 2001).

I anticipated that some of these same factors influence teachers who have students with 504 Plans in their classrooms. Time was needed for teachers to make referrals, document needs of students, be involved in the meetings with other professionals to help decide if a 504 Plan was needed, and if so, what needs should it address. After a plan was in place, teachers needed to document how the accommodations were being implemented, then evaluate the success or failure of these accommodations (Wright & Wright, 2002). To add to this, these students are enrolled in regular education classes where teachers have not been trained to keep such detailed work. Often in the case of students with 504 plans there is no one with whom to collaborate (Hubbard, 1999).

Regular education teachers must learn to implement accommodations without the support of teachers who are trained to do so (Hubbard, 1999).

This dissertation addressed Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, educational plans written as a result of this act, and factors that influenced the effectiveness of these plans. Ideally, it provides information that will enable administrators to deal more effectively with 504 cases in their schools. Haller and Klein (2001) claimed that research information such as this is necessary for educators to make informed decisions that enhance student achievement and learning.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Chapter Two is a synopsis of the current educational literature relevant to the legal fundamentals of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as well as an examination of literature evaluating the success of educational mandates and programs. A review of the literature about Section 504 encompassed both the legal fundamentals of the law as well as how the mandates were implemented in schools. An overview of successful educational practices was examined in order to establish justification for this study as well as to provide direction toward those components likely to make implementation of the law successful.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires all public facilities to provide reasonable accommodations to allow all people with a handicapping condition the opportunity to enjoy the same degree of benefits as someone with no such condition. This translates into such accommodations as ramps, Braille symbols on doors and elevators, handicap parking, and architectural modifications to buildings such as curb cuts and wheelchair access. Section 504 of this act addresses these modifications in an educational setting and mandates 504 plans for school children who have handicaps that substantially limit a major life activity (Wright & Wright, 2002). These 504 plans require school systems to meet the needs of all students regardless of learning challenge (Betz, 2001; Caruso, 2001; Katsiyannis, 1999; Conderman, 1994; Zirkel, 2000).

Why 504 Plans are Developed

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act mandates that all handicapped children receive an education that is comparable to their non-handicapped peers. To make

education comparable, 504 plans are developed requiring modifications and adaptations that ensure the children are not being discriminated against because of their handicapping conditions (Bateman, 1998; Bateman & Bateman, 2001).

Who Qualifies

Section 504 is a civil rights law that protects children who are regarded as having a handicap. These are the children who have a physical or mental impairment that affects a major life activity or who are regarded as having such a disability. These major life activities include learning, walking, hearing, speaking, breathing, writing, reading, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, or math calculations. The major life activities addressed by academic 504 Plans are learning, reading, writing, or performing math calculations. If one of these activities is limited because of a handicap, the child qualifies for a 504 Plan (Wright & Wright, 2002). Other children who may qualify under Section 504 are children with chronic health conditions, substance abuse problems, students who have returned to school after a serious accident or illness, and students who are at risk of dropping out of school (Betz, 2001).

Students who qualify for 504 Plans are typically students who have previously been tested for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act but did not qualify. Some students are referred for 504 Plans if they have shown a pattern of not benefiting from school, are at risk of being retained, exhibit chronic health conditions, have returned to school after a serious illness or accident, or if they are considered for suspension (Betz, 2001). Students who abuse substances, who are at risk of dropping out of school, or who are suspected of having a disability are also candidates for referral for 504 plans (Luvovich, 1995). Any of these indicators provide educators with a reason to

refer a child for a 504 Plan, but there are other circumstances that might warrant a referral. These are students who are a problem in class, students who are always tired or depressed, students who have a drastic change in academic performance or behavior, students who regularly receive poor grades, and students whose parents express concerns about the child (Caruso, 2001).

Children with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and children with Attention Deficit Disorder with Hyperactivity (ADHD) are among those children who qualify for 504 Plans. ADHD is a “complex and chronic mental health disorder involving problems with inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity developmentally inconsistent with the age of the child” (Edwards, 2002, p.126). These children qualify because their disability hinders their learning (Kardon, 1995). Children who are diagnosed with a medical disability such as ADD, ADHD, diabetes, or other health impairments may be referred to the county 504 coordinator on a separate referral form, deemed only for 504 Plans. It is not necessary to have these children diagnosed by a psychologist, but all of their medical records, school records, along with parent and teacher input are crucial to the decision to develop a 504 Plan (Wright & Wright, 2002).

If a student meets any of the above criteria, or they are not successful in school, the teacher makes a referral to what in some school systems is called the School Assistance Team (SAT). The SAT consists of the child’s parents, current teachers, building administrator, and evaluator. For some students the presence of the school nurse, speech and language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, or counselor may be prudent. This team meets to discuss recommendations for the student and to determine if evaluation such as an intelligence quotient test or an academic

achievement test is necessary (Wright & Wright, 2002). Evaluations are tailored to assess specific areas of need that a child has, and must be valid for the purpose they are given (Bateman & Bateman, 2001). These tests must be administered in ways that best guarantee that the results accurately reflect the student's academic ability (Bateman & Bateman, 2001). Evaluations may also include existing information and must be overseen by someone who is familiar with the child and his or her school performance (Livovich, 1995). It takes the consensus of all of the people involved in a student's education to determine placement or modifications for the child. If the SAT decides that a child qualifies for a 504 Plan based on the law, the SAT becomes a 504 Plan Committee and then a plan is developed (Ryan, 2003). Once a student has been evaluated, the teacher, parents, school administrator, and county 504 plan coordinator meet to discuss what the child needs to succeed in school, and if necessary, develop what is called the 504 Plan (Wright & Wright, 2002). Every three years, or more often if parents or teachers request, the 504 Plan is reviewed and the child may be re-evaluated (Bateman, 1998; Luvovich, 1995; Wright & Wright, 2002). In Wayne County this group of people is still considered the SAT; the language in the literature calls it a 504 committee.

Entitlements

Individuals who meet the requirements of Section 504 are entitled to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), meaning that their parents do not have to pay for the accommodations that better enable them to learn. Under Section 504 students are guaranteed that they will not be discriminated against because of their condition. Parents or guardians are provided with procedural safeguards which tell them what the law says and what considerations they are entitled to. Students who qualify for 504 plans are

assured they will have the same academic curriculum while having equal access to health care, recreational activities, athletics, student employment, clubs, specific courses, and field trips (Betz, 2001; Katsiyannis, & Conderman, 1994; Smith, 2001).

The law requires an appropriate education, comparable to that provided students without disabilities. To provide this education, the school district personnel are responsible for developing 504 Plans. Although the written document is not mandatory, it is recommended (Betz, 2001; de Bettencourt, 2002). These are formal plans that are designed to meet the unique needs of students. The plans include modifications and accommodations that enable the children to receive the maximum benefit of their educational experience (Wright & Wright, 2002). Accommodations and modifications vary for each child and are written to reflect the child's needs. These modifications can come in the form of specialized instruction, related services, or accommodations made in the regular education class (see Appendix A).

Reasonable accommodations must be made to ensure the education of a person with a disability under both 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. These accommodations include changes in policies and procedures that are necessary to provide goods and services and make facilities accessible (Cole, 1995; Crockett, 2002; Wright & Wright, 2002). Section 504 recognizes that inclusion, equality, and achievement are necessary for children to become productive members of society (LREC, 2001).

Section 504 does not require an educational institution to lower or modify its standards in order to accommodate persons with disabilities. It mandates that reasonable accommodations must be made to ensure the education of a person with a disability as

defined in Section 504. Accommodate does not mean dilute, and if used correctly, 504 plans can strengthen educational programs (Cole, 1995).

Developing 504 Plans

Once a student is identified as having a handicap that substantially limits a life activity, the same group of people involved in the evaluation process meet to develop a 504 Plan. This group of people is either called the School Assistance Team (SAT) or the 504 committee. School systems should also have a 504 coordinator to assist in writing these plans (Dagley & Evans, 1995).

This team must determine what the students' strengths are, what their needs are, and how they can meet those needs at school. The first step in the development of a 504 Plan is to identify the resources available. The team must make decisions based on the evaluation and the input of all people involved in the child's education.

Students with chronic illnesses need counselors and medical staff who are aware of their specific needs and who are able to generate appropriate educational, medicinal, psychological, and behavioral interventions to meet these needs (Cox, 1994). Occupational therapists, physical therapists, school nurses and behavior specialists are all service providers that may be included in a 504 Plan. If these support services are determined necessary, a schedule is agreed upon for the child to receive them (Bateman, 1998). These services are then provided in a regular education setting (Wright & Wright, 2002).

Other students with identified disabilities need modifications made within the regular classroom. These modifications include but are not limited to preferential seating, shortened assignments, extended time for assignments, oral testing, written

directions, peer tutors, and a plethora of other accommodations listed in Appendix A. All parties who are involved in the development of the 504 Plan are accountable for the implementation of the accommodations as outlined in the plan. This plan is designed to meet the individual needs of the student. It may address curricular content, physical setting, communication, rules and consequences, medical activity, teacher expectations, and instruction (Livovich, 1995).

Lloyd County's 504 Plans consist of eleven sections which encompass information ranging from identifying the students' needs to the team's approach to the necessary accommodations. Sections I, II, and III include background information, identification, information about the school, the student, and the plan's developmental steps. Section IV names the disabling condition that makes the plan necessary. I have previously discussed the requirements for qualifying for a plan as any student who is identified as disabled as outlined in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Lloyd County offers a computerized list of disabilities that meet the criteria for a 504 Plan. Among this computerized list are the following disabling conditions: Allergies, Autism, Cirrhosis, Panic Disorder, Asthma, Conduct Disorder, Diabetes, Hearing Impaired, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Language Impaired, Attention Deficit Disorder, Chron's Disease, and a multitude of others.

Section V of Lloyd County's 504 Plans is a checklist of what criteria were used to determine eligibility. This checklist includes an Adaptive Behavior Assessment, Audiological Evaluation, Classroom Work Samples, End-of-Course Testing, End-of-Grade Testing, Far-Point Vision Screening, Hearing Screening, Hospital Discharge

Report, and Individual Educational Evaluation. The 504 Plan Committee is required to consider any and all relevant information about a child (Wright & Wright, 2002).

Section VI of this plan lists the major life activities by the student's disability: breathing, caring for one's self, hearing, and learning, performing manual tasks, seeing, speaking, walking, and working (Ryan, 2003). Section VII of Lloyd County's 504 Plan mandates that the 504 Plan Committee identify the educational impact of the child's disability. The disability may affect whether the student loses her or his place when reading, has difficulty with addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division, has illegible hand writing, has difficulty understanding normal conversations, has involuntary motor tics, has unpredictable and explosive behavior, is not able to attend to detail (Ryan, 2003), and a profuse number of other educational implications.

Section VIII of this plan is a list of the accommodations necessary for the student to have an education that is comparable to that of other students. Accommodations in Lloyd County's guide to 504 Plans (Ryan, 2003) include, but are not limited to, such things as leaving class early to avoid the crowd, using colored paper, eating a special diet, taping recorded lessons, or access to occupational therapy. These same modifications and others are cited by Wright and Wright (2002).

Section IX of Lloyd County's 504 Plans is a determination of the least restrictive environment (LRE). The least restrictive environment as defined by Wright & Wright (2002), require assurances provided by public agencies of the following:

- (2) That to the maximum extent appropriate children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled, and

(3) That special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from their regular environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (p. 192)

Section X mandates the signatures of all people in attendance including the 504 Plan Committee chairperson, school administrator, teachers, nurse, counselor, or any therapist involved in the evaluation or education of the student. The last section, Section XI, is the signature page which must be signed by the parents, teacher, 504 Committee chairperson, and a school administrator.

Implementation of Plans

What does the child need to succeed? Some students need modified instruction or a curriculum that accommodates their needs. Teachers and parents agree on assignment notebooks, modified assignments, extra time to complete projects, specialized instruction, or oral testing. Some students need resources such as raised lined paper, tape recorders, tilted desks, or any number of modified materials. Some students qualify for 504 Plans because of medical needs and their plans are written to accommodate those needs. The team members decide what accommodations are necessary and design the plan to make these adaptations (Blazer, 1999).

What does the teacher need to implement this plan? Teachers value time as one of their greatest resources (Luvovich, 1995). They need time to collaborate with other teachers, time to modify assignments, time to gather resources, and time to implement the 504 plan if it mandates specialized instruction (Caruso, 2001; Coleman, 2001). Teachers also need resources and materials. If a plan requires that the teacher provide the student

with colored paper, highlighted notes, or stories on tape, they must have access to these materials (Zirkel, 2000).

“Rarely in educational research do we have access to data that allow us to empirically explore the relationships between the practices of individual teachers and the learning of their students. This report is one of those exceptional cases” (Supovitz & May, 2003, p. ix). When studying America’s Choice Design, a school reform model, Supovitz and May (2003) found seven principles and rules to be essential in school reform: high expectations, a focus on literacy, a common core curriculum, standards-based assessments, distributed school leadership structures, safety nets, and a commitment to teacher professionalism. Although the America’s Choice Design is not directly related to 504 plans, the premise is the same. Successful school reform and successful student instruction follow the same principles and tools.

Schools need to have high expectations for students, (Luhm, Foley, & Corcoran, 1998; Supovitz & May, 2003) and so do teachers of students with 504 plans. These plans are meant to help the child learn the curriculum, not merely make it easy for them (Cole, 1995). Teachers who answered survey items in the study by Supovitz and May (2003) with a belief that all students could learn, were more inclined to implement the reform model.

America’s Choice design requires a focus on literacy (Supovitz & May, 2003), as does the No Child Left Behind Act passed by the federal government. “The ability to read is a critical component of schools’ success” (Schmidt, Rozendal, & Greenman, 2002, p. 131).

The identification of effective instructional practices for teaching reading in inclusive settings is crucial for ensuring the success of students with high-incidence disabilities integrated in general education classrooms. Poor reading ability is a strong predictor of school failure, and the majority of students with learning disabilities—the largest high-incidence disability group in schools experience difficulty with reading (Schmidt, Rozendal, & Greenman, 2002, p. 30)

This focus on literacy may require the teacher of a student with a 504 Plan to provide books on tapes, a peer mentor to take notes, someone to give him or her oral tests, pencil grips for writing assignments, or raised-line writing paper (Blazer, 1999; Conderman, 1995; Conderman & Katsiyannis, 1995; Semrud-Clikeman, 1999; Zirkel, 2000).

The third principle necessary for America's Choice Design schools was a common core curriculum that was aligned with standards (Supovitz & May, 2003). This same core curriculum and standards must also be met by students with 504 plans. Cole (1995) reiterated that the curriculum for students with 504 Plans should be the same as that for their non-disabled peers; only the instruction of it must be modified to meet their needs.

Supovitz and May (2003) maintained that school assessments must be standards based. These assessments must be aligned with the core curriculum and the standards that have been set for this curriculum. Students with 504 Plans would thus be required to be assessed from the same material with adaptations for test taking provided. Examples of test modifications are oral testing or extended time (Conderman & Katsiyannis, 1995; U.S. Department of Education, 1995; Zirkel, 2000).

The fifth principle found in America's Choice Design was that of a distributed leadership structure (Supovitz & May, 2003). This will be discussed in the role of the administrator's section of this paper.

Supovitz and May (2003) named safety nets as the sixth factor needed in America's Choice Design. Safety nets provide extensive student support and multiple opportunities in which to achieve the standards aligned to the core curriculum. The implementation of 504 Plans coincides with this premise of safety nets. Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, 504 Plans are written to give students the support they need to meet the curriculum goals (Blazer, 1999).

Lastly, Supovitz and May (2003) claimed that a commitment to teacher professionalism must be made by administrators. Teachers need to be provided ongoing professional development, and support for the pedagogy of the school. Teachers have an obligation to meet the needs of every student who has been identified as having a disability. In order to do this they must know how to modify their instruction and make adaptations within their classrooms (Fossey & Hosie, 1995). In the ERIC Bright Futures report, Coleman (1999) found that teachers wanted to be better prepared to meet the needs of their students. Their roles as teachers were changing and the range and intensity of students' needs had increased, but pre-service training was not in alignment with these changes.

Students who qualify for 504 Plans based on a diagnosis of ADD or ADHD may require multi-modal treatment. This multi-modal treatment includes parent education and training, classroom interventions and modifications, medicine when prescribed by a

doctor, and other therapies as needed. Education in anger control, social skills, problem solving, and family or individual therapy may be included in this treatment plan (Abramowitz & O'Leary, 1991; Bryan, Burstein, & Bryan, 2001). Educators need to be aware of the treatment available for students with ADD or ADHD, and their part in this treatment, if they are to successfully educate students with ADD or ADHD who are provided 504 Plans. In their study of behavioral interventions in the classroom Abramowitz and O'Leary (1991) found that classroom noise takes away from on-task behavior, children attend better when in smaller classes, and that direct instruction provides greater results than individual seat work.

Teachers are often faced with educational reform, changes in policy, and legal mandates. The Bright Futures Report of 1999 (Coleman), commissioned by the Council for Exceptional Children, addressed five key factors which influenced special education teachers' ability to succeed; many of these factors apply to 504 Plans.

The sense of collegiality or professionalism that teachers feel directly affects how successful they believe they are. Administrators can help teachers develop this sense of professionalism and therefore have a positive effect on a teacher's success (Coleman, 1999). Also an environment that is open and has frequent communication is mandatory for teachers to implement accommodations, understand behaviors, and better serve students. Students with exceptionalities are required to meet many of the general education curriculum guidelines, yet teachers are often not able to work together to ensure this happens (Coleman, 1999).

Thirdly, teachers reported that if they worked in a climate of support they felt more confident and successful in their work. Creating and maintaining an environment

such as this is the responsibility of the administrator and directly affects student achievement as well as teacher success (Coleman, 2001).

The fourth factor that influenced the teaching conditions was resource availability (Coleman, 1999). Students with 504 Plans often require a variety of resources such as modified text books, raised-line paper, medical supplies, and technical devices such as recorders, keyboards, or touch screen computers. Having necessary resources at hand improves implementation of accommodations and motivates teachers to teach to their maximum potential (Blazer, 1999).

Lastly, teachers reported that clarity of roles and responsibilities contributed to a sense of satisfaction. Coleman (2001) listed defining the role of the special and general education teacher relative to students with exceptionalities as a key factor in special education teachers' success. Teachers who knew their role were more likely to meet their responsibilities in a manner that promoted success.

Students' experiences, understanding, interests, commitments, and engagements are also crucial to instructional capacity. One way to consider the matter is that the resources that students bring influence what teachers can accomplish. Students bring experience, prior knowledge, and habits of mind, and these influence how they interpret and respond to materials and teachers (Cohen & Ball, 1999, p. 3). Teachers who know, understand, and adapt to this information stand a greater chance of maximizing their students' potential.

Parental Involvement

A parent may refer their child to the SAT for initial testing if they feel their child has a disability that is prohibiting them from learning comparably to their peers (Wright & Wright, 2002). Parents are involved in the evaluation process if they so choose and their input is valuable to the team (Horn, 1996). There are no specific state or federal requirements under Section 504 concerning parental participation or frequency of review, yet most school districts set a standard to follow. In Lloyd County, the parent must meet with the SAT to discuss options to better enable their child to learn. Testing for special education or a 504 plan may be an option. If the SAT decides testing for some kind of placement is necessary the parents must sign permission for the child to be tested by a psychologist who will give the child an intelligence test. Once evaluation is completed, the SAT convenes again to discuss its findings and its recommendations for the child. Parents also have a right to review their child's records, ask for an impartial hearing and review process, and to be notified if the school is proposing to stop the services for their child (De Bettencourt, 2002).

Although there are no legal mandates, it is necessary to view parents as the true experts on their child, and professionals such as teachers, pediatricians, psychologists, and others need to learn to consult with parents (Gold, Rhodes, Brown, Lytle & Waff, 2001). A respectful approach to listening to the voices of parents holds promise for a positive impact on the life of a student with a disability that deleteriously affects one or more major life activity (Muscott, 2002).

Research and practice have shown that parental participation in education is important to student achievement (Boyer, 1991; Muscott, 2002; Turnbull & Turnbull,

1997). The Consortium of Policy Research in Education sponsored research which was later written as an occasional paper, “Clients, consumers, or collaborators? Parents and their roles in school reform during children achieving, 1995-2000.” (Gold, Rhodes, Brown, Lytle, & Waff, 2001). “Children Achieving” is school reform that lasted from 1995-2000. This reform “envisioned parents as critical players in school reform, a vision that freshly emphasized the need to transform relations between local schools and parents and communities” (Gold, Rhodes, Brown, Lytle, & Waff, 2001, p. 1). One of the emphases of this reform was to increase parent engagement in schools. This effort was founded on the presumption that educational change would not occur without an alteration in the relationship between schools, communities, and the parents. Parents were asked to get involved in four key areas: creating standards and assessments, school councils, relationship building, and community service. A summary of this report avows that parents, communities, and schools did become more connected during “Children Achieving.”

“Exceptional partnerships are based on family-centered practices. Family-centered practice emphasizes families’ strengths rather than deficits, family choice over resources and services, and collaborative relationships between schools and families” (Muscott, 2002, p. 67). Children will achieve more when the needs of their family are supported and when the strengths of the family are considered (Muscott, 2002) in the development and implementation of 504 plans. Professionals who work with families of children with disabilities must aspire to understand the child, family, and the culture in which they live. These partnerships, known by Muscot (2002) as “exceptional

partnerships,” understand the importance of matching strategies of learning and resources that best meet the needs of the family and child.

Students with disabilities not only need modifications in the classroom, but they may struggle with homework as well. Understanding assignments, accurately recording the assignments, taking the necessary materials home, managing time in which to do homework, organizing materials needed to do the work, completing the homework, keeping up with it, and remembering to take it back are all steps in receiving grades for homework. An emerging area of educational intervention research suggests that parental involvement is necessary to improve homework completion (Bryan, Burstein, & Bryan, 2001). An adverse effect occurs when students do not complete, or do not attempt, their homework. Parents can play an important part in guaranteeing homework is attempted, complete, and/or correct (Bryan, Burstein, & Bryan, 2001).

In addition children’s performance and attitudes toward school are positively associated with parental involvement (Bryan, Burstein, & Bryan, 2001). Parents who monitor their children’s homework, participate in school activities, and support the values and work of the school produce students who achieve higher (Bryan, Burstein, & Bryan, 2001).

High scholastic achievement is not the only area that parental involvement improves. It is also necessary for behavior modification and behavioral treatment. Research has shown that the most efficacious and preferred treatment for children with ADHD is a family-based, behavior oriented, multi-modal, and multi-system approach. This multi-modal, multi-system approach includes parent management training, school interventions, medication, and aspects of a summer treatment program held for the

purpose of the Multimodal Treatment Study of Children with ADHD (Abramowitz & O’Leary, 1991; Bryan, Burstein, & Bryan, 2001).

Administrators and 504 plans

How can the administrator help? Administrators can facilitate the implementation of 504 Plans by providing teachers and support service personnel with time to meet and discuss the child, the plan, and how they can implement it together (Schmidt & Greenman, 2002). This collaboration of professionals is directly related to The Bright Futures Report about successful educators (Coleman, 1999). In their study of high performing schools Miles and Darling-Hammond (1997) found that the allocation of teachers as schools’ most expensive resources significantly helped schools meet the needs of their students. These nationally accredited high performing schools restructured their organizations to give teachers more time to collaborate, provide individual attention to students, and used an inclusive model for students with disabilities much like what is required for students with 504 Plans. Schools indicated that in order to perform better they needed high standards curriculum, more time for individual student attention, and an increase in the amount of time spent in teacher planning and learning (Miles & Darling-Hammond, 1997; Supovitz & May, 2003). Administrators have a role in organizing school schedules to promote teacher collaboration (Gulick & Urwick, 1936).

Oppressive paperwork was also named as a detriment to successful education (Coleman, 1999). Filling out forms for the school system or the state department, logging telephone calls, filling out progress reports, maintaining discipline records, reporting child abuse, transition plans, 504 Plans, and IEPs, all consume teachers’ time

and drain their energy. Administrators can lighten this burden by simplifying forms or providing time for these activities (Coleman, 1999).

Administrators can arrange for teachers to observe the student in other situations in which they are successful or observe other teachers who are making modifications (Luvovich, 1995). In their study of America's Choice Design, Supovitz and May (2003) declared that a distributed school leadership structure was essential for successful school reform. A principal who coordinated implementation of best practices, analyzed results, set performance targets, implemented the previously mentioned safety-net system which provided students with additional instruction and resources, and aligned school activities with the implementation of America's Choice Design were the most successful.

Administrators are ultimately responsible for what happens in their schools. Being knowledgeable of the law and how to implement it is their job (Henderson, 2001). A primary function of school administrators is that of protectors. They protect the rights of students and make sure that their needs are met (Willower, 1991). School administrators need knowledge of the law to ensure the needs of students are met, and empower teachers to develop programs that are effective for students with 504 plans (Zirkel, 2002). Crockett (2002) maintained that the laws that require the inclusion of children with special needs into the classroom have been in existence for three decades; still, many school administrators have very little knowledge of the laws and their requirements. When studying school principals in 1997, Powell and Hyle learned that commonly used terminology such as "least restrictive environment" and "inclusion" held various meanings for different principals (Crockett, 2002). However, in 2000 Condry and Brudney studied the implementation of the American with Disabilities Act and its

implementation and found that most administrators perceived that they implemented the law and modifications. This discrepancy between what administrators know and what they do provides a basis for this study of effective 504 Plans. If administrators do, in fact, know the laws and what they have to do to meet the requirements, this study can strengthen their practices by providing research based evidence about the elements of effective 504 Plans. If they do not know the law or how to implement it, this report provides a brief overview of the law, resources for finding out what they need to know, and evidence about effective 504 Plans.

Schools that include students with special needs require responsive, knowledgeable leaders. These leaders need to understand the demands and constraints of the law and the plethora of services included under the umbrella of special education. Even though Section 504 is not considered special education, the same needs apply (Crockett, 2002). In their study of Wheeler School in Kentucky, Brown and Thomas (1999) found that administrator's support and vision nurtured teacher's leadership and encouraged them to grow and refine their teaching practices. It is this support and vision that is needed to encourage teachers to best meet the intent of the law. Coleman (1999) reported that when administrators were knowledgeable and supportive of their efforts teachers felt that their loads had been lifted.

The range and intensity of students' needs have increased but little has been done to help teachers prepare to meet those needs. Administrators can better serve students with special needs and their teachers by preparing the teachers involved (Horne, 1996). Teachers feel inadequately prepared to meet the needs of students with exceptionalities. They fluctuate in their ability to interpret, notice, and adapt to the differences in their

students. These teachers have various conceptions of knowledge and understanding of the content material, they differ in their acquaintances with students and the skills they have in relating with students, as well as a vast span of experiences in which to relate their instruction . These factors all shape how teachers teach; thus administrators who provide teachers with opportunities to develop skills and gain knowledge through in-service, staff development, opportunities to observe other teachers, and being assigned mentor teachers can affect instruction (Cohen & Ball, 1999; Coleman, 1999).

Empirical Research on Accommodations

The National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) reported the results of a literature review documenting that there was very little empirical research on accommodations for students with disabilities (Thurlow, Hurley, Spicuzza, & Erickson, 1996). The data that I found on accommodations predates this report; a thorough review of the literature did not glean more current findings. Vaughn, Shumm, Niarhos, and Daughtery (1993) asked 93 teachers from a metropolitan school district to rate the desirability and feasibility of 30 classroom adaptations. Interestingly, ratings of desirability were significantly higher than ratings of feasibility for all 30 of the adaptations. Those modifications that required little individualization were ranked both the most desirable and the most feasible. This finding is supported in research by Gajria, Salend, and Hemrick (1994) who found that the majority of the teachers who answered their questionnaire about test design modifications were familiar with the modifications and were likely to implement modifications that could be applied to all students. These teachers were less likely to use modifications that could only be applied to individual students. Vaughn, Schumm, Niarhos, and Daughtery (1993) also stated that the

modifications that teachers found least feasible were those that required changes in curriculum, planning, or evaluation policies. Teachers felt that those modifications which increased social acceptance and motivated students to learn, as well as those that did not require curricular or environmental adaptations, were the most desirable (Vaughn, Schumm, Niarhos, & Daughtery, 1993).

Jayanthi, Poloway, and Bursuck (1999) asked regular education teachers to indicate the accommodations they made for students with disabilities when administering tests in the classroom. They found that those accommodations that were most helpful to students were the ones that were the most difficult for educators to make, such as teaching test taking strategies and allowing students to use word processors. Gajria, Salend, and Hemrick (1994) found that modifications that pertained to changes in test design were more likely to be used than those requiring changes in administrative procedure. The 1999 findings of Jayanthi, Poloway, and Bursuck show that modifications that were not difficult to make were giving individual help with directions on a test, simplifying wording of test questions, and using black and white ink copies instead of dittos. Teachers were not likely to utilize testing modifications that they felt would endanger the integrity of the test (Gajria, Salend, & Hemrick, 1994). Such modifications would include letting a student use his notes, providing the test questions ahead of time, or giving a student more time on a timed math test.

Jayanthi, Poloway, and Bursuck (1999) also questioned teachers about how they felt about classroom adaptations. The findings indicated that 8% of the teachers believed that adaptations were unfair because if the students were in general education they should follow those guidelines; however, 67% thought modifications should be made for all

students who were perceived by teachers as needing them, not just the students with diagnosed disabilities. Elementary school teachers reported greater ease in implementing adaptations than middle or high school teachers (Jayanthi, Poloway, & Bursuck, 1999).

Whereas research indicates what successful schools have in common (Zinsmeister, 2002), we do not know what successful 504 Plans entail. This study will add to a small but growing body of knowledge about the success of 504 Plans and how to better write and implement them—knowledge that will be of assistance to administrators who are seeking to enable all children to learn.

CHAPTER III

Research Methods

Chapter Three focuses on the research methods that were used in this phenomenological study of the effective elements of 504 Plans. The use of a qualitative approach, such as a phenomenological study of educational experiences, is supported by the literature (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 2002; Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003; Haller & Kleine, 2001). The research design, selection sample, data collection strategies and data analysis plans are all addressed in Chapter Three. The last section of this chapter briefly discusses the validity and reliability of the methods used in this study.

The four types of research purposes discussed by Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) include description, prediction, improvement, and explanation. This study of 504 Plans was conducted to describe effective 504 Plans and to explain their effectiveness in relation to common elements among them. The research was concerned with the effectiveness of educational interventions, specifically 504 Plans; therefore cases were chosen based on the effectiveness of their 504 Plans. Many effective interventions for improving student's academic successes have been discovered (Walberg, 1993). Further educational research is necessary to refine the interventions found and to transfer their effectiveness to students in different settings (Walberg).

Qualitative Methods

In order to find out what makes 504 Plans effective I used qualitative research methods in the form of case studies. The research was performed in the natural setting, in this case public schools. The goal was to see implementation of successful 504 Plans in their natural contexts in un-manipulated environments (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Information collected through interviews with teachers, parents, and administrators, observations of students in their classrooms, and document collection in the form of the actual 504 Plans, report cards, daily assignments, and teacher notes was the descriptive data necessary for qualitative research. This descriptive data took the form of words, was anecdotal, and described the phenomenon in narrative form (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The study was concerned with the processes in relation to the proposed study. How the participants assigned meaning to 504 Plans and how they applied terms and labels were important processes in this study. A phenomenological approach was used to understand the meaning of events and interactions of ordinary people (Bogdan & Biklen). In this study the goal was to understand the perceptions and experiences of teachers, administrators, parents, and others actually involved in the implementation of successful 504 Plans.

Role of Researcher

As the principal investigator in this collective case study it is important for me to address my educational background. Before becoming an administrator in Wayne County I taught Special Education for thirteen years. My experience in Special Education provided me with an extensive knowledge of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) but did little to prepare me for working with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the 504 Plans developed under this act. My practices as an administrator have allowed me to serve as the School Assistance Team (SAT) leader, be a part of the referral process, observe testing, and be a committee member when a 504 Plan was written. These experiences gave me the ability to observe and infer what

teachers, administrators, and parents want from 504 Plans, and what 504 Plans actually bring about.

Being involved with plans that met with success and those in which children still continued to struggle made me realize the importance of knowing what made plans successful, and what could be done to increase success among students with 504 Plans. It was my desire to focus on successful plans as a way to obtain this information from teachers, administrators, and parents. Knowing that I chose plans because of their success helped to alleviate any fear of criticism or repercussions that teachers or parents might feel. Choosing successful plans also kept me from becoming a trouble shooter for parents or teachers who were not satisfied with a student's success.

Research Design

A case study design was used because the desire was to understand, be enlightened, and discover knowledge (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003; Johnson & Christenson, 2004; Patton, 1990) about effective 504 Plans and the specific instances in which they occurred. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) defined case study research as "The in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon" (p. 436.)

To understand the phenomenon of successful 504 Plans, five purposefully selected cases were studied in order to acquire information and to understand the processes and implementations involved. For a 504 Plan to be determined successful or effective, the student had to be making adequate yearly progress. The student must have been able to keep up with the pace of the class, and had to be learning what was required of the other students in that class, even if it was in a different manner. Using a collective

case study approach, I examined the particulars of each case individually and then identified commonalities of the cases I studied. These commonalities and unique characteristics became apparent through studying the nature of the cases and how the people involved interacted (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Stake, 1990).

Although I simultaneously studied several cases, each case was given careful attention as a unique case (Stake, 1990). The historical background, such as how and when the student was referred for evaluation to receive a 504 Plan, was obtained through interviews and data collection. A description of the student's physical setting helped paint a more accurate picture of the student's environment (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). For example, I attempted to understand how classrooms were modified to meet student needs. This description enables the reader to visualize the classroom environment. I also explored contextual factors such as family economics when trying to understand each child's experiences. I specifically wanted to find out the following about each case:

1. Who were the participants involved in the case, and what was the nature of their involvement?
2. What was the historical background of the case? (Why and how was the student referred for evaluation? How was the 504 Plan developed?)
3. What was the physical setting? (I wanted a description of the school, the classroom, the students and the community that surround the child being studied).
4. What other contextual information such as economic background was important? (A description of the child's home environment, care givers, and their out-of-school activities was given).

5. What were the teachers' perceptions of the student and the 504 Plan?
6. What was the administrators' perception of the plan and its implementations?
7. How did the parents perceive the 504 Plan?
8. How did the student perceive his or her own 504 Plan?
9. How was the plan implemented?

Sample Selection

Lloyd County educates 7,439 students; of these, seventy-three have 504 Plans, which translates into less than one percent of the student population having a 504 Plan. Students who need 504 Plans often need medical adaptations such as nursing care, specialized equipment, time to change classes, and other such modifications. In cases such as these I recognized the plans as Medical 504 Plans. Students who need adaptations to succeed in the academic arena need modifications such as extended time, preferential seating, and someone to take notes for them; these are considered Academic 504 Plans and are the focus of this study. Of the 73 504 Plans that Lloyd County has, 19 are medical and 54 are academic. This translates into .73% of the student population having an Academic 504 Plan.

Table 1

Percent of Population with 504 Plans

| | % with 504 Plans | % with Medical 504 Plans | % with Academic 504 Plans |
|---------------|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Entire County | .98% | .35% | .63% |
| Elementary | .55% | .11% | .43% |
| Middle School | 1.5% | .52% | .99% |
| High School | 1.18% | .23% | .94% |

Five information-rich cases were desired (Cambell & Stanley, 1963; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Herriot & Firestone, 1983; Patton, 2002) and were purposefully chosen as samples of effective Academic 504 Plans. In order to expedite the process of choosing participants for this study I began calling all Lloyd County principals shortly after the Institutional Review Board (IRB) indicated that my application would be approved after I made a few changes. Rather than sending out letters I personally contacted principals, some of whom knew immediately who had a 504 Plan and which ones they would consider successful. Principals with assistants put me through to them, some referred me to the SAT leader who served as a case manager, and yet others suggested I speak to the guidance counselor. Those educators who knew which children had successful 504 Plans volunteered to make the initial contact for me thinking this would alleviate any trepidation parents might feel.

I wanted to study students from each school level and started with high school students with 504 Plans. Wayne County has three high schools in which 1.18 % of the population has a 504 Plan; of these .94 % are academic. The first high school principal with whom I spoke laughed and said there were no successful 504 Plans. He mentally went through a list of students who had 504 Plans, none of which met the criteria. The principal of the second high school I contacted had one student in mind but said there were others about which he was not sure. He referred me to the SAT leader, who gave me the name of a student, Drew, whose teachers felt he had a successful plan. When I spoke with Drew's mother I learned she did not think his plan was successful and I was unable consider him a participant in this study. The third high school principal I contacted, Mr. Chair, made arrangements for me to talk to the teachers and parents of a

student he thought I should include in the study. This student, Les, was the only high school student who participated.

Lloyd County has six middle schools and according to county record, only four of those had students with academic 504 Plans. City Middle School was the first middle school I contacted, and the principal agreed to contact Chris' parents for permission because he felt Chris would be a successful candidate for this study. I then called Staley Middle School and the principal told me that she did not feel the four academic 504 Plans at her school were viewed as successful. The third middle school I contacted, Hayes Middle, did not want to participate in this study. Last, I called Mayor Middle where Cobe attended, and was given his name as a referral. Chris and Cobe, both boys with ADHD, were the middle school students who participated in this study.

Lloyd County has twelve elementary schools. I am the assistant principal of one of these schools, which left the pool of possible schools to use at eleven. I had already selected my two middle school participants and did not feel that I should use an elementary school that fed into one of those schools. I was trying to get a sample of the entire population of Lloyd County rather than just one area. This left me with nine elementary schools from which to choose. Of those nine, only three had students with academic 504 Plans.

The principal of the first elementary school I contacted did not think the students at her school would meet my needs. However, the principal of Malcolm Elementary identified one student, Shandra, to participate in my study. Next I contacted Nabisco Elementary in hopes of finding a student with an academic 504 Plan to study. The assistant principal told me she had a student in mind and once she had parents'

permission gave me that student's name and phone number. This student, John, had a successful 504 Plan and was eligible to participate in this study.

Choosing cases that met the needs of this study allowed me to focus on gaining insight about plans that are perceived as successful (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). By focusing on a small sample of cases that were specifically chosen to provide the most information and enlightenment about 504 Plans I was able to understand effective 504 Plans and identify common components among them (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Johnson & Christenson, 2004; Merriam, 1998).

Fieldwork

Fieldwork requires the researcher to have direct and personal contact with the people involved in the study. This involvement must take place in their environment so that one may observe the realities and minutiae of their daily lives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). I immersed myself in the complexity of the phenomenon and entered the world of the interacting individuals to gain descriptions and understanding of both their external observable behaviors, and even the internal states into which I glimpsed (Bogdan & Biklen).

Observations. Fieldwork is the primary activity involved in qualitative research (Patton, 2002). I observed all student participants in their classroom settings. Elementary students were observed in the regular classroom, at recess, and in special classes such as art, music, or physical education. Middle and high school students were observed in at least two different classes, in between classes, and either at home or at an after school activity.

It was my goal to obtain as much information as possible to gain a holistic view of each case. Gaining this holistic view required that I observe each student a minimum of three times. I observed them in the classroom two of these times, and once in a non-instructional setting or out of the school environment. I wrote field notes to document each observation. In order to ensure my notes were an accurate portrayal of the observations, I jotted abbreviated notes while I was in the field and then typed expanded notes as soon as possible after each observation session. These notes rendered a description of the people, objects, events, places, conversations, and activities observed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The previously stated research questions were my guide as I looked for information that was relevant to understanding the nature of effective 504 Plans. These field notes included both descriptive and reflective components. The reflective or interpretive part of these notes addressed speculations, feelings, problems that arose, hunches, impressions, and my own prejudices that had to be accounted for when analyzing the data (Bogdan & Biklen).

Interviewing. Another data collection strategy that was utilized was interviewing. Parents, teachers, school administrators, and students with effective 504 Plans were interviewed individually to glean information and perceptions of the process of obtaining and writing a 504 Plan, as well as its implementation. Interviews were both structured, based on research questions I previously formulated, and unstructured as I remained open to talking with interviewees about unforeseen issues and concerns about 504 Plans. Teacher and administrator interviews took place in classroom and administrative offices in the schools. Parent interviews took place at school or in the participants' homes. Some follow-up interviews took place by phone.

The purpose of the interviews was to obtain descriptions of participants' perceptions of the educational experiences that preceded the child's receiving a 504 Plan and how those experiences changed since the child was provided with a 504 Plan. I hoped to gain specific knowledge about the events that took place rather than general knowledge (Steiner, 1996). I was focused on a particular theme (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Steiner, 1996), specifically the nature of effective 504 Plans.

In conducting the interviews I attended not only to *what* was being said, but *how* it was said (Steiner, 1996). I asked teachers, parents, and administrators questions about the child generally, about the testing process, and about their involvement in the child's education. These questions yielded rich descriptions of the participants' experiences with effective 504 Plans (Steiner, 1996). The introductory questions provided segue for follow up questions through direct questioning or appropriate gestures that said "tell me more" (Steiner, 1996). If the answers provided by participants did not provide the detailed description necessary to paint a word picture, probing questions such as "Can you give me a specific example?" were asked. These probing questions allowed me to pursue information that met the needs of this study.

In addition to introductory and probing questions, I also used specifying questions. These questions asked for precise descriptions of events (Steiner, 1996) such as "What was the process of obtaining a 504 Plan for your child?" or "Please describe the evaluation process."

Indirect questions were used to glean further information about the phenomenon of effective 504 Plans. Indirect questions are questions that deal with the attitudes of

others, such as “In what ways are the child’s parents involved in his or her education?” or “How willing do you think the people involved are to meet the necessary accommodations?” Answers to questions such as these required careful interpretation (Steiner, 1996). After I interviewed teachers, parents, administrators, and students once, I transcribed the interviews from oral speech to written text (Steiner, 1996) and reviewed the transcriptions before I interviewed participants for a second time.

The interviews were based upon a set of questions designed to best determine what factors contribute to successful 504 Plans. Leading questions showing personal preference or bias were carefully avoided. At the beginning of each interview each participant was reminded that all information would be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Every participant agreed to being taped, but several had comments they wanted to make when the tape recorder was turned off.

Document Collection. Finally, the fieldwork required document collection such as the 504 Plans themselves, teacher reports, parent notes, school records, instructional materials, and work samples of students. This provided me with information about how the child was doing in school before having a plan and what changed since the plan was put in place. Documentation of adaptations made by teachers and notes to parents gave insight into teacher attitudes and willingness to comply with the 504 Plan.

The fieldwork for this study took place during the spring semester of 2004. It concluded after I had the opportunity to observe each participant three times, interviewed the parents, children, teachers, and administrators involved in each case, and collected documentation such as 504 Plans, work samples, lesson plans if modified, and report cards that were relevant to my study. This time range allowed for exhaustion of sources,

saturation of categories, emergence of regularities, and overextension (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In other words, once all of the teachers involved with a student, the school administrators, parents, and students themselves were interviewed, the student was observed in various settings, and data in the form of the actual 504 Plan, schoolwork samplings, report cards, and progress reports were collected, then the sources of information in this study were exhausted. When it was apparent that no other relevant information could be gained, I stopped observing, interviewing, and collecting data. Thorough data collection, which exhausted the sources, led to saturation of categories. Extensive data collection filled all possible categories of data coding and did not allow for more categories to be developed.

Data Analysis

Analyzing qualitative case study data should begin early in the study with the researcher engaging in a preliminary analysis of the data by looking for key issues, or recurrent events or circumstances that become the focus of subsequent data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). I looked at many incidents and data collection documents while searching for common social processes, which were categorized and recorded while the study was being performed (Bogdan & Biklen). As I conducted observations and interviews during the spring semester of 2004, I wrote memos, reviewed literature, and made connections among the data I collected.

The data from each case were analyzed individually. I captured the intricate details of the individual cases and treated each case with respect (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Subsequently, the four cases were compared to one another in a cross-case analysis in an effort to identify and understand the common elements of effective 504

Plans. The goal was to describe each case in such detail that the readers can make comparisons themselves (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). “Interpretational analysis” is the process of examining case study data closely in order to find constructs, themes, and patterns that could be used to describe and explain the phenomenon being studied” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, p. 453). Interpretational analysis helped me achieve insight into the phenomenon of effective 504 Plans.

A critical aspect of the interpretational analysis was categorizing the information collected into segments that encompassed that data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). After I carefully studied the data, I developed categories of the reoccurring factors involved in effective 504 Plans. Through categorizing I sought to explain and describe the phenomena that were observed (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). This process of developing categories from the data was consistent with the inductive logic used in qualitative research analysis (Bogden & Biklen, 1998).

I used strategy codes to separate units of data. “Coding is the process of marking segments of data (usually text data) with symbols, descriptive words, or category names” (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p.502). The strategies, tactics, and instances that influenced the effectiveness of 504 Plans were examined (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Once a system of categories was established, it was necessary to code each segment of collected data into meaningful analytical units (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Due to the inductive nature of this research, I generated codes that were grounded in the data, “which are defined as codes that are generated by the researcher by directly examining the data during the coding process” (Johnson &

Christensen, 2004, p. 502). I used emic terms (terms used by the participants of the study) when coding (Johnson & Christensen, 2004).

Constant comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) of data was performed within and across the categories (Johnson & Christensen, 2003). Categories were revised and compared until I clarified which events and experiences actually affected the success of 504 Plans.

Once interviews were transcribed, observation notes narrated, observer comments and reflective notes written, and documents such as referrals, 504 Plans, test reports, and student work samples were read and reread, the collected data were coded into the following categories: (a) History, (b) The plan, and (c) Factors Enabling Success. This coded information was then used to write a narrative about each child. A cross-case analysis was performed in order to determine what factors successful 504 Plans had in common.

There were several factors that were significant to the success of each plan: (a) Candid and frequent communication between parents, teachers, and administration, (b) Accommodations and modifications necessary for academic achievement, (c) Students' willingness to work and perform, and (d) Active and frequent parental involvement in child's academic work and with school experiences. The data also produced factors that were not common among all cases but were unique to just a few: (a) Support services such as therapists and counselors, (b) Medication, and (c) Extended family support and interaction.

Validity and Reliability

Validity in research is concerned with the extent to which the researcher measures what he or she intends to measure (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990). Johnson & Christensen (2004) noted that descriptive validity, the factual accuracy of the research, is important to qualitative research because descriptions of people, settings, events, and behaviors are a major objective in qualitative research. For example, did what is reported in the field notes actually happen? Through the use of a tape recorder, jotting down notes, and multiple visits, I provided accurate factual accounts of what I observed, thus providing descriptive validity.

The use of observations, interviews, and document collection strengthened the validity of this research. The use of multiple investigation techniques, known as methods triangulation, provided a holistic view of the phenomenon (Johnson & Christenson, 2004). Observing students with effective 504 Plans in their classrooms provided me with details about how the 504 Plan worked in the classroom. I had the opportunity to observe students' and teachers' behaviors which added validity to this study. By interviewing students, teachers, and parents, I had the opportunity to hear their perceptions of the events around them. I found out what were they thinking; I learned about the thought processes that occurred during these educational experiences. Interviews offered answers that were not available through observation, but I had to be cautious because of the possible discrepancy between what someone says and what he does (Johnson & Christenson, 2004). For this reason a holistic approach through methods triangulation was used.

For example, if the researcher hears about the phenomenon in interviews, sees it taking place in observations, and reads about it in pertinent documents, he or she can be confident that the “reality” of the situation, as perceived by those in it, is being conveyed as “truthfully” as possible (Merriam, 1995, p. 55).

Data triangulation, which refers to the use of multiple data sources in a single research study while using the same data method (Johnson & Christenson, 2004), was used to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation and to enhance validity during this study (Stake, in Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The use of several observations of the same student, multiple interviews concerning the same case, and collection of data materials from the same student are examples of multiple data sources that I utilized to provide data triangulation within my study. This process of triangulation helped eliminate biases that result from focusing on only one source of data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

Wolcott (1990) offered nine suggestions to make qualitative research more valid. First, Wolcott suggested that researchers not be verbose. Carefully listening to participants and the people surrounding a case was of great importance. I used both observations and interviews to hear what was happening, honed listening skills that allowed me to attend to participants without talking too much. Wolcott warned against researchers who presumed they understood what was happening. I guarded against this by asking purposeful questions and carefully listening to the answers. Secondly, Wolcott asserted that recording accurately was another step in making certain that research was valid. I recorded data as soon after an observation or interview as possible to assure that my notes were accurate and that my record keeping was true to the account. Wolcott’s

third suggestion was that researchers begin writing early. I wrote a rough draft of all observations and interviews as soon after the encounter as possible.

The fourth suggestion Wolcott offered is to let readers “see” for themselves. Through rich, thick descriptions I wrote in such a way that hopefully enables readers to see the children, parents, teachers, and administrators being studied, and to put themselves in their shoes. Wolcott’s next suggestion was that researchers give a full and accurate account of the phenomenon they are studying. I attempted to do this through field notes, interview transcriptions, and copies of documents I collected. I included statements that I was unable to clarify for the purpose of allowing the readers to see what I saw, and make their own judgments. Wolcott’s sixth suggestion indicated a need for subjectivity rather than objectivity in qualitative research. He explained that the researcher is a part of the study and that it was easier to admit rather than to try to write as if it were not so. Because of the emic perspective I have in relation to the focus of the proposed study, this suggestion encouraged me to give an account of what I saw from my point of view, as long as I admitted that I had biases. These biases are discussed in the limitations section of Chapter One. Also, Wolcott suggested that research writers should seek feedback. The “accuracy of reported information is one critical dimension, and readers close to the settings provide yeoman service by checking for corrections and completeness” (p. 132). I did this by asking educators who worked with 504 Plans to read my narratives; however, I did not solicit educators who were involved with the cases in this study. Most of the educators whom I asked to read and edit my narratives were surprised to learn of the success I had studied. One principal took notes so that she could

implement communication skills among staff and with parents. Finally, I retained confidentiality through pseudonyms when others read my writings.

As his eighth suggestion Wolcott stated that research reporting should be balanced. Researchers must balance what they write about; case study reporting should achieve balance, with one case not overshadowing the others. This balance should also characterize each case itself. One aspect of the case should not overshadow other aspects. I accomplished this through observing each student the same number of times, performing the same number of interviews, and collecting roughly the same types of documents for all five cases.

Accuracy in writing was Wolcott's last hint for conducting valid research. Technical accuracy was sought after the aforementioned balance check was performed. Consistency in writing was sought and careful honing of writing skills was performed. This step differed from step two because it was an editing stage. In step two Wolcott avowed that the researcher should record accurately, thus checking all of what was written. He asked that the researcher reread what was written as a final check for accuracy, and as an editing task. My research writing was edited by an outside source, and then again by my committee chair to assure accurate writing.

External validity, or generalizability, refers to how the results of a study can be generalized to the population. In other words, do these findings hold for other groups beyond those in the sample (Merriam, 1995)? This research study, like most qualitative research, did not lend itself to generalizability. The participants in this study were purposefully selected, and random selection is the best way to generalize from a sample

to the population. Therefore, caution should be used in attempting to generalize the findings of this study (Johnson & Christenson, 2004).

Reliability is the consistency of one's findings, or the chances that the same findings would occur in different places or times (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). LeCompte and Preissle (1993) ascertained that reliability is the extent to which studies can be emulated. Reliability presumes that a researcher using the same methods could achieve the same results as those of a prior study. Because qualitative study is performed in natural settings rather than in a laboratory with controlled conditions, exact duplication is impossible. However, Le Compte and Preissle (1993) asserted that if qualitative researchers recognized and handled five problems they could enhance the external reliability of their research. The first of these problems is researcher status position. My position in this study was that of an observer, which I made clear to all participants. I did not offer suggestions and advice and did not want to be seen as evaluating how participants fulfilled their roles.

The second problem Le Compte and Preissle (1993) warned against is that of informant choices. Through careful data collection and descriptions of the informants, I allowed for this. A third element that influenced qualitative data was the social context in which data was collected. Environment and social situations were included as factors that influenced 504 Plans and have thus been accounted for.

The fourth problem with reliability as defined by LeCompte and Preissle (1993) was analytic constructs and premises. Even if a researcher reconstructed the relationships and duplicated the informants and social contexts of a prior study, replication might remain impossible if the constructs, definitions, or units of analysis informing the original

research were too idiosyncratic or poorly delineated (p. 335). I have listed this as a limitation to this study because I do not believe that future researchers could duplicate this study; however, the methods and auditing of research methods I have used could serve as a guide for similar studies.

Lastly, methods of data collection and analysis were listed as a problem with reliability. “An ideal toward which many ethnographers strive is to present their methods so clearly that other researchers can use the original report as an operating manual by which to replicate their study” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p.336). By using triangulation in both methods and data collection and by providing an extensive narrative describing the data collection and data analysis that I utilized have addressed this problem.

Ethics

Professional ethics were carefully followed in every stage of this study. The ethical practices used in performing this study began with gaining written permission to study the effectiveness of 504 Plans from all parties involved in the process. Once my doctoral committee accepted my prospectus, I applied to Marshall University’s Institutional Review Board to begin this study. Once my prospectus was approved I asked permission from the Superintendent of Wayne County Schools, and the Federal Programs Coordinator who oversaw 504 Plans, for written approval to begin this study. With their approval I called principals in Wayne County identifying myself and the study I proposed to conduct. I asked for their permission to conduct my study in their school; once appropriate responses were received I began contacting parents. When parents responded, I asked them to discuss this process with their child and have the student sign

willingness to participate even if he or she was not of legal age. With consent from parents and principals to observe students, it was not necessary for me to receive teacher permission, but because I also wanted to interview these teachers, and as a professional courtesy, I called to tell them what I was doing and my role in the process. I obtained written permission from Marshall's Institutional Review Board, county officials, teachers, parents, and students before I began conducting research.

Confidentiality was protected through the use of pseudonyms for the students involved as well as all adult participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). All interviews and taped observation notes were transcribed and coded without the source being identified. Only my doctoral committee members and I had access to the interview documents, and the privacy of the participants was protected. I secured and verified all information that was obtained and ensured the final written product was a true and accurate reflection of my findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Summary

An important outcome of research in educational leadership is to identify factors that contribute to improved administrative practices which in turn improve student learning (Haller & Klein, 2001). An analysis of the data collected in this study provides such an outcome. Knowing the factors that positively and negatively influence 504 Plans can enable administrators to write effective 504 Plans by relying on enabling factors and decreasing constraints to success as identified in this study.

Chapter Four introduces each case, provides a narrative of each student in this collective case study, and identifies the factors that contribute to the success of that case. Each participant's history is provided as a means to give insight as to why the plan is

important and what the student's school career was like without it. The designing of the plan and how that occurred is also narrated to give the reader a broader picture of the participant.

Chapter IV

The Participants and Their Plans

This collective case study of successful 504 Plans attempts to narrate the experiences of the participants. A rich description of each participant, the process by which he or she obtained a 504 Plan and the plan itself are described in Chapter Four. The factors enabling the success of each plan are described in Chapter Five.

The Participants

This collective case study of the implementation of successful 504 Plans was conducted in a rural county in West Virginia during the spring and summer of 2004. There were five actual cases included in the study. Pseudonyms for individuals and schools have been used to protect the privacy of everyone who took part in this study.

The first student who participated as part of this collective case study was a junior in high school who was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). I observed Les twice in class, for a short period between classes, and at a baseball game. His mother, the assistant principal, and three of his teachers allowed me to interview them for this study. Two teachers gave me work samples and the assistant principal provided a copy of the 504 Plan

The second student in this study was Cobe, an eighth grade middle school boy who also was diagnosed with ADHD. I observed Cobe in two classes and during a study hall. Interviews with his stepmother, three of his teachers, and the principal, were conducted. The papers used in the referral process, the 504 Plan, and samples of Cobe's classroom work were all documents obtained as part of the data collection phase of this research.

The third student included in this research was Chris, another middle school boy. Chris was diagnosed with ADHD and panic disorder and thus qualified for a 504 Plan. I observed Chris in two classes, at a ball game, and at his house. Chris' mother invited me into their home to interview her and Chris. The middle school principal and both teachers I observed allowed me to interview them as well. Chris' mother and teachers shared some of his school work with me as well as a copy of the 504 Plan; these documents helped me to gain the information I needed to better understand how Chris performed in school.

The only girl in the study, Shandra, was in first grade at Malcolm Elementary. Shandra was diagnosed by a chiropractor as having Winging Scapula Injury after her kindergarten teacher had expressed concerns to her parents. Data about Shandra were collected through observations, interviews, and obtaining written documents. Her first grade teacher, previous kindergarten teacher, mother, assistant principal, and occupational therapist were interviewed to gain a better understanding of why Shandra needed a 504 Plan and how it helped her. Shandra was observed twice in the classroom and once on the playground. Document collection consisted of samples of her schoolwork, copies of the referral papers, and a copy of her 504 Plan.

John, a fifth grade boy diagnosed with Landau-Kleffner Syndrome, was the second elementary student who served as a participant in this collective case study. John's father, his teachers, and the principal all allowed me to interview them. I observed John in his classroom three times and in the computer lab once. His teacher and parents shared some of his work with me and the principal made his 504 Plan available to me.

Participant Narratives

Each case in this study warrants its own story with an exploration of the history of the case and the nature and implementation of the 504 Plan. A narrative of each of the five students is provided in this chapter; a cross-case analysis of the significant factors involved in the success of these five 504 Plans will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Les

Les, the only high school student to participate in this study, was a large, burly boy who played baseball and football. Les, like many of his peers, dressed in a tee shirt and shorts and wore a baseball cap both times I saw him at school. Les was quiet and to himself when I observed him and was quite reserved during our interview. Les' mother had informed him I was conducting this study, but I am not sure he knew who I was when I was in the room. In contrast to this, his teachers described him as somewhat social, as did his mother, who is a teacher at the high school Les attends. This perplexing contrast perhaps occurred because Les was aware someone was coming to observe him.

Les lives with his mother and stepfather; he has a brother playing college ball on scholarship. As an elementary age student, Les lost his father in an accident. His mother attributed his academic difficulties to this loss for several years. Les' mom admitted that she felt sorry for Les when he was younger. She thought she was helping him by justifying his behaviors and poor grades. It took the advice of the middle school principal and support from Les' stepfather for Les' mother to acknowledge there might be other problems.

History. Les came to the high school with his 504 Plan in place. His teachers were aware of it because his mother had already explained the plan to them. To get the history of the plan I relied on interviews and conversations with his mother. She informed me that, “Les had a horrible time in middle school. He really almost failed. He had been tested for gifted in grade school, so I knew his IQ. There was no reason for his bad grades.” With further questioning I found that Les did not make stellar grades in elementary school; his parents just thought he might be gifted and had him tested. His mother went on to say it was not just his grades, but that Les was getting in trouble at school too. She had thought it was the loss of his father coupled with hormones, but was open to the principal’s suggestion of counseling.

During the second semester of eighth grade the counselor diagnosed Les with ADHD, “a neurobehavioral disorder characterized by developmentally inappropriate inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity” (p.5, Veritas Institute, 2002) and referred him to the School Assistance Team (SAT). Les exhibited the short attention span, distractibility, and restlessness that are descriptive of a child with ADHD (Gregg, 2000). Since he had a previous psychological test the SAT determined that his problems were related to the ADHD and referred Les for a 504 Plan. The same staff, along with the Director of Special Education, who served as the 504 Plan Coordinator, then became the 504 Plan Committee. They wrote a 504 Plan for the following school year, ninth grade.

Les’ ninth grade year was filled with trial and error. He had new medication for the ADHD, was at a new school, and teachers who barely knew him were trying to implement a 504 Plan written by the teachers he had the year before. Tenth grade went

relatively well and this year, his mother, the assistant principal, the teachers I spoke with, and Les all felt that his junior year was the best so far.

Les's trigonometry teacher had Les as a ninth grader for algebra and then again this year. He averred, "Les hated school before; it was a real chore for him. This year I think he might actually be enjoying it. Well, maybe not enjoying it but having more fun than he has in the past."

Although Les had the plan as a ninth grader, it was the consensus of the staff that it has taken time for Les to be successful in school. His trigonometry teacher attributed some of this to Les himself.

I think it took some time for everyone to implement it, and for Les to follow it. With high school students sometimes the problem is the student rather than the plan or the teachers. Teachers can do their part; we can't make students do theirs.

His trigonometry teacher thought Les had matured, that maybe his medication had changed, but that definitely his attitude changed: "He used to have a real chip on his shoulder....This whole year is positive compared to two years ago. Last week Les had the highest score on a trigonometry test." The trigonometry teacher clarified that Les' hard work and self-responsibility had a lot to do with his success. For example, "Les sits at the front of the class like his plan says. He did that on his own; I never seated him there." On the other hand, the world cultures teacher described Les' work as

poor compared to almost anyone else in the room. He just can't organize his writing. Students this age know how to put a paragraph in order and

how to punctuate. They are all lazy, but his is lack of ability not just laziness.

He had to help Les organize his written work by giving him an outline. He did compliment Les by saying, “He’s less needy than some who are a lot brighter, or make better grades.” This was what I observed too; Les always seemed to know what to do and worked by himself when other students were asking for help.

When asked specifically about modifications, the teacher who taught trigonometry reported that he didn’t think of it as following a plan. He just helped all of his students however he could. When I observed in the trigonometry class the teacher told every student what grades they needed for that four and one half weeks and gave them the opportunity to turn the work in late. The world cultures teacher informed me that Les always sat up front and that he graded his papers easier. If he could figure out what Les meant, even if it was not written perfectly, he gave him credit. This was more lenient than the plan called for, but it took the plan to make him aware of Les’ disability.

The Plan. Once the SAT determined that a 504 Plan would best meet Les’ needs, a 504 Plan Committee consisting of his teachers, the principal, and the 504 Committee Coordinator was formed. This committee met to write the 504 Plan based on previous testing, teacher input, parental input, and school records. Teachers agreed that Les performed poorly on teacher made tests that were developed from lectures. His plan addressed this by stating that he would sometimes be provided a copy of lecture notes and lesson plans at the teacher’s discretion. Les was also afforded the opportunity to tape record directions or lectures, but I did not see him do this.

Teachers concurred that Les was unable to remember facts a short while after learning them, that he forgot information from one occasion to the next; consequently he scored poorly on classroom tests. His plan accommodated for this by providing him permission to tape lectures, get copies of notes, and have a daily schedule provided to him. His teachers actually did much more than this. I observed a teacher helping him individually, averaging what work he did have, and giving him a second chance on a previously graded paper.

Because of the ADHD Les had difficulties paying attention or staying on task. The plan specified that he would sit at the front of the class to avoid distractions. Les did this voluntarily; no teacher had to move him to the front. Les' 504 Plan did not call for extra time on assignments or the opportunity to take tests orally. The team felt that he was capable of doing the work at the same rate and in the same manner as his peers.

His trigonometry teacher was pleasantly surprised this year at how Les worked and never disrupted class; he credited Les' success to maturity rather than the plan or medicine. The world cultures teacher however, felt the plan should be credited for Les' success. He said he would have graded him more rigidly without the plan and may not have supported or encouraged his endeavors as he did because of the plan. What I observed was that Les behaved differently than teachers described his behavior in the past. Perhaps the medicine allowed him to be more focused, thus enabling him to do better in class, but his changes seemed to be more than that. Teachers commented about his improved attitude and maturity this year, as did his mother.

Les' plan did not recommend individual tutoring, but whenever Les needed extra help he went to a teacher with whom he felt comfortable. This teacher used his own

planning and lunch period to help Les and other students who were having difficulties with school work.

Les was successful in school this year, an accomplishment in which Les, his mother, and his teachers take pride. This success was a result of several factors, with the primary factor being his 504 Plan. The aspects of the 504 Plan that facilitated success are discussed in Chapter Five.

Cobe

Cobe is a middle school boy diagnosed with ADHD. He lives with his father, stepmother, and their two small children. He has lived with Leah, his stepmother, since he was eighteen months old. Leah, Cobe's father, and Cobe's grandmother, Sue, are all active participants in his education. Sue is a secretary at the school Cobe attends. Cobe plays football and is also a Boy Scout; his grandmother is the scout leader.

Most students with ADHD have trouble completing tasks and often do not complete their homework; however, Cobe always completed his. Many students with ADHD have organizational difficulties which causes them to lose some of the homework they do complete, as was the case with Cobe. Students with this condition do not seem to listen or pay attention, which in turn results in them forgetting instructions or not knowing what to do (Henderson, 2001).

Cobe is somewhat of an enigma, with behaviors that are sometimes in contrast with his diagnosis of ADHD. The school principal and his teachers described him as a smart, quiet boy who would rather read than do anything else. When I observed Cobe I did not see him interact with any students. His library science teacher said, "He does not have many friends. He would rather read or do his own thing." Yet his mother depicted

Cobe as a social child who would do anything for a laugh and who spent a lot of time with his friends. When asked about extra-curricular activities, the library science teacher described Cobe as, “Not very coordinated. He has motor problems. No coordination when it comes to playing ball.” However, his step-mother informed me, “He plays football....He’s played ever since youth league. He’s really good too.”

Although it appeared school personnel and Cobe’s stepmother perceived him differently, almost everyone with whom I spoke agreed that Cobe loved to read, was intelligent, and could certainly do the work. They also agreed that Cobe was disorganized; he could not keep up with his work. When talking about his disorganization, his library science teacher exclaimed, “It is bad! Really, he is never with the class. It is like he is in his own world.” The language arts teacher agreed, “He never had his work. He had a lot of zeros each grading period; no matter how high his test scores were, his grades were very poor.” It was these poor (but not failing) grades earned by a bright student that brought about the 504 Plan.

History. To understand the history of Cobe’s 504 Plan I talked with his step-mother, Leah, his grandmother, Sue, who worked at the school, and the principal. Leah stated that Cobe’s problems started early in his school career, “When Cobe was in kindergarten the teacher was concerned about his fine motor delays. We took him to a pediatrician who referred him for a neuropsychological evaluation... The doctor told us it was early to diagnose ADHD but he saw some real problems.” In second grade Cobe was tested but did not qualify for the gifted program. He was put on Adderall for ADHD by the third grade but according to his step-mother, “It was horrible. He had no

emotions, not happy or sad. I just thought I would rather have him hyper so we took him off of it.”

Cobe made it through elementary school without any real problems, but sixth grade came as a big surprise. When discussing elementary school his step-mother said,

He had wonderful teachers ...I worried in fifth grade; his teacher was known for her rigidity, but she had a son with ADHD and was a dream for Cobe. The rest of elementary was superb. That is why sixth grade was so hard. It was a culture shock.

His step-mother told me that what she meant was they were so rigid that it seemed like no one wanted to help the children. When I asked the language arts teacher why she thought middle school started out so difficult for Cobe she speculated that making the transition from elementary to middle school, “Changing classes, changing teachers, having a locker, all of that was just too much for him.”

In sixth grade Cobe got in trouble for not having his work and his grades were not what his parents expected. When, “The school suggested he be placed in a slow group,” his step-mother knew it was time to get help. Sue, Cobe’s grandmother, knew a little about 504 Plans because she had heard teachers and parents talk about them. She asked the principal what the qualifications were for a 504 Plan and whether she thought Cobe would benefit from one. The principal immediately initiated the SAT. According to the principal, “The SAT agreed Cobe qualified for a 504 Plan based on his diagnosis of ADHD coupled with his struggles in school despite his intelligence. His test scores were high, so we knew he had the ability.” Because the school had documentation of his poor classroom scores and the results of his achievement tests along with a medical diagnosis,

the county required no other testing and a 504 Plan Committee was formed. His step-mother agreed that the process of getting a 504 Plan Committee was relatively quick; it was the writing of the plan that she worried about. The committee, which consisted of the team of sixth grade teachers Cobe had classes with, did not seem to understand his disability and his step-mother perceived that they thought she was making excuses. Once the teachers, the step-mother, and the principal met with the county 504 Coordinator, the writing of the plan was a collaborative effort by everyone.

The Plan. The 504 Plan Committee met to decide the educational impact of Cobe's disability and how they could best meet his needs. The impact of Cobe's disability, ADHD, was that he did not complete his work, had poor organizational skills, performed at a lower level than he was capable of, and could not do math operations without concrete manipulatives.

One accommodation specified to ameliorate these weaknesses was that Cobe was to be seated near the chalkboard or in front of the classroom in an effort to lessen the distractions around him. Also Cobe was to be given a set of text books to keep at home so that he would not have to keep track of books that needed to be transported to and from school. It was also suggested that Cobe not be given library books to take home; his mother assured the committee that she would supply Cobe with the books he would need for out of classroom reading. It was designated that Cobe would be provided a daily schedule of class activities and his assignment notebook would be utilized. Parent communication through his assignment notebook was an accommodation that his stepmother urged the committee to include. She felt that communication among educators and parents was crucial to Cobe's success. The plan also called for Cobe to

have small group instruction in math. Mayor Middle was able to meet this directive because of normal class sizes; if Cobe were at another school this may not be available to him without Special Education services. The 504 Plan also included tutoring for Cobe. This tutoring is part of an after-school program that is available to all students at Mayor Middle.

One of the accommodations that probably benefited Cobe the most was that teachers took up his work as soon as he completed it. The principal explained, “We decided if we saw him doing homework in class to just take it from him when he walked out the door.”

Once the 504 Plan was implemented things did not immediately start improving. Leah felt that teachers did not particularly want to follow the plan, “The attitude was he was in regular education classes; he ought to be able to make it.” I did not observe this or get this impression when talking to teachers, and as stated earlier, the principal felt the 505 Plan Committee meeting was successful. With his step-mother’s insistence and the careful leadership of the principal, modifications were made and Cobe began to succeed. Teachers took his work as soon as he was finished with it, not letting him walk out of the room with it. I observed this in language arts class and the library science teacher told me she always did this. Cobe sat at the front of the classroom to avoid the distractions in the room. Cobe’s teachers and step-mother used his assignment notebook as a way to stay in close contact and to ensure his step-mother knew what work Cobe was supposed to be doing in the evenings. His teachers assigned another classmate to check Cobe’s agenda to make sure all assignments were written correctly. As the year proceeded Cobe made progress and ended his sixth grade year with good grades, relatively few reminders

for behavior, and most teachers wondering why they had not made the modifications before. The principal avowed, “The 504 Plan was successful for Cobe and really made a difference in his grades.”

Chris

Chris, who finished eighth grade during this study, was a quiet boy who had been diagnosed with both ADHD and panic disorder. He lives with his stay-at-home mother, Linda, his father, and a half brother. He is active in a local church and joined the high school band the summer this research was being completed. A 504 Plan was written for Chris when he was in the fourth grade and has been in effect every year since. He is now going to be relying on it in the ninth grade. His mother and his teachers believe the plan helped him succeed in school. Chris and his mother are looking forward to the school year to come.

Chris’ description of his eighth grade year is surprisingly upbeat and his enthusiasm for high school caught me off guard. He looked forward to the new school year with curiosity and a confidence his teachers might be surprised to hear about. Chris thought that high school would be okay, and that he would be fine. In relation to band camp, his mother said, “It feels good to pull up there and drop him off and pick him up again with a smile on his face.”

Conversely, Chris spent the seventh grade in and out of school. His mother home schooled him with the support of staff from the Board of Education. When I asked Chris about the time period when he was home schooled he just said, “Yeah, I was home schooled at the beginning of seventh grade and then I decided to come back towards the end of seventh grade.” His mother and teachers told me that it was his decision not to go

to school and his decision to come back. According to his mother, this period of home schooling came about because, “He’d have to leave school because he was causing such a disruption.” Eighth grade started in a similar fashion, with Chris missing school or wanting to go home.

By the second semester of eighth grade Chris’ attendance had improved and his school work reflected as much. His mother and teachers thought he had matured and settled into a daily routine which helped him achieve at his potential. Chris’ teachers and parents were pleased with his eighth grade year and felt that overall it was successful.

History. Chris’ 504 Plan was written when he was a fourth grade student. When I observed Chris and interviewed school personnel I got the impression his 504 Plan was written because of his panic attacks. His teachers mentioned social issues much more than they mentioned academics, although his history teacher did tell me that Chris’ test scores were low and that he needed extra time to finish class work. Upon talking to his mother, however, I learned that Chris did not have panic attacks until sixth grade. His 504 Plan was written because he was doing poorly in elementary school and was diagnosed with ADHD. His mother told me how difficult school was for him.

It was terrible...He hated it, and we hated it for him. The schoolwork was bad because it was difficult for him. The writing and stuff took him hours. And, being at school, you know not being able to concentrate, being in the class with all the people was hard for him.

Chris was in the third grade when his mother realized he was not able to do the work and asked the teacher to have him tested. She told me that the testing process took quite some time, but the county finally administered both an academic and a

psychological test to Chris. His scores were average, providing no reason for his learning deficits. It was in the SAT meeting after test completion that Chris' mom was told she should look into testing for ADHD. When he was in the fourth grade Chris was diagnosed with ADHD. As a result the SAT met as a 504 Plan Committee to write his 504 Plan. The plan worked well during fourth and fifth grades. Chris' mom explained, "Teachers lessened assignments and gave him more time," and she was pleased with fourth and fifth grade experiences. As with all 504 Plans there was a review meeting before Chris started sixth grade. The teachers with whom I spoke were not in on this meeting, but their administrator had made them aware of the plan. Mrs. Little, Chris' English teacher, and Mr. Corn, his history teacher, both had access to it, and were acutely aware of the accommodations to be made.

The Plan. Chris' 504 Plan acknowledged that the educational impact of ADHD on Chris was that he did not complete homework and had reading difficulties. These reading difficulties included poor word attack skills; he could not sound out words to know what they were. Math was affected because of his poor reading skills when reading problems were included in his assignments. Chris was also unable to remember things a short while after he learned them, which caused him to score poorly on classroom tests or be incapable of performing assignments after he left the classroom. Chris was unable to grasp new information without a slow, "chunked" presentation. He needed new skills broken into distinct segments of learning, something that is difficult for a regular education teacher to do considering the number of students in the room and the number of standards and objectives they must cover. Chris needed additional time to complete assignments because he tended to be distracted and unable to focus on the task at hand.

The accommodations Chris needed to meet the challenges of his disability included being seated near the teacher's desk to limit distractions, a modification his teachers informed me they made for any child who could not pay attention or had problems. Chris' plan stated that he be seated away from other students but I did not observe this taking place. One of the accommodations listed for Chris was that he be provided a daily schedule of class activities and an assignment notebook. Every student in the school was given an assignment notebook. These assignment notebooks are like day planners and students are required to write down their homework or any upcoming tests. The plan also mandated that teachers write assignments on the chalkboard so that Chris would have a visual reference of what to write in his assignment notebook. The teachers I interviewed said they did that anyway. Some teachers required that students have their parents sign the book as a means of communicating with them. Chris' mother used this assignment notebook on a daily basis to make sure he was doing what needed to be done.

Chris was given an additional set of books to keep at home so that he did not have to remember to take his books home daily. Having this set of books at home also allowed his mother to read and study what Chris was doing so that she was better informed and more capable of helping him. The plan allowed Chris to utilize a different reading series because he was not at a middle school reading level, but his reading teacher did not implement this accommodation because she felt it set him apart from the other students. She allowed him to take additional time to read, take open book tests, and partner with another student so that she could keep him in the same book as his peers.

A school-wide tutoring program was available at Chris' school and his plan stated that he would have access to it. The principal checked his records and found that Chris did not participate in tutoring.

Chris' 504 Plan did not specify that he was to have extra time on assignments, have his work modified, or be given individualized attention, yet his history and English teachers both avowed this is how they ensured he was successful.

On testing it's [extra time] an accommodation I made just because he wasn't, he couldn't pass the test. And, that was really what was keeping his grade so low. Because when we do group work he does group work and when we have partners where we do small group work he functions real well. You know there is no problem with that, it was just that he was making low scores on his tests. So, I modified how we would attack that.

(History Teacher)

His English teacher explained, "I used to have to give him additional time to do all of his work. He took everything home for homework whether it was a class assignment or a homework assignment." When asked if she shortened his tests she said, "I have not in a long time; he hasn't needed me to. I would have to look to see if that's written into the plan or if it is just a modification I made." The history and English teachers agreed that they allowed Chris to come back to class to retake tests on which he scored poorly. The English teacher said she even modified them until Chris was able to keep up. These things were not in the plan; they were additional modifications teachers were willing to make.

Chris' successful eighth grade year and his excitement about high school are credited to his 504 Plan both by his teachers and his mother. Chris had his 504 Plan for several years, but it appeared that it was most successful during his eighth grade year and in elementary school. The plan provided confidence and security to Chris and his mother for the upcoming school year.

Shandra

At the time of the data collection, Shandra, the only girl and youngest participant in the study, was in the first grade at the school where her mother teaches special education. Shandra's dad is a full time nursing student. She lives with her parents and younger sister of whom, according to her mother, Shandra is very jealous. Shandra attended preschool before starting kindergarten and is involved in community activities such as cheering and gymnastics.

Shandra was referred for a 504 Plan as a kindergarten student and started first grade with the plan in place. The assistant principal, her first grade teacher, and her parents all felt that her plan is successful.

Although I did not realize it when Shandra was named as a possible case study, I had prior knowledge of her. Shandra attended the day care where I once taught preschool special needs students. Shandra was not in my special needs class, but I saw her often through the collaborative agreement of the day care and special needs program. As a four year old Shandra was unlike most of her peers in that she drank from a sippy cup and wore pull-ups (a diaper material used as underwear for children who are being toilet trained). Shandra was also a messy eater; she often left the table with a ring of food or drink around her mouth. The sippy cup and late toilet training were of some concern to

me, but the day care teacher thought it was because her parents did not want her to make a mess. No referrals were made at this time; in fact, Shandra's parents informed the day care director that because of her birth date Shandra would be in preschool rather than kindergarten the next school year and they were afraid she would be bored. I left the preschool needs class the next year and did not have an opportunity to see Shandra again.

History. When Shandra started kindergarten her teacher noticed her fine motor delays and what appeared to be some processing problems. She told me, "She was so weak with her hands. She couldn't even hold a crayon. We kept trying to strengthen her hands." When I followed up by asking if Shandra's problems were just fine motor, the kindergarten teacher averred that she thought there were also problems with, "Learning. She had lots of trouble with math. She had problems with language expressions. She had difficulty getting her thoughts in order".

When asked how the 504 Plan came about, Shandra's kindergarten teacher told me, "The chiropractor diagnosed Shandra with Winging Scapula Injury and gave the parents some exercises to do with Shandra". Winging Scapula is due to the palsy of the long thoracic nerve. This injury or condition causes shoulder instability which contributes to poor motor skills and the tiring easily of the upper extremities (O'Toole, 1997). Shandra's poor motor skills were a result of Winging Scapula Injury, but further evaluations by therapists concluded that Shandra also suffered from motor planning delays, known as dyspraxia, and processing deficits. Dyspraxia is the inability to plan and execute motor actions and behaviors. Processing deficits result in the inability to integrate sensory and motor information in a manner that results in the proper motor movements (Deuel & Doar, 1992). An example of how these deficiencies affected

Shandra is that her brain would assign too many muscles to stabilizing the pencil and too few to mobilize it, thus leaving her with an inefficient pencil grip and poor handwriting.

It was the combination of these deficits that qualified Shandra for a 504 Plan.

Shandra's mom is a special education teacher, so she knew that to get further help she would have to have Shandra evaluated by an occupational therapist and a physical therapist. The chiropractor wrote the prescription for the screenings and these therapists screened Shandra. The results of both physical and occupational screenings supported the need for further evaluations. The evaluation results for both physical therapy and occupational therapy suggested that Shandra needed therapies for both. It was the persistence of her mother that brought about the screenings and evaluations that ultimately qualified Shandra for a 504 Plan.

When I asked Shandra's mother about how and why Shandra was referred for a 504 Plan, her perceptions of Shandra's deficits were somewhat different than those of the teacher.

Kindergarten is when it [problem] first showed up. We thought, "She is not writing like the other kids are writing". She's great at being able to read the daily news, name the letters, sound the letters, but if she has to put it on paper she is struggling. I wondered what the struggle was. Could she not perceive it correctly or not write it correctly? Is she having problems with perception, or having actual motor problems, control, and putting it on the paper? The kindergarten teacher thought it was just motor. So, we started the screening for Occupational Therapy, because I knew that was a possibility.

Shandra's mother thought her experiences as a special education teacher (knowing the right people and what to do) expedited the process and that she was instrumental in getting Shandra tested and placed. It was at this time that she shared with me that her husband was not as agreeable to this plan as she would like. "Her dad was totally against this. He thought she wasn't supposed to be perfect, but that she would be alright." Shandra's mother seemed to think her husband was denying there was a problem, blaming it on Shandra not trying or on her looking for a problem. Shandra's mother told me, "I think she is working hard. I just think she can't. She's having trouble with spelling...It's starting to look more like a perception problem. She's having a lot more trouble now with reversals." This was referring to more trouble in the sense that it is more important to be able to make letters correctly as students get older, not that she was doing it more often. Shandra's mother's perspective on Shandra's school problems was colored by her own experience with a learning disability. School had been a horrible ordeal for her. She told of staying in at break, not getting to participate in special classes, and being miserable. She did not want that for Shandra and was willing to do whatever it took to get help for her.

Shandra's first grade teacher recalled that, "Mrs. Bells [Shandra's mother] had suspected some things all along but wasn't real sure about it. She just kind of kept that in the back of her mind but, didn't have anything done until kindergarten." Her first grade teacher went on to say that the kindergarten teacher noticed Shandra was having problems when the students began to hold the pencils and form the letters. The plan did not start until the beginning of first grade, but the deficits were evident in kindergarten.

To summarize the history of this case, many people who knew Shandra were concerned with her motor skills, with thoughts that her delays could be neurological. The first official step in the process was a chiropractor's diagnosis of Winging Scapula Injury and his prescription for both physical and occupational therapy screenings. When Shandra failed these screenings, full scale evaluations were warranted. The occupational therapist who evaluated Shandra told me, "She had a lot more problems than just fine motor skills." She diagnosed her with, "Motor planning difficulties and processing deficits." The physical therapist concurred with the Winging Scapula Injury diagnosed by the chiropractor, but was more concerned with her motor planning difficulties. These evaluations led to the diagnosis that warranted a 504 Plan which Shandra's mother pursued.

The Plan. The problems Shandra had in school that were addressed by the 504 Plan were fine motor deficits, motor planning difficulties, and decreased balance and coordination. These deficits showed up in the classroom in the form of letter reversals, illegible handwriting, and an inability to complete lengthy written assignments. The 504 Plan ameliorated Shandra's weaknesses by recommending occupational and physical therapy in addition to classroom modifications that were to be made. Therapists monitored her work and provided suggestions to her teacher to help alleviate Shandra's weaknesses.

The occupational therapist provided Shandra with writing aides and strategies, as her first grade teacher explained.

They have given her a pencil gripper. They have given her, well actually her mom taught her to hold a Kleenex, which seemed to help more than

anything else. She wads it up and holds it in the fist of the hand she writes with... Her mom thought of the Kleenex, and at that time of year everyone had a Kleenex. She didn't seem different. That is when I noticed her writing improve a lot.

Shandra also received occupational therapy. This therapy consisted of the therapist having Shandra complete puzzles, manipulate small objects, and practice her writing. She also used paper activities such as find the hidden picture, finger tracing mazes, and I Spy activity sheets.

The physical therapist stated that she worked with Shandra on activities that would "strengthen her motor planning skills." Motor planning is the ability to get from point A to point B. It requires being cognitively aware of the steps involved in completing a physical task or performing an activity. Activities to improve Shandra's motor planning skills included walking through a maze, following three step directions, and exercises that included multiple body parts. The therapist used classroom furniture and physical education equipment to construct mazes for Shandra to maneuver through. She had to perform tasks such as over the table, under the chair, through the blocks, and around the ball to get from the designated starting point to the finish mark. At times Shandra was given directions to perform tasks at each of these areas to increase memory skills while working on motor deficits. According to the physical therapist, Shandra also needed strengthening exercises. The therapist collaborated with the physical education teacher to integrate those into gym classes. Coincidentally, the physical education teacher at Shandra's school previously worked throughout the county with orthopedically impaired students and already knew how to do the exercises Shandra needed.

The 504 Plan also ensured that classroom modifications were made for Shandra. She was given oral testing if she was unable to pass a written test, modifications for copying work from the board, and accommodations for lengthy assignments. These modifications enabled Shandra to complete her work in a satisfactory manner.

John

John was a fifth grader during this study. He had a 504 Plan because he was diagnosed with Landau-Kleffner Syndrome after having a series of seizures as a young child. Landau-Kleffner Syndrome (LKS) is a form of childhood aphasia that is acquired between the ages of two and a half and six years. The condition occurs after a period of normal development. It is the same as cortical deafness in a broad use, and commonly referred to as word deafness (Makiko, 1999). John was four and a half years old at the onset of Landau-Kleffner Syndrome, a time when language had developed but vocabulary and comprehension were increasing every day. John started speech and language therapy in the school system as soon as he was diagnosed with LKS, before he even started school. It was the role of the pathologist to help John develop the necessary skills and to attain the language that his seizures were having a detrimental affect upon. Along with the language deficits, John experienced motor problems that resulted in awkward movements and a loss of coordination.

John's mother is a teacher and his father is an accountant; they live together with John and his younger brother. John's father is active in John's school experience as well as his extra-curricular activities. John plays soccer and baseball; his father coaches both teams. His perceptual delays are somewhat apparent when he plays ball; his coordination is poor and his reaction time is delayed.

John was a typically developing child until the age of four and a half when he had a seizure. This seizure was the first of several more, which left John with language difficulties, the inability to speak, and some motor regression. John's father described this time as nerve-racking. John's parents took him to several different doctors, specialists, and psychologists. They just wanted answers. Finally, John was diagnosed with Landau-Kleffner Syndrome.

History. After he had the first seizure John quit talking and could not recognize objects that he once knew. The doctors referred him for speech therapy. Language disorders are one of the hallmarks of this syndrome. Inappropriate connections disrupt language acquisition during crucial times of development (Van Slyke, 2002). It was this disruption in already acquired language that came to the attention of John's parents. John's poor language and verbal skills were addressed in speech and language therapy before he was school age and lasted until the end of his fourth grade year. The speech and language therapist began to work with John to re-teach him how to articulate words, and to develop the language skills that he lost. This therapy was intense at the beginning and helped him achieve many of the skills he lost. When John started kindergarten he was receiving speech and language therapy but was still behind the other students because of the Landau-Kleffner Syndrome. His parents, however, felt sure he was capable of learning like the other children.

The speech and language therapist recalled the time she spent with John before he started school. He had articulation errors, but her main concern was language. John was not able to identify objects that he knew previously and could not understand concepts

that he had once mastered. Kindergarten is based on many language concepts and because of his delays and the language he had lost John was behind.

John had to repeat kindergarten and his parents became very concerned about his future education. The repetition of a second year in kindergarten was successful for John, but he was still having seizures and worries about first grade prevailed. In first grade John made minimal progress; he had a lot of trouble grasping concepts and remembering facts, as his father explained.

He couldn't remember addition facts; he really needed concrete objects to manipulate. Reading was also very difficult. My wife explained to me that comprehension and vocabulary are based on prior knowledge; in one sense John did not have prior knowledge.

In actuality, John may have had prior knowledge but he had difficulty in recalling this knowledge. He had to learn the same things over and over.

By the time John was in second grade his teacher was very worried; she did not think he was learning what the other children were learning, and she was concerned about his language. John did not recognize things to which she was sure he had been exposed. The principal recalled a story of John in speech therapy when the therapist was using plastic doll food to see if John could identify common food; he could not. At this time John's mother asked that he be referred for a 504 Plan. She knew about these plans because she was in the education system. When asked if anyone tried to help them obtain a plan, his father raised his eyebrows and replied, "No, we did it on our own." He then told me he and his wife had considered special education and the psychological and

academic testing that went along with that but they decided that was not the best placement for John and pursued a 504 Plan.

The Plan. In January of his second grade year John's plan was written. His second grade teacher, the principal, the county 504 Plan Coordinator, the parents, the speech and language pathologist, and his parents made up the 504 Plan Committee. The plan required teachers to use peer tutors when appropriate. The plan gave John the opportunity to have modified assignments and time allowances, as well as additional help and resources as necessary.

John's plan also stated that achievement tests would be taken with modifications and additional time to complete them would be offered. John's parents felt like this would still give them an accurate account of how he was doing and wanted these modifications made. Because of the strict procedures for testing, John and other students who needed modifications were given the tests separately from the other students. The state testing has changed this year, with no time limit set. John will be able to take the test in his regular classroom.

In addition to these modifications, an occupational therapy evaluation was specified in this plan. John qualified for occupational therapy and the therapist came to school to provide services for him once a week. The occupational therapist worked with John in a one-to-one situation as she tried to improve his handwriting skills and finger dexterity. The therapist also worked with John to increase his eye-hand coordination and make him more capable of manipulating small objects. The occupational therapist explained to me that not only did John have poor fine motor skills but that he also had trouble completing tasks that had two or three step directions. He had trouble processing

the directions or remembering what came next. She gave him multiple step directions to complete at the same time she worked on the other deficiencies he had. At the end of his fourth grade year the therapist evaluated John and found that his scores were much like those of his peers and he was dismissed from services.

Because of his poor writing skills the plan gave John the opportunity to type his assignments and to take tests orally if necessary. John had the advantage of having a note-taker assigned to provide daily notes for him if needed. This note-taker wrote down his assignments and any messages in his assignment notebook as well as writing directions or explanations that John might forget when he got home. John's teacher did not report that he took advantage of being able to type his assignments, and based on his skills with the computer, she was not sure this was a viable option.

Because of the plan John finished second grade successfully. Then, in third grade he began to have difficulties. The differences in the curriculum and teaching styles proved to be troublesome for John. It took some open communication and parental intervention to keep John on the right track. John's parents considered fourth grade to be his most successful year and attribute this success to the teacher's willingness to implement his plan. Fifth grade was also successful for John, a fact for which his parents were grateful.

His fifth grade teacher reported that when the students had class work John only had to do every other problem; his fourth grade teacher used an even/odd system as well. His fifth grade teacher described response time as a factor in John's education; it took him longer to process things. John's second grade teacher described this as him "picking the right door." She thought he knew the answer, but had to search his mind to find it.

This coincided with what his father told me. The teacher thought that other students noticed this, but that no one spoke out or did anything to make John uncomfortable.

Although it was not in his plan, John saw a tutor several days a week for all subjects, to ensure that he understood the concepts being taught both in fourth and fifth grade. John typically needed the reinforcement offered by the tutor, and the additional time spent mastering concepts. Tutoring, his parent's diligence, and the modifications made by the 504 Plan allowed John to have a successful fifth grade year. The success of John's plan will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

Summary

The description of each student in this collective case study allows the reader to get to know all of the case study children, to learn what they are like, what their school difficulties were, and what modifications were written into their 504 Plans to address these difficulties. Their histories, followed by descriptions of the plans themselves, provides the reader with the information needed to know each child so that he or she can better understand the success the child experienced and what facilitated this success.

Chapter Five discusses factors related to the success of each case individually as well as comparing and contrasting the factors critical to the success of all five students. In other words, factors that are found to be common among cases are discussed as well as those factors that are unique to each case with detailed explanations of each factor and how it contributes to the students' success.

CHAPTER V

Success of Plans

Many educators feel that healthy schools are schools where teachers can teach to their potential and where students' learn at their potential. A learning system such as this requires the basic provision of needs (Cooper, 1999). For some students this provision of needs comes in the form of a 504 Plan. Chapter Five identifies and explains factors significant to the success of the plans of the participants in this study.

Successful Factors

Five students who were recognized as successful by their teachers, parents, and school administration were the participants in this study. Success was identified as making adequate progress in school or making passing grades and learning the skills that would prepare them for future coursework and expectations. Success was determined by the administrators who nominated students, the parents who agreed the student was successful, and then by teachers who attested to the success each participant was having.

A cross-case analysis of these five case studies produced four common factors that were related to the success each child achieved. These factors were (a) open communication, (b) necessary accommodations and modifications, (c) student's willingness to work, and (d) active parental involvement. Other factors that contributed to the success of one or more individual cases but are not common to all five cases are (e) extended family, (f) medication, and (g) support services. My distinction of the factors is somewhat artificial because they overlap in reality; for the purpose of discussion they will be discussed individually.

The first factor, open communication, involves dialog among parents, teachers, administration, support service personnel, and in some cases the students themselves. Straightforward, frequent communication was responsible for informing parents and or teachers that a child was having difficulties, ameliorating problems a student was experiencing, and in obtaining and writing the 504 Plan. Ongoing communication thereafter was also vital to the success each child experienced.

The second factor, parental involvement, was apparent in all five cases because it was primarily parents who initiated the 504 process in these cases. Parental attendance was requested when the School Assistance Team (SAT) met to discuss each student and the difficulties they were having and again when this team reconvened as the 504 Plan Committee. Unlike some parents, the parents of the students in this study were actively involved in this process and attended all of the meetings. Permission was necessary for most evaluations that took place and parental input was valuable when writing the 504 Plans. At least two parents were educators and knew first hand of the importance of their involvement. The active involvement parents took in the realm of assisting the students and communicating with the staff promoted each student's success.

Accommodations and modifications regulated by 504 Plans are the third common factor that successful plans share. The teachers, parents, and administrators all met to write these adaptations based on the students' needs. Interestingly the modifications written into the five plans were quite similar. It appeared that modifications were written in global terms; it was the manner in which the teachers implemented them, or devised their own adaptations, that was particularly helpful to the student.

The last common factor among these cases was the willingness of the participants to do their assignments and study. Students' willingness to work clearly enhanced their achievement. Teachers noticed and reacted to the extent to which students were trying to learn as opposed to not putting forth an effort.

The three factors that were shared by some but not all of the cases are extended family, support staff personnel, and medication. These will be described as part of the discussions about student successes in the following section.

Student Success

Each of these students was successful this school year, a fact with which parents, teachers, and administrators all agreed. This success was largely credited to the students' 504 Plans. The success each student achieved is described in the following sections, and then compared and contrasted under the headings of the factors involved in the success.

Les

Les' plan was successful this year and this success was the result of the four common factors: communication, parental involvement, accommodations and modifications, and Les' willingness to work. A fifth factor may possibly be his medication. Les went from being a student who struggled with school and was considered troublesome to a pleasant boy who put forth his best effort to succeed in school. This dramatic transformation appeared to have come about because of a successful 504 Plan, medication, maturation, and the collaborative efforts of his parents and school personnel.

Cobe

Several factors are salient to the success of Cobe's plan. Communication among the teachers at Cobe's school and between his family and the school staff, including the administration, was significant in Cobe's success. His teachers and step-mother agree that the actual accommodations and modifications guaranteed by the plan helped Cobe be successful. Parental involvement is a key issue when discussing Cobe's success. His step-mother perceived that without her active involvement and monitoring the plan would not be as successful as it was. Along with this parental involvement was extended family involvement. Cobe's grandmother initiated the 504 Plan process and was instrumental in its implementation and she guided Cobe through school. Cobe's grandmother was a critical player in his education and used her knowledge and perhaps influence as a school employee to help Cobe succeed.

Common to the other cases is willingness to work. Most teachers felt that Cobe did not work particularly hard, but his stepmother felt perhaps they did not understand what a struggle staying organized and on task was for Cobe.

Another unique factor to Cobe's success is that Cobe is on medication and it could not be determined whether it influenced his success. However, because it could affect his behavior and organizational skills it is possible the medication he takes for ADHD is critical to Cobe's success.

Chris

Chris was successful this year, a fact that seemed a result of five factors: communication, accommodations and modifications, parental involvement, willingness to work, and the support of other staff. Also, some credit for his success must be given to

the counselor who worked with Chris and made it possible for him to go back to school and then stay in school. Her involvement in his education was important to Chris.

His mother felt that his plan was successful in middle school despite his earlier panic attacks. It was the support she received and the fact that Chris was able to score well on the achievement tests and pass his classes that made her realize he might not have been successful without such a plan. To describe this year his mother stated, “He did more work like the other kids than he ever has. I want him to have it [504 Plan] to fall back on.”

Chris finished eighth grade with average grades and a new confidence in his abilities and skills. He looked forward to ninth grade and felt he would be able to communicate his needs to his teachers. His mother felt less confident than Chris, but was still anticipating a good year at high school due to the mandates of his plan and the rights Chris was guaranteed by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. In anticipation of next year his mother declared, “We’ll have a meeting a couple of weeks after school starts [to allow time] so that he gets to know his teachers and his schedule. Then they’ll [teachers] either contact me or I’ll contact them.”

Shandra

Shandra’s mother and first grade teacher both felt that her 504 Plan was successful. When I looked at samples of Shandra’s work she made As and Bs and performed well in the school’s Accelerated Reader program. Based on the interviews, observations, and documents collected from this study, factors that facilitated the success of this plan were the individual suitability of the modifications and accommodations made, Shandra’s willingness to work, the frequent and open communication among her

parents, teachers, therapists, and administrators, her parents' active involvement in Shandra's education, and the physical and occupational therapies that she received. Although there is no way to identify which of these factors was the most important or which had the greatest impact on her success, it is evident that Shandra's success relies on these factors. Shandra will go on to second grade with a successful plan in place and parents who know how to facilitate this success.

John

John has had a 504 Plan most of his school career and his parents feel comfortable requesting modifications and ensuring the plan is being implemented. His second grade year was successful, but his third was somewhat worrisome to his parents. Fourth grade came with John being placed in a class with 28 students. His parents were needlessly worried. John was successful both in fourth and fifth grades. His success was due to honest communication, necessary accommodations, parental involvement, his willingness to work, and his previous speech and language therapy.

Although John's plan was recognized as successful, everyone involved had some trepidation about him starting middle school. It will certainly take the implementation of his plan and the continuance of the factors that made his elementary school plan successful for him to succeed in middle school.

Summary of Student Success

Each of these cases was deemed successful by teachers, parents, and administrators who felt the child was achieving to his or her potential and meeting mandates for adequate yearly progress. The success of each student depended upon several factors, some which all of the cases had in common and some factors that were

relevant only to one or two cases. Those factors which were common to all five cases were: were (a) open communication, (b) necessary accommodations and modifications, (c) student's willingness to work, and (d) active parental involvement. Other factors that contributed to the success of one or more individual cases but are not common to all five cases were (e) extended family, (f) medication, and (g) support services. These support services included an occupational therapist, physical therapists, a speech and language pathologist, and a school psychologist.

Common Successful Factors

Communication

Straightforward communication among teachers, parents, administrators, and students is important in the education of any child. This study suggests that communication is even more important for a child with a 504 Plan. Sincere communication took place in several different ways: as a manner to introduce the plan to teachers, during the implementation of the plan, among educators and administration, among educators and support staff, and in most cases a rapport developed between the teachers and the students. Each of these will be discussed drawing on examples from all five cases.

Parent and Staff Communication

Obtaining and introducing the plan. Frequent and open communication between teachers and parents played a major role in these students' successful experiences with 504 Plans. For example, Chris' mother and teachers felt that the candid communication they shared was paramount to his success. His mother stated, "We talked all of the time, probably three times a week or more."

Also, Shandra's kindergarten teacher informed me that Shandra's mother advocated obtaining a plan for Shandra. She was the one who took Shandra to the doctor who then made referrals for physical and occupational therapy. She started the process of getting the 504 Plan based on what she knew about the laws for students with disabilities. Shandra's first grade teacher averred that Shandra's mother had informed her about the plan before it was even written. Once a meeting was scheduled, "We [Shandra's mother and teacher] talked across the table during the meeting." They developed the plan based upon what they knew about Shandra's learning style and ability.

Honest communication that occurred regularly played a major role in teachers' awareness of students needs. It took Les' mother informing teachers and administrators about his plan to ensure it was utilized. The frequent communication between Les' mother and Les' teacher seemed to have played a major role in the teachers' awareness of the plan and their willingness to utilize it.

Cobe's parents were also instrumental in making sure everyone involved in his education was aware of the 504 Plan. His step-mother explained, "When we had open house I took a copy of it to each teacher and told them about it. Some knew, either from last year or from the principal. I just wanted to make sure."

One of the three unique factors, extended family, is the result of a family member's involvement in the education process of a participant. Cobe's grandmother initiated the 504 Plan process and was instrumental in its implementation and she guided Cobe through school. The communication between this extended family member and Cobe's teachers also played a role in his success.

Implementation. Not only did the forthright communication between parents and teachers facilitate the writing and introduction of each participant's 504 Plan; it reinforced and strengthened the plan throughout the year. Honest communication from the teachers helped Les' mother see that he needed modifications that were not included in his plan and that there were things he could do to make better grades. Les' history teacher explained to Les' mom that, "Les performs better when we do activities and projects; his test scores are the biggest problem." The teacher then increased the number of points he took for these projects which raised Les' class scores. His mother felt that because teachers knew her, and knew how hard she strived to help Les, they were more willing to help her. The assistant principal supported this: "Les' mother used to check on Les all the time; the teachers knew she would be there." The direct communication between Les' mother and the staff played a major role in the success of Les' plan.

Likewise, Cobe's step-mother attributed his success to the communication she had with the staff at his school. This communication was encouraged by his grandmother, Sue, who worked there. Cobe's step-mother communicated almost daily with his teachers through his agenda. "I tell them what he's having trouble with, and they tell me whether he does his class work or not." This allowed her to know what he was and wasn't doing, which kept Cobe motivated. Teachers felt that Cobe's knowledge that his step-mother was in contact with the school increased the likelihood that he would complete his work.

Open and frequent communication also was instrumental in Chris' success during this study, and in the years past. Teachers were able to speak candidly to Chris' mother

and tell her what they needed; she felt the same way. For example the history teacher told her, “You’re helping him to miss school and not do his work,” harsh words for sure, but they helped Chris’ mother see the problem more clearly. Chris’ mother spoke repeatedly of all the time she used to spend at school talking to Chris’ teachers:

“Teachers listened to me; they cared about what I had to say. I think they appreciated my involvement.” When I interviewed Chris’ teachers and his mother, the communication they shared was apparent. Through a constant flow of communication, everyone involved in Chris’ education was better able to meet his needs and gain insight into his strengths and weaknesses. This process of open communication and rapport allowed teachers to express their concerns to his mother and her to them.

Unlike Chris, Les, and Cobe, Shandra and John only had one teacher each. Although candid communication was an integral part of the success of all five cases, perhaps this one-to-one communication was even stronger with these three students. Also, because she taught in the same school, Shandra’s mother had the opportunity to talk to her teacher daily, “Whatever I can do to make sure that she’s okay... is what I am going to do.” She felt this greatly affected how Shandra’s plan was implemented and the success Shandra achieved.

John’s success also was attributed to the communication between his parents and the teachers. John’s father described how his wife sent notes in the assignment notebook as a way to communicate with his fifth grade teacher. The teacher sometimes made copies of her lesson plans so John’s mom would know what they were working on and what the class would be doing next. The teacher stated this was very important because John needed the repetition and reinforcement from home.

John's fourth grade teacher described her frequent communication with John's mother.

She would send notes in his planner and I would let her know if I had any problems with John and his work. We kept in touch constantly. He came a long way from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

The parents and teachers of all five participants felt that the frank and frequent communication they shared was significant to the child's success. Helping the child to learn and succeed was a collaborative effort on the part of the teachers and the parents.

Administrative communication. Although sincere communication between parents and teachers seemed to have the biggest impact on success, communication with administrators was also key. In these five cases effective principals ensured their staff knew which students had 504 Plans and how to implement them. In Chris' case, the principal who was hired during the year was not aware of the plan, nor did he know the child, however, the principal who was at the school at the beginning of the year had copied and given the plan to all of Chris' teachers.

The assistant principal at Les' school told the team of teachers who had Les in class that Les had a 504 Plan and why he needed it. "During the first week of school before students returned to school I made sure all of the teachers knew about Les' plan. I wanted to make sure they utilized the plan." He helped teachers understand how to implement the plan and offered necessary resources. This frank communication by the administrator encouraged teachers to utilize the plan and took the burden of enforcing it away from Les' mother. Les' mother remembered that the assistant principal helped her make Les' schedule based on his interests, abilities, and which teachers they felt would

work best with Les. Les' mother credited this candid communication by school administrators for making the transition from middle school to high school easier for Les. His English teacher validated this when she said, "At the beginning of the year she made sure all of the teachers who had students with 504 Plans were aware of the plans and knew how to follow them."

The principal at Cobe's school facilitated direct communication among the staff by informing them about the 504 Plan, a role Cobe's step-mother had also assumed. Cobe's step-mother claimed, "At the beginning of the year I met with the team of teachers who had Cobe and gave them a copy of his 504 Plan. We discussed these modifications and how teachers could best meet them."

The former principal at Chris' school also engaged in this process of team meetings and introducing teachers to 504 Plans. Additionally, Chris' English teacher described the process of learning about students who have 504 Plans as helpful to her.

We have the modifications highlighted. At the beginning of the year the principal tells us who in our classes has a 504 Plan, what modifications need to be made, makes sure we have the necessary resources to carry it out, and offers suggestions based on his experiences. It is really a wonderful way to be introduced to the plan.

Chris' English teacher and his Social Studies teacher both described seventh grade teacher meetings during which the group of teachers who taught Chris agreed upon techniques and modifications to make. They all wanted to see him succeed and were willing to listen to what other teachers were doing.

For Shandra and John it appeared that the administration was involved when problems arose rather than in introducing the plan. Communication between Shandra's mother and the principal occurred because, "Shandra's mother had one concern at the beginning of the year. We told her she needed to start with Shandra's teacher and it has never come back, so I assume it [the plan] works." When asked about this incident the teacher said, "Shandra's mom and I talk all the time. I was counting off for some reversals and she didn't think I should. We worked it out; I don't count off for reversals, but I do make her aware of them." Shandra's mother confirmed this, noting that the only concern she ever had with Shandra's teacher was that she counted off for reversals, something she did not feel Shandra could help. She also confirmed that the two of them were able to work that out. It seemed the principal served only as the liaison, and that parent and teacher solved this problem.

When John was in third grade there were a couple of difficulties. For one thing, he was having some processing problems. His father said, "He picked up the concepts, but it's a matter of it took him a while to pick up the skills...It just took him longer to do that." The other problem was that John had a teacher who thought if he was in regular education classes he should be able to do the work. This attitude resulted in the administration providing the teacher with some resources and materials to enable her to better help John meet the expectations of the class.

Direct communication between the administration and teachers was informative and allowed an opportunity to share ideas and worries. The fact that this communication broke down early in John's school career brought more attention to the plan this year. The principal said, "I wanted to make sure he had a successful year, I wanted to make

sure the teacher knew what was expected and that she was going to talk with his parents.”

Monitoring by the administration and their unreserved communication with staff and parents ensured modifications were made and that the intent of the plan was met.

By law, administrators face the task of guaranteeing 504 Plans are being implemented and enabling teachers to do so effectively (Wright & Wright, 2002). Data from this study suggest that the effectiveness of 504 Plans relies in part on the communication administrators have with their staff and the communication they help establish between parents and teachers.

Communication with support services. The individual factor that is named last is support staff. John previously saw the speech and language pathologist and the occupational therapist. Shandra received services from both the physical and occupational therapist, and Chris was in counseling. These four distinct services had an impact on the lives of each child and are discussed as factors of success.

Students with disabilities are offered a variety of support services to ameliorate the effect their disability has on their education. Students are offered speech and language therapy if they have a delay in either of those areas. Students who have fine motor delays based on educational performance are offered occupational therapy, and those with gross motor deficits which affect their education are offered physical therapy. Students who need counseling or therapy are offered this service as well. School systems employ psychologists, therapists, counselors, and a plethora of other professional service providers to ensure the needs of students are being met. Several of the cases in this study received services; Shandra from the occupational and physical therapist, John from the

speech and language pathologist and occupational therapist before this study occurred, and Chris from a counselor.

It appeared that the occupational and physical therapists and Shandra's teacher communicated effectively about what they were doing to help Shandra. Shandra's teacher said, "I see them hopping and skipping in the hall," when I asked about physical therapy. She was also aware of the writing strategies they had tried and knew what ultimately worked. Shandra's mother also seemed to have rapport with the therapists and felt responsibility for following through at home.

John saw the speech and language pathologist before he was school age which gave the pathologist an opportunity at every session to communicate with his parents. His sessions were primarily based on language skills which John needed to relearn. The rapport that John's parents and the speech and language therapist developed helped John's parents learn more about Landau-Kleffner Syndrome and how they could better help John. John's father claimed, "The speech therapist wasn't always concerned about our feelings; she wanted to make sure we knew John's limitations." Her version was quite similar, "I felt I had to make sure they knew just how delayed he was. We're talking about a child who could talk, and then regressed. It was hard to deal with." Once John started school the pathologist was instrumental in collaborating with John's teachers and in preparing them for the needs John had. The brutally honest communication between his parents and the pathologist ameliorated many of the obstacles that John had to overcome. John was dismissed from speech therapy at the end of his fourth grade year.

The behaviors that Chris displayed and the panic attacks that arose because of school caused his parents to allow Chris to be home schooled part of his seventh grade year. His mother wanted help and support and contacted the board of education to see what they could do to help; one answer was for Chris to work with a counselor. This counselor met with Chris twice a week to talk about what was going on and why he felt the way he did. Although not part of her job, the counselor made sure Chris' mom was keeping up with his school work helping him to keep up, " She made sure I was following the schedule so that going back to school would not be so difficult."

Communication between the student and the teacher. Frank communication between students and teachers also played a part in the success participants achieved. Rapport between Les and his teachers helped him know what to expect and how to meet the requirements of the classroom while still receiving the accommodations and modifications he needed. Likewise, it appeared that Chris had established rapport with his teachers. He told me that if a teacher was not following the plan he would, "Just tell them. I just say, 'I need this.' They always know. I just have to remind them." This level of comfort and being able to express his needs caused me to realize just how much Chris depended on having a written plan. I did not interview the younger students because their parents were against it. I did not interview Cobe because his step-mother was afraid it would make him feel singled out. However, their parents and teachers felt that they had a positive relationship with the teachers and that if they needed help with an assignment they would go to them.

Summary of communication. Frequent, honest communication among teachers, parents, administrators, support services, and students was pivotal to students' success.

The open communication among educators, parents, and the students helped these students succeed and minimized the chance of misinterpretations. Students performed better in school when their parents communicated with the staff, and the staff was better able to help students when they shared ideas and information. Communication seems to be critical to the success of 504 Plans.

Necessary Accommodations and Modifications

A 504 Committee, which consisted of the participant's parents, teachers, administrator, support staff, and the 504 Coordinator, wrote each child's plan based upon his or her strengths and weaknesses. The modifications that were written met the individual needs of each student, yet appeared to be very similar for all of the students. Each of these students was offered accommodations such as preferential classroom seating, extended time for tests and assignments, reduced assignments, and an extra set of text books to keep at home. It appeared that what helped students achieve were not only the modifications written into the plan, but the ways in which the teachers implemented these modifications and other learning strategies.

The accommodations and modifications in Les' 504 Plan were written when he was in middle school. These accommodations were supposed to allow him to be successful while still learning the content he needed. It turned out that these accommodations were not specifically what Les needed after all. Les' teachers and mother were able to adapt classroom assignments and modify lessons in a way that did meet Les' needs, thus enabling him to succeed. Les' plan did not call for the modifications teachers told me they made. In fact it proposed he use an assignment notebook, tape classes or get a copy of teacher notes, and take advantage of after school

tutoring. If these modifications were made, I did not observe them. Les' trigonometry teacher said, "I don't think my lessons plans would be of any use to a student." His mother said, "He's not going to tape a class; no other student does that." The modifications that I observed, and that seemed to make Les successful, such as individual attention, lenient grading or partial credit, were teacher initiated and were not a part of his 504 Plan. Les did receive tutoring, but not in the after school tutoring program; he went to the graphic arts teacher during his lunch break for individual or small group tutoring.

His world cultures teacher attributed Les' success to the allowances he made because Les did have a 504 Plan, not to the modifications of the plan. He surmised that if he had not graded Les more leniently than he did the other students, which he did because Les had a 504 Plan, Les would have failed. He gave him this chance because he did have a 504 Plan which made him aware that Les had problems. This same teacher also commented that he modified lessons and grading for many students, not just Les. He avowed, "Teachers know what students are capable of."

The one teacher who did individual tutoring with Les was the teacher of graphic arts, which is more of an elective class than a core academic class. Les informed me about these tutoring sessions and I am not sure the other teachers knew they took place. The graphic arts teacher helped several students when they came in during lunch. He did this of his own accord and even helped them with homework and assignments from other classes.

Many of the students in this study had similar modifications; it was the way in which these modifications were implemented that helped individual students achieve. Due to his ADHD Cobe needed help in keeping focused, staying organized, and in

developing the strengths that he had. In every class I observed Cobe he was sitting nearest the teacher, and by himself. Close proximity to the teacher was a modification stipulated in his 504 Plan. This modification was intended to diminish the distractions Cobe would encounter in the classroom.

Teachers described Cobe as a smart boy; in fact his library science teacher stated, “He is probably the smartest kid in the school.” I observed his bright nature in English class when the students were discussing the symbolism of Poe’s *The Raven*. Cobe was quiet for awhile, but finally answered that it symbolized the death of Poe’s wife. His teachers and step-mother described Cobe as dark; they suggested the macabre was definitely his style. In this way, he is not unlike other, “young people who love this genre because it teaches them to cope with the sinister and tragic in their own lives” (Jones, 2002, p.98).

Another modification Cobe was entitled to was that teachers would collect his work as soon as he was finished, to decrease the likelihood that he would lose it. I observed the language arts teacher collect Cobe’s work as he was leaving class rather than having him wait until the next day to turn it in. The teachers I observed and interviewed all made use of the extra set of books Cobe was entitled to, and no one assigned other books to him. The consensus was that Cobe could not keep up with books outside of the classroom. Another modification that I observed was in library science class. Cobe sat closest to the teacher, which is a modification but in addition to this when the teacher asked the students to pass in their work she told Cobe not to worry, she already had his. This turning in of assignments as he finished them was an adaptation

stipulated in Cobe's 504 Plan. Teachers seemed to feel that the plan was reasonable and there was no reason not to follow it.

Cobe's stepmother explained how the math teacher followed Cobe's plan.

His math teacher... has students keep a math notebook of all the concepts they are doing... [Cobe] has to turn it in at the end of the nine weeks for a grade. There is no way he can keep a notebook for nine weeks. So, she takes his up a week ahead and sees what he is missing. She then assigns a buddy to help Cobe get it. This is great. His other teachers do similar things. In Library Science she just grades what he does have.

The principal agreed, noting that without a plan Cobe would not be successful in school.

He would not be passing. Cobe just can not keep up with all there is to do. He really needs organization and this plan provides it. Cobe would never be able to take all of his books home and then remember to bring them back. He really needs that extra set of books at home.

His language arts teacher explained that she had Cobe as a sixth grader before he got the plan and it was terrible.

Cobe just had no organizational skills. He could not keep up with anything. He could not find his homework, or maybe he did not remember to take the books home and do it, or he forgot to bring it back to school. It was very frustrating because it was always a series of excuses.

When I asked her what had changed she revealed that teacher expectations changed. She thought teachers understood that Cobe could not help his inattention and his lack of

organizational skills; they were more accepting and they were more able to help Cobe. The language arts teacher also credited the 504 Plan for Cobe's success.

It is because of the extra books and the fact that he can turn his work in as soon as he is finished. He would lose it if he walked out of here with it. Cobe just can not keep up with his work. Being able to turn it in as soon as he is finished really helps him. He is so smart; you really want to see him do well.

She reiterated that the plan was successful because it met Cobe's needs. The math teacher, with whom I only spoke briefly, assured me that Cobe had to work hard at math, but that her class was small in accordance with the 504 Plan. She also averred that the 504 Plan provided availability for tutoring to Cobe, but that he only took advantage of it if he was not doing well.

His teachers and step-mother agree that the actual accommodations and modifications guaranteed by the plan help Cobe be successful. Without modifications such as an extra set of books at home and being able to turn in his work as soon as he is finished Cobe would not be able to keep up with his assignments.

As with all of the students discussed previously, Chris' 504 Plan was written to specifically address his needs, based on the fact that he had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Accommodations and modifications were developed in the plan to help Chris manage the workload and get the help he needed. However, what I observed was that teachers modified lessons and assignments in ways that were not specified on his plan if they felt Chris needed them. For example, teachers were willing to spend their lunch breaks or planning periods allowing Chris to retake tests on which he

had scored poorly, or give him individual attention on an assignment he did not understand. Although much credit should be given to the modifications teachers made that were not on the plan it seems likely that teachers made these modifications because Chris did have a plan. His history teacher explained to me that Chris failed many of his tests, but he allowed him to come in and take them again without the distractions of the class, and with some individual assistance. His English teacher reported similar strategies she made in order for Chris to be successful. The plan made teachers aware of Chris' disability and increased the likelihood they would accommodate him.

Chris' plan was significant in the success he achieved this year. When asked about the success of his 504 Plan, Chris' mother raved about the plan.

I love it. I just think it is wonderful. It has helped us manage and be able to know Chris can succeed. It's not, you know, it's not important that he does fifty similar problems, if he can do twenty five of them and does them correctly you can assume he knows how. That's what I like about the 504 Plan; he does every other one. It takes the pressure off of him. It has alleviated a lot of stress from us. Hours of homework. It was too much for all of us.

His mother also complimented teachers on their willingness to make the necessary accommodations.

All of them work very well with Chris. If he needs an extra day, or an extra thirty minutes, or let him come in at lunch, they all say, "whatever you need." If he needs to retake a test they allow that. If he gets an F they

just tell him to study and come in and retake it. They have all been very accommodating.

Chris seemed to think he did not need the plan very much; perhaps he did not realize that teachers made some exceptions for him. Yet when asked about what school might be like without the plan Chris said:

Probably when I was younger it would have been a lot harder and I might not have been able to accomplish all my work that I was supposed to turn in and would not have any time in the evenings to myself and all I would always be working on [is] my homework.

Both teachers with whom I talked mentioned modifications they made that were not part of the plan. They both allowed Chris to retake tests, to take tests individually rather than in a group setting, and they shortened his tests if they thought he needed it. These teachers also stated that as the school year progressed they tried to wean Chris from the modifications. They wanted to see him working to his potential.

Additionally, Shandra's parents and teachers agreed that the modifications provided by the 504 Plan significantly influenced Shandra's success. Mrs. Bells felt the plan was successful because Shandra was receiving the services she needed (Occupational and Physical Therapy) to ameliorate her weaknesses and because modifications that helped her succeed were being made in the classroom.

Likewise, Shandra's first grade teacher declared that Shandra's plan was successful because it enabled her as the teacher to better meet Shandra's needs through modifications and accommodations that she was able to implement relatively easily.

It gives us a chance. We know what we are looking for before it becomes

a problem. It gives us something to fall back on; you know, drop back and punt. If something happens we know what we are dealing with and what we need to do. I think any good teacher is going to modify what's in this plan, because it's not an extreme plan.

When probed further about what she meant, the teacher replied that, "If Shandra starts being unsuccessful I've got something to fall back on." She mentioned modifications such as reducing Shandra's workload and conducting assessments differently than those for other students if she thought Shandra needed them.

If I have a need to do oral testing I can. What comes to mind is spelling dictation. If she were struggling and the whole class was sitting there waiting on her we would do oral testing. It's not a real problem.

I observed classroom modifications being made one day when Shandra was copying her spelling words from a teacher-made list of words. The other students did not have this list and I jotted a note to ask the teacher why. She later told me she had given the words to the other students orally but Shandra could not keep up, therefore she had written the list for Shandra to copy. On another day I observed Shandra writing "past" or "present" in the line beside each word. This seemed like a lot of writing and I later asked the teacher if that had been too much work for Shandra how she would modify it. She said she could always tell her to put a capital P for past and a lower case p for present. She said, and my observations confirmed, that Shandra was willing and able to do all of the writing she had assigned. Mrs. Phillips told me, "I modify work by giving Shandra only the odd problems, but she didn't need that today." She felt Shandra was capable of doing all of the work the other students in the class were doing.

I examined some of Shandra's written school work and noticed that no points were deducted from a paper that had all of the numbers reversed. Shandra had a perfect score on a paper that had both bs and ds on it, a letter she often reverses, but did not on this paper. Shandra's teacher told me that at the beginning of the year she cut Shandra's work in half because she did not want her to get frustrated; she knew that it would have been too much. However, "As she got more in control of the writing I went ahead and let her do the full length. She doesn't want to do anything different."

Like the other participants, John's success is credited to the adaptations directed by the 504 Plan and the additional ones the teacher willingly provided. His fifth grade teacher worried that a lot of John's problems were carelessness and at one point thought there was a time issue, so she and the parents decided to extend the time he had to do assignments. The teacher also told me, "I would put five problems on the board (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division), and he would do them correctly. He knew the process, but he made careless mistakes [leave numbers out, skip problems] when he worked on assignments." It was the realization that he could do some of them that caused her to shorten assignments.

Once I observed John when an assignment had been made and the students were given a few minutes to work on it before opening their books for the next subject. When it was time for the next subject John continued to work on the map previously assigned, while all of the other students opened the appropriate text. John's teacher did not call on him during the lesson or ask him to put his map away. Later, when I asked the teacher about this, she explained that when John was focused on one activity she found it best to

let him complete it, or at least stay on task for as long as he would. It was her interpretation of providing him extended time on assignments.

Each time I observed John in class the teacher went to him to check on his work and to see if he needed help. She explained to me that the main modifications she made were decreased assignments. She knew that his 504 Plan allowed him to type assignments, but that he had never done so. His teacher also claimed that she gave John extra time if he needed it, but felt that his parents made sure his work was turned in on time. The only accommodation made in spelling class was that he did not do the challenge words at the end of the lesson.

Student Willingness to Work

Teachers suggested the willingness of students with 504 Plans in this study to participate and try in school was important to their success. Les' willingness to work and the effort he put forth to succeed are noteworthy. His teachers all felt he made a conscious effort to stay on task, that he completed his work, and that he took the initiative to get more help if needed. These things, combined with studying and tutoring, helped make Les successful.

If a child struggles with school he or she may become less motivated to try; this was not the case with Les. Les made every effort to do well in school and attempted to achieve at his maximum potential. He took advantage of the plan he had, his teachers' willingness to modify his work, and his mother's involvement in his education. Les was a prime example of a student who was willing to work.

The assistant principal at Les' school described Les as very hard working, a student who wanted to do well. "He is very dedicated...He works hard to do well."

When I observed Les in world cultures class he worked quietly while the other students were socializing, walking around, or working in groups. He had his textbook and some copies that he was highlighting for use in his presentation. He read for more than fifteen minutes without getting up or talking to anyone in the room. Les was more on task than any other student, quite an accomplishment for a student with ADHD.

His mother attributed Les' endeavors in school to maturity, and partly to his stepfather. She indicated that Les' stepfather worried that she babied him too much because she felt bad for him about his father's death. His mother accepted the fact that her making excuses for Les' behavior and incomplete work was deleterious to him and the best thing she could do was to allow him to grow up.

Les attributed his success to learning what he needed to do, saying, "I learned I just had to work harder." As a student who gives up his lunchtime to be tutored, and does not socialize between or during class so that he can work Les seems to be a highly motivated student who wants to succeed.

In contrast to how hard teachers thought the other students worked, Cobe's teachers did not think he put for the effort that he should. Cobe's math teacher mentioned how dedicated he was, but this was actually the only comment I heard from teachers about the effort Cobe put forth. All of his teachers agreed he worked in class, that he did not goof off or cause trouble, but no one mentioned that he strived to succeed. Several teachers did mention the endeavors of his grandmother and stepmother. It was definitely the consensus of the staff that Cobe's success was important to his family. His library science teacher commented, "Well his teachers work hard to make sure he gets his work turned in. His grandmother works to check up on him." But when I asked if Cobe

works she paused and replied, “Some. He does toil, but he doesn’t care like his grandmother or parents.”

Chris on the other hand, claimed to put forth a lot of effort and his mother supported this claim when questioned about his work ethics. His mother exclaimed, “We used to work for hours! It’s not that bad now, but it used to be. Chris has to really struggle.” His English teacher thought Chris worked hard towards the end of the year and made an extra effort to complete his work and study for tests. She thought Chris was doing the best he could do.

Asked if he ever took advantage of having a plan, Chris replied, “No, I only use it when I desperately need it...I wanted to, but I knew it wasn’t for that. I knew I just had to use it for emergencies. It wasn’t for that.”

When his mother was questioned about this same thing she emphatically shook her head no.

I’ve been real conscious about that. At times I think he would, you know any child would if they thought they could get by with it. I have really encouraged him. He is a little on the lazy side when it comes to that. I’ve always said if you can do it all then I want you to always do all of your work. He had done a lot. Me and him talked about this year. He probably did more this year than he ever has since third grade. He really did not use the plan a lot. He did as much work as he could. He tried to do as much as the other children. I try to push him; it has been a constant push to try to get him to do his best. You know, I don’t regret that; it’s what I’m here

for. I don't think it is strictly up to the teachers. Parents have to do that too, so I've done it.

His English teacher told me that Chris would do anything for her. She did not see him as a reluctant learner or a child who wanted special attention, but she did say if he needed help he would ask. I observed this in her class when she used proximity and physical contact to give Chris more instructions for a classroom assignment. His history teacher also thought that Chris worked to his ability, that mainly he needed more time to do classroom assignments, but that he always did them. Chris' mother told me that he worked to his potential. "When he gets low grades he gets more motivated, he works hard to get what he gets." From what I observed, and in talking to his teachers and his mother, it appears Chris works to the best of his ability.

Willingness to work was an important factor in the success of Shandra's plan too. Her mother and teacher thought that how hard she tried and how much effort she put into completing assignments and studying for tests had a direct impact on her grades and ultimately her success. Shandra worked hard in school and seemed to feel comfortable with what she was able to do. I observed her in class doing all of the problems from the board, knowing, if necessary, the teacher would have reduced her assignment by half. When I observed Shandra in class she was working hard and doing what the other students were doing. Also, Shandra's mother described how hard she studied at home. "We spend hours on homework, and I dread it as much as she does."

Often times students' willingness to work is directly related to how successful they feel in school, or by contrast, how frustrated they are (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). I paid careful attention to whether or not Shandra seemed frustrated, and asked her teacher

and mother about this. Shandra never seemed frustrated when I observed and was always doing something similar to what the other children were doing. When questioned about Shandra's school difficulties her teacher indicated that Shandra was able to keep up when modifications were made and did not seem to feel bad about not quite being able to do it. Shandra's first grade teacher felt that Shandra wanted to do what the other students were doing and did not want modifications if she could make it without them.

When discussing frustration with the first grade teacher another detail filtered into the conversation, Shandra's attitude. Her teacher thought Shandra had a good attitude; she put forth a lot of effort. Only once did I hear the teacher redirect her to the task at hand and even then I felt that her attitude towards working and obeying was similar to that of her classmates. The assistant principal at Shandra's school perceived her as a quiet girl who never got in trouble. When asked about Shandra's attitude toward school her teacher said, "She has a good attitude. It's really good. She's willing to work; she never complains about the tasks she's assigned. She participates in group discussions." On the other hand, Shandra's kindergarten teacher noted that Shandra had, "quite an attitude," and was sometimes unwilling to complete tasks or try new skills. Shandra's mother also saw her attitude as being a problem at times. Yet her mother also relayed a school scenario in which she felt Shandra's attitude was appropriate. It appears that her attitude is perceived differently by different individuals; some people see it as good and others think it could be better. If there was indeed a change in attitude at school, from a bad attitude in kindergarten to a good attitude in first grade, the change may be a result of her having a 504 Plan in first grade. She may have been frustrated in kindergarten, thus developing a "bad attitude."

In some of the cases I studied, the student's willingness to work and put forth effort were either observed or mentioned in interviews, or perhaps both. This was not the case with John. I did not observe him toiling, nor did any of the teachers I interviewed mention him putting forth a lot of effort in class, except with the material he really liked.

The fourth grade teacher, who was very successful with John during the school year, claimed that he had changed. She tutored him a couple of days a week and reported that he grumbled, "I don't need to do this; this is a waste of my time." His fifth grade teacher averred that he tried really hard at the things he was interested in, but let the rest slide.

John's father perceived that John worked hard at home; he thought the teachers just did not realize how long it took him to do a little bit of homework. Also he was sure they did not know how much effort his wife put into John's success. "He works hard at home. He spends probably two to two and a half hours an evening. It's repetitive in nature. We have gone to the extreme of getting copies of textbooks."

This contrast between teacher and parent perceptions is probably due to the differences in how John acts at home and how he acts at school. It might also be because his mother provides him with the individual attention to do the work and he has to stay focused, whereas in a classroom he can daydream or not do work and the teacher does not immediately see he's not on task. When I observed John he was often daydreaming and not on task, but some of this behavior is likely due to the syndrome he has and the medication he takes to prevent seizures.

Active Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is lauded as essential to student success in school and is necessary to provide programs such as awards recognition, elementary school libraries, and tutoring. It appeared that the fact that Les' mother was a teacher gave her more opportunities to being involved in his education. His mother had the knowledge and skills available to aid her in her endeavors to help Les succeed. Les' mother was involved in his education in three distinct ways. First she communicated frequently with all persons involved in his education. Secondly, as mentioned previously, she monitored his work and progress. Thirdly, Les' mother took an active role in making sure his needs were being met. His trigonometry teacher told me that Les' mother came to see him quite often when Les was a ninth grader, but since he had such success this year she had not been as likely to come to him. This teacher went on to say he thought the mother's involvement, and the communication between them, was quite a motivator to Les. Les knew if he did not perform, his mother would be there, "I used to talk to her everyday, she always asked questions and wanted to know what was going on." The assistant principal told me that he thought the fact that Les' mother was a teacher at the school profoundly affected Les; he knew she was there to check up on him.

She checks to make sure he has done his work, she monitors his behavior, and she tries to stay on top of everything. His mom is dedicated to his success and really plays a part in it...He used to have a lot of problems. I talked to her everyday when I had him before [as a ninth grader; he's in eleventh grade now]. It's not near as much this year. She's let him grow up and accept more responsibility for his work and grades. His stepfather

is the assistant coach for the baseball team he plays for, so I'd say his parents are really involved.

Les, who did not seem to know a lot about his 504 Plan, thought his mother took care of it. She told him what modifications he was entitled to and then stayed on him to get his work done. Les' mother was instrumental in getting a 504 Plan for Les and remained active in his education throughout his school career. His teachers felt that she had put a lot of time and effort into making sure Les was successful. It appeared that everyone concurred that Les' success and hard work were a direct result of his mother's involvement in his education. Les agreed that his mother took responsibility for making sure he had the plan, and that teachers were following it.

Active involvement and participation in his education by his parents also was significant to Cobe's success. His parents, most often his step-mother, and his grandmother were verbose when it came to Cobe and his needs. It was this communication, which I also considered an ingredient of parental involvement, which helped Cobe obtain a 504 Plan, and then utilize it to reap the greatest benefits. Not only did the candid communication between his step-mother and the teachers facilitate the success of the plan, it was his step-mother's feeling that it took her involvement to ensure Cobe's plan was successful.

Because I stay on top of it. I'm the one who checks the agenda to make sure it is filled out... I mean I had to tell Cobe to make sure the teacher wrote his assignment in his agenda. If he did not ask them to, they did not. And, I'm not kidding, if it wasn't written down, there was no way he could remember it. He can't remember what he ate for lunch. I was constantly telling teachers that I

couldn't make him do it if I didn't know what it was. It's working now. It started getting better last year.

Cobe's success may be largely a result of other people making sure he had his work. Leah seemed to feel this was acceptable and wanted others to help Cobe because she attributed his lack of organization to his Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. His step-mother believed that without her active involvement and monitoring, the plan would not be as successful as it is.

Along the same lines, his mother's active involvement was critical to the success of Chris' plan. Her attention to his work and her willingness to seek help for him ensured Chris' success. Chris' mother claimed that she had always been involved in his education and considered it her job: "I've always taken part in his school activities. Chris was in Head Start, and parents have to be involved there. I always wanted to." She felt like it was her responsibility to make sure Chris succeeded, therefore, she took an active role in his education as well as other activities he was involved in. Chris' mother reported that her school participation was beneficial for Chris and that she was comfortable with her role. "I feel good about being there, I think he expects it."

Chris's mother was the one who requested that he be tested in elementary school because he was struggling. She told me that this process actually took a long time; the teacher put off filling out the paperwork, and took more time than necessary to refer Chris to the SAT. Once the SAT met, Chris was referred for psychological testing which did not warrant any special services. The school psychologist told Chris' mother that he was fidgety and had trouble paying attention during testing; therefore, she suggested he be taken to a doctor for an evaluation to see if he had ADHD. Chris' mom immediately

took him for an evaluation because she wanted to do all that she could to help Chris succeed.

Each of Chris' teachers relayed stories about him crying and being upset at school. Chris' mother's perception of this time period was that he was bullied and harassed. The teachers with whom I spoke thought it was more than that; that Chris relied heavily on his mother coming to school. His history teacher described situations in which: "It is like the first time you took a kid to first grade or kindergarten and they cry ...He wanted to go back with his mom or have her sit with him." His history teacher even suggested that Chris was able to cry and get his way; meaning his mother would feel sorry for him and take him home. His English teacher narrated the following story.

Chris had an F at the first midterm and his mom came to talk to me about it. I told her, [that] he struggles academically and he needs to be at school all of the time. He was bombing the tests and wasn't at school to get homework grades.

When I asked how his mother reacted to this, his Social Studies teacher replied,

She made excuses about his anxiety and stress. I told her that I could empathize with that, but he needed to be in school. The cold hard facts are that he will even struggle if he is here everyday. He'll sink if he is absent. I'm trying to help him, but he needs to be here. I can't help him if I don't see him. I really thought the conference was ineffective; I was very skeptical about his future attendance. Two weeks later it hit me; he had been there everyday.

Chris' history teacher also credited Chris' regular attendance the second semester of eighth grade to his mother, saying, "I think somewhere along the line she must have told him, you know, you need to try to stay in school." His social studies and English teachers agreed that Chris was not as easily upset and that he seemed to have matured socially which helped him in school. His mother attributed some of this change to his medication for ADHD and panic disorder. Chris' mother perceived her involvement as positive, and for the most part teachers did too. Even though his teachers did not always think Chris' mother made the right choices, they claimed that it was her participation in his school career that helped Chris stay on track. Without her involvement he may have never received a 504 Plan. Chris' mother thought that it took her requests for help and continued involvement and contacting the school for help to make Chris successful.

Shandra's parents' involvement in her education went beyond their frequent communication with school personnel as described previously. Shandra's mother was sure that her presence in the school gave a lot of credence to the 504 Plan. She explained to me, "I've had lots of students who were supposed to get therapy. The therapists only showed up about half of the time. They never miss with Shandra. They know I'm going to check to see if they have serviced her." Shandra's kindergarten and first grade teachers averred that because Shandra's mother knew she needed prescriptions for the therapists and how to go about getting a 504 Plan the process was expedited. Her first grade teacher said, "Shandra's mother wanted the plan and knew how to go about getting it."

Shandra's mother spoke of Shandra's homework and what an ordeal it was. She avowed that they worked with Shandra every day. Shandra's mother stressed how hard

she and Shandra's father both worked to make sure she succeeded: "Her dad and I both do homework with her all of the time. We make sure it is correct." Those hours of homework, the therapy sessions, and suggested exercises were all their responsibility. Shandra's mother felt it was this active involvement that increased Shandra's success in school.

As noted earlier, Shandra's parents were involved in getting a 504 Plan. Her mother played a major role in writing the plan and was instrumental in making sure it was implemented. Also, Shandra's mother communicated with the teacher and administrator to ensure Shandra's success, and facilitated some changes. Her parents' involvement significantly affected Shandra's success and is intertwined in the other three identified factors: modifications and accommodations, communication, and indirectly willingness to work. The parents and teacher felt that the plan was successful because Shandra was making good grades and they all thought she was learning. Her mother averred that, "She makes good grades. It's a lot of work...She makes the best grade in math."

The success of John's plan also was dependent upon his parents being involved in his education. His fifth grade teacher claimed, "His parents are the reason he is as successful as he is. They spend hours daily helping him with his homework. They really push him to be successful." John's mother worked for hours every evening with John and bought educational toys and games to try to increase his skills. His dad agreed that John's mom put in a full day's teaching after John got home.

In third grade John was not doing well and the principal told me that she did not realize there was a problem until the parents brought it to her attention. She then called for a School Assistance Team meeting, and the teacher was made aware of the

accommodations she had to make. The principal claimed, “We got it worked out. She made adaptations and he got through third grade.” The principal seemed to think the teacher felt the parents just wanted him to make passing grades, but what they told the principal and me was that they really wanted him to learn the skills he would have to have the next year. It was this parental presence and involvement that influenced John’s achievements in school. This comment from John’s father illustrates how involved his parents were in John’s education and how important it was to them.

The 504 Plan has significantly changed the amount of homework and if he’s able to get the concept and only do half the work that’s what the 504 specifies. We’ve had to do some alternative things in order to get him to pick up the concept. We might step out of the box to try to teach him. If it means purchasing the materials ourselves we do. We try to stay one step ahead of the teacher. We’re not trying to give him the test or anything, but we’ve created study guides to try to help him.

I’m not a teacher by any stretch, but apparently you learn one of two ways. You learn from memory, rote memory, or you know like reading is phonics. I don’t know what you call that. It seems like everything in education today is phonics. But John learns by memorization.

The parents of these five students were all active in their child’s education. They played a key role in the identification of the disability which enabled the student to qualify for a 504 Plan. These parents also participated in writing the plans and ensured they were being implemented. The communication these parents helped establish with their child’s teachers and school personnel seemed to be a critical component of their

involvement. Parents took an active role in making sure students did their work and engaged themselves in the teaching process when necessary. This parental involvement and obvious concern for their education helped these participants to be successful.

Extended Family Involvement

There is a Chinese proverb that says “It takes a village to raise a child”. In this era of hectic schedules, single parent homes, and working mothers, this proverb may become a truism. Along with the importance of parental involvement is the involvement of this “village”. In Cobe’s case, it was an extended family member who played this role. Cobe’s grandmother Sue has been a critical player in his education and has used her knowledge and perhaps influence as a school employee to help Cobe succeed.

The principal of the school told me that it was Sue who asked her if she thought Cobe would qualify for a 504 Plan and then suggested that they start the process. Sue also interceded on Cobe’s behalf many times before the 504 Plan was written. She checked up on him and asked teachers how he was doing. The principal told me, “Teachers felt like Sue expected teachers to give Cobe special treatment.” The principal thought Sue just wanted teachers to know how badly she wanted Cobe to succeed and how willing she was to help him. Sue kept track of Cobe’s schedule, school activities, and knew if he needed to bring anything to school. Having this extra help was reassuring to Cobe’s step-mother and helpful to teachers.

Medication

Four of these students were taking prescription medicine. Two of the students took medication for health reasons, John to prevent seizures and Chris to keep him from having panic attacks. Two of the students, Les and Cobe, were on medication for

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and this medicine was specifically prescribed to help them function better at school.

Les was prescribed a new medication for ADHD the summer before starting ninth grade. Les' teachers did not know what his behavior was like without that medication so it was hard for them to tell if it was helping, but the general consensus was that it was not. However, by his junior year the medication had been regulated and there were improvements in his behavior and his ability to stay on task. His trigonometry and world cultures teachers agreed that he was as likely to be on task as any student in the room, certainly not distracted like other students with ADHD.

Cobe was also taking medication for ADHD for the second time in his school career. His stepmother, Leah, did not like the effect medication had on him when he was in third grade and was resistant to his sixth grade teachers suggesting he needed it. She felt they were pressuring her to put him on medication and that if she did not they would not do their part. Teachers assured me this was not the case; they knew how Cobe struggled and had seen how medication helped other students. With some encouragement from teachers, and from Cobe's grandmother who saw the difference it made in other students, Leah allowed Cobe to be put on medication when he was in seventh grade. Because he had finished sixth grade successfully it was hard to determine if being on medication in seventh grade made an impact on Cobe's grades. Leah felt that the medicine helped him stay focused more, but was not sure it helped him stay organized.

Support Staff

School systems hire and contract with many different services in an effort to better meet the needs of children. These services include those of psychologists, counselors, occupational and physical therapists, and speech and language pathologists. Three of the students in this study received services from these individuals.

Psychologist. School systems hire and contract with psychologists to administer intelligence tests and in some cases provide counseling or therapy. All but one of the students in this study were given intelligence tests and the results of these tests were explained to the parents by the psychologist who administered them.

Psychologists also offer counseling to students. When Chris was in seventh grade he missed enough days of school to be considered truant, and then his parents applied for a waiver to home school him. They were not sure this was what was academically best for Chris, but they could not bear to send him to school where he would scream and cry. His uncontrollable outbursts were disruptive to other students and ultimately embarrassing to Chris. Once Chris was approved for home-schooling his mother hired a tutor. She did not think she had the knowledge or skills to keep Chris abreast of the new strategies and techniques used in teaching. She also felt that the relationship she had with Chris was suffering from trying to be his parent and his teacher. His mother told me, "I just couldn't do it. It was emotionally draining for both of us." Because he had a 504 Plan a school psychologist was offered as support personnel for Chris by the county. This psychologist worked with Chris once a week while he was out of school, providing counseling and situation management techniques. She encouraged Chris to get back in

school and worked with him routinely. It was ultimately the impact that therapy and learning coping skills had on him that helped Chris return to school.

Physical and Occupational Therapists. Shandra had gross motor delays and thus received the services of the physical therapist who primarily concentrated on large muscle groups. Exercises and activities which strengthened muscles and increased gross motor skills were employed during these therapy sessions. The physical therapist evaluated Shandra at the end of this school year and dismissed her from services because she was able to perform skills appropriate to her age level.

Shandra's dismissal from physical therapy may be a result of large muscle groups developing faster than small muscles. The occupational therapist who screened Shandra explained to me that Shandra was involved in gymnastics last year and that an extra curricular activity such as that would help her develop large muscles. The occupational therapist also thought that Shandra was able to ambulate through the hallways and stairs at school and navigate on the playground without any difficulties. If she did not have any visible gross motor problems at school she would not qualify for school-based physical therapy.

On the other hand, Shandra's occupational therapy sessions dealt specifically with, "Motor planning, sequencing, and sensory integration," all things that helped her achieve in the classroom. Thus, according to the therapist, she still warranted occupational therapy. Shandra and John both saw an occupational therapist because they had fine motor delays and motor planning problems. The occupational therapist helped them to learn how to do small motor activities such as manipulating small objects or writing. In Shandra's case the therapist also worked on motor planning skills. The

occupational therapist told me, “She has a lot of motor planning, maybe perceptual problems. There’s a lot of work to be done.” John received therapy for several years and was able to relearn some of the skills he lost due to the seizures he had as a young child. John made such progress since beginning that the therapist dismissed him from occupational therapy at the end of this school term.

Speech and Language Pathologist. John started speech well before he began school, and continued to go to speech therapy from the time he started kindergarten until he was dismissed from services in the fifth grade. The speech and language pathologist provided therapy to John because he had language delays, fluency deficits, voice problems, and articulation errors. The pathologists taught and retrained John to pronounce sounds correctly, develop language, and to compensate for or repair voice problems.

Once John started school, the speech and language pathologist used visual planning strips to help John establish a routine. She collaborated with his classroom teachers to increase his ability to decode words and develop phonemic awareness skills. The speech and language pathologist helped teachers implement the 504 Plan by providing them with information about his disability and guiding them in the use of strategies that would best meet John’s needs. She had the materials and resources that helped make classroom experiences more successful for John, such as cars and a house for naming and recognizing objects. John’s parents think that his success in school is largely due to her strategies for teaching John language and her dedication to helping him learn.

Summary of Common Successful Factors

The success of these five cases was attributed to the four common factors that enabled students to achieve: (a) open communication, (b) necessary accommodations and modifications, (c) student's willingness to work and (d) active parental involvement,. Other factors unique to some of the cases (e) extended family, (f) medication, and (g) support services also played a role in the success some students achieved.

Chapter Six summarizes the findings of this study and discusses ways that administrators can facilitate the emulation of these factors in an effort to ensure the success of all students with 504 Plans. The factors identified as significant to success will be compared and contrasted to the literature in an effort to add to the body of knowledge available.

CHAPTER VI

Findings, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Chapter Six is written as an impetus for the emulation of the factors which were found to significantly impact the success of 504 Plans. Through coding individual case data and performing cross-case analysis I was able to find regularities and commonalities among these effective 504 Plans. It is the commonalities identified and described by this study which I hope can be used in a manner that is beneficial to administrators by adding to the body of knowledge discussed in Chapter Two. Although there is a plethora of information about factors that make schools successful, there is little information about the success of 504 Plans, and I found no literature that designated successful factors of 504 Plans.

The four common factors shared among the successful 504 Plans examined in this study and the three factors unique to cases that impacted success were identified and discussed in Chapter Five. Chapter Six compares the findings of this study to the research that was discussed in Chapter Two of this document. This comparison and contrast of the findings of this study to the available literature adds to the body of knowledge about successful 504 Plans.

Factors that Influenced Success

Communication

The first factor, open and frequent communication, was discussed in Chapter Five in relation to individual cases and in relation to the cases collectively. Communication was crucial to the success of the students in this study in several different ways.

Communication between teachers and students, communication among professionals working with students, communication between teachers and administrators, communication between the school staff and parents, and liaisons that aided communication all played a part in the success students experienced.

Two cases in this study contribute to the body of knowledge on communication between teachers and students by showing the importance of communication between Les and his trigonometry teacher, and Chris and his teachers. Les was able to find out what he needed to make up and ask for extra help if he needed it. Chris also mentioned that he felt comfortable telling different teachers if he needed modifications. Miles and Darling-Hammond, who studied high performing schools in 1997, found that teachers at a successful high school were only assigned 76 students a day, had those students for more than seventy minutes per day, and led small advisory groups weekly to discuss social, personal, and academic issues with students. Similar to this, Les found a teacher with whom he connected to help him and other students with homework. Les and his mother felt like this teacher really helped him achieve.

In this study, frequent communication among professionals who worked with students, such as teachers, therapists, and any other support staff was important in collaboration and the establishment of an educational program that met the students' needs. Having a liaison such as the one mentioned in Zirkle (2002) ensured this communication took place. The use of a liaison is discussed later in this section on communication. The occupational therapist who saw Shandra talked with her teacher to find out what kinds of problems she had with fine motor, specifically writing; and then developed a plan to help her learn to write more legibly. John's speech pathologist

researched his syndrome, learned how to better serve John, and then shared this information with his teachers. Her efforts were extremely instrumental in the success John achieved. This confirms Coleman's (2002) findings that regular education teachers wanted to collaborate and communicate with special education teachers. They did not always know what to do for a student with special needs and wanted to ask or observe special education teachers to learn. The high performing schools that Miles and Darling-Hammond (1997) studied employed this strategy too; they allowed time for special educators and regular education teachers to discuss students and events. In her article about counseling students with 504 Plans, Cox (1994) agreed that counselors and educators had to work together to provide the best education to students with special needs.

In the current study, forthright communication between the administration and teachers was also essential to establishing programs that were successful. This is not surprising in light of prior research indicating that teachers believe an environment of frequent and open communication with administration and other teachers is a key variable in their ability to successfully teach students (Coleman, 2002; Crockett, 2002; Finkenbinder, 2001). In Les' case the administrator was a liaison between his mother and the teachers; later he helped communicate Les' needs to teachers before assigning him to their classrooms. Likewise, Suppovitz and May (2003) found that collaboration and communication between the administration and the teacher increased the quantity and quality of success for students with disabilities. The findings of Schmidt, Rozenwal, and Greenman (2002) were also consistent with this. At Chris' school there was a new principal, but the teachers I interviewed mentioned the habits of their previous principal

and felt that he communicated Chris' needs to them as well as collaborated with them to best meet Chris' needs. Likewise, in Cobe's case the principal played the role of facilitator in meeting Cobe's needs and monitored how teachers were working toward that goal. According to Coleman (2001), teachers avowed that administrative support was essential to their ability to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Les' teachers claimed they had this needed support; they believed the assistant principal was knowledgeable and willing to help. Teachers repeatedly claimed that an environment of frequent and open communication with administrators and other teachers was essential to their successes with students with 504 Plans.

Also, open communication between the parents and school personnel made it possible to better serve students and ensure that needs were met. The parents of all five students in this collective case study communicated regularly with their child's teachers. They all communicated that their child had problems and that they were looking for help. In addition to this they provided teachers with information and talked with them concerning their child on a regular basis.

Zirkle (2000) wrote about the trials of obtaining a 504 Plan and the success it helped one child achieve. For this child, one of the accommodations was a mentor who met with him weekly and acted as a liaison between him and his teachers. The fact that a liaison was written into the plan demonstrates the value of communicating. In Chris' case the counselor who worked with him and his family so that he could overcome his anxiety and perform better at school served as a liaison among the professionals who worked with Chris and between these professionals and his parents. This counselor was

provided to Chris because he had a 504 Plan. Also, as previously mentioned an administrator served as a liaison between Les' teachers and his mother.

Accommodations and Modifications

When observing participants and interviewing teachers I consistently found that teachers made accommodations for not only the students participating in this study but for students who did not have 504 Plans or Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Teachers reported to me that they accommodated all students because they wanted them to succeed. This was consistent with Schumm and Vaughn's (1991) study reporting that regular education teachers believed that modifications should be made for all students not just students who were diagnosed with a disability. Teachers were less likely to use modifications that pertained only to individual students (Schumm & Vaughn, 1991; Gayria, Salend, & Hemrick, 1994). I did not find this to be true; I saw teachers making accommodations to fit the individual needs of the students in their classes. Gayria, Salend, and Hemrick (1994) also stated that elementary teachers claimed implementing adaptations was easier than middle or high school teachers, but I saw no evidence of this. Only two of the five participants in my research were elementary students and I did not find any evidence that teachers in middle or high school were less likely to implement modifications or any sign that they thought modifications were difficult to make.

Schumm and Vaughn (1991) reported that teachers thought that adaptations which increased social acceptance and motivated students to learn were the most desirable. I did not observe accommodations in order to make students more socially accepted. However, the parents of several of the participants in this study expressed to me that they had made it clear to the teachers that accommodations that drew attention to the child or

made him or her less socially acceptable were probably as deleterious to their emotional well being as they would be beneficial to learning. These parents did not want such accommodations to occur.

Schmidt, Rozenwal, and Greenman (2002) noted that teachers employed strategies that benefited the majority of the students and required little accommodation. They were less likely to implement accommodations that were more specific or time consuming. What I found in this study was a direct contrast to this. Teachers allowed participants to retake tests, take them orally, turn work in late, and a plethora of other adaptations that only benefited the participants. The findings in this study might contradict the research because of the demographics of the schools I visited. The two elementary schools and one of the middle schools participants in this study attended are nestled in small, close-knit communities wherein the schools are key focus areas. These schools laud their parental involvement and strive to involve the parents of all children. The fact that two of the parents of participants in this study are teachers and one student has extended family in the school system may also skew the research results. Teachers may have treated these students differently because of the ties that their family had with the school system. I did not observe this or hear it said, but it is certainly a possibility. However, accommodations were not made only for students with 504 Plans; they were made for any student who needed them. The fact that these findings are different complicates the literature and identifies how modifications can enhance children's success, especially in relatively small schools and communities such as the ones involved in this study.

Student Willingness to Work

The last common factor, students' willingness to put an effort into their studies, work with tutors and therapists, and spend numerous hours working at home affected how students in this study achieved in school. It also affected teachers' perceptions. Teachers were pleased with students they perceived to be working hard and reacted positively to the accommodations they were asked to make for them.

With the exception of a study of adult learners, literature does not identify students' willingness to work as a factor affecting achievement. When studying adult learners, Pietersen (2002) found that personal engagement in learning encouraged learner confidence and increased motivation. I found this to be true with participants as well. Cobe enjoyed library skills because it required group participation and activity. Les did better with projects than with pencil paper tasks, and Shandra felt responsible for and motivated to read when she was able to use the Reading Counts program. Pietersen noted that if the participants in his study were able to get involved in learning they were more motivated to do so; my findings were similar. This willingness to work seemed to be directly related to how teachers implemented lessons and accommodated students' abilities and learning styles.

Parental Involvement

All of the parents in this study felt that they enhanced their child's success by taking an active role in their education. Many students with 504 Plans have them because they have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), as was the case with three of these students. When writing about children with ADHD, Edwards

(2002) averred that the most efficacious and preferred treatment was an approach that included the family, the school, and medication. The importance of this multi-system approach was supported by Cobe's mother who made practical use of his agenda notebook by writing to the teacher several times a week. Les and Shandra's mothers were both teachers at the schools they attended and were able to communicate frequently, again supporting the literature, even though Shandra did not have ADHD. Parents of children with any disability, or no disability may find it beneficial to know that the same procedures that positively influence students with ADHD may have a positive impact on their child as well. Communication was pivotal in starting the plan and in sustaining it, a fact the parents and teachers in this study claimed as did the literature (Brown & Thomas, 1999; Bryan, Burstein, & Bryan, 2001; Gold, Rhodes, Brown, Lytle, & Waff, 2001).

Parent involvement is important to all student achievement and positive classroom behavior (Muscott, 2002). In terms of children with 504 Plans, this involvement takes place in several different ways. Parents have knowledge about their child and the law to share with educators, especially during the 504 Plan process; they can be active participants in their child's school experiences; they can monitor or help with homework; and they can communicate with teachers as discussed in the previous section.

According to Muscott (2002) parents must be recognized as true experts on children and all professionals must learn to be consultants to them. In the current study, Shandra's mother felt that she knew Shandra's strengths and weaknesses better than anyone else, and that this information was necessary for writing a successful 504 Plan; she wanted to be an active participant in planning for Shandra. Likewise, Cobe's stepmother and grandmother both worked diligently with Cobe and Cobe's stepmother

felt it was important that teachers recognized their efforts. Muscott (2002) supported the importance of this kind of involvement and the knowledge that parents hold, mentioning that parents know how their children learn and know children's experiences and prior knowledge. Muscott also found that parents' involvement positively affected student achievement. The parents of the students in this study were not passive recipients of information; they were empowered and active in their child's education. In all five cases in this study the parents were involved in obtaining a 504 Plan and in several cases were the ones who instigated the process. Shandra's mother was also aware of the other services such as physical and occupational therapy that should be provided for Shandra. John's parents performed research and were the ones to start the process of him getting a 504 Plan. Because his grandmother worked at the school, Cobe's stepmother was knowledgeable of what was available and pursued getting help for Cobe. Extended family support and involvement, as Cobe had with his grandmother, is supported by research as important to the success of students with disabilities (Bryan, Burstein, & Bryan, 2001; Gold, Rhodes, Brown, Lytle, & Waff, 2001; Muscott, 2002).

Educators must approach parents respectfully in order to have a positive impact on the education of students (Muscott, 2002). John's most successful year, fourth grade, was a product of such respect. His parents and fourth grade teacher respected each other and understood that their collaboration was critical to John's success.

Research and practice have shown that the active involvement of parents and their continued participation in their child's education are essential to student achievement (Boyer, 1991). Wheeler Elementary, a Professional Development School in Kentucky, touts its parental involvement program and claims that by educating the parents about the

school they are more capable of aiding the children (Brown & Thomas, 1999). This participation not only affects academic achievement but positively influences behaviors as well. In the current study, for example, Chris' mother was able to spend time at school with him, walk him to class, and even eat lunch with him. His teachers knew he needed this kind of support, at least for a while. Les' teachers and the assistant principal all mentioned that his behavior in high school was much better than it had been in middle school. They felt this positive change in behavior was directly related to his mother working at the school. When looking at his report cards and talking to his mother I also found that his grades had gone up and his academic record had improved.

The directors and participants in Children Achieving, a school reform model in Pittsburgh, envisioned parents as crucial participants at every level of school reform. This vision emphasized the transformation of school and community relations, with parents as the primary stakeholders. Seeing parent engagement as critical to school reform, this reform established a leadership role for parents in order to transform the relationship they had with the school. Parents were encouraged to be actively involved at every level (Gold, Rhodes, Brown, Lytle, & Waft 2001). Likewise, it was the parental involvement at every level that helped the participants in this study achieve success. Parents were involved in referrals, testing, meetings, and in the writing of the 504 Plans for the participants of this study. In Children Achieving there was a true partnership between the parents and educators; parents had a voice (2001). This same kind of parental voice, in each step of the process, was necessary for the success of the students in this study.

Students achieve at higher levels when parents are involved in the homework process and support school activities (Muscott, 2002; Bryan, Burstein, & Bryan, 2001). Cobe's stepmother exemplified this; she could make sure Cobe did his homework and get it organized for him to turn in if she knew what was assigned. John's father averred that his wife did John's homework with him every night. One of the reasons their parents had to take such an active role in getting homework complete was the frustration John and Shandra both felt. Bryan, Burstein and Bryan (2002) supported this claim in their study of homework practices claiming that students with disabilities found homework frustrating either because they did not remember how to do it, did not remember the exact assignment, or because they had trouble staying on task to finish it. In all five cases in the current study the parents took part in the child's education and all but Les' mom mentioned how much they had to help them with homework. Parents and teachers believed this type of participation enhanced the success the students in this study achieved.

Extended Family

Extended family is considered in this research as an extension of parental involvement and has been written in to each discussion directly following parental involvement to strengthen this idea. In the case of Cobe, it was the involvement of his grandmother that helped him achieve success. Cobe's grandmother worked at the school and knew what was available to him. She was also able to intercede on his part, and helped teachers either understand his disability or help him make better choices. This kind of extended family involvement is supported by literature that lauds family involvement in education and deems it critical to success.

The success a child achieves when given support and enrichment from an adult, in many cases an extended family member, is discussed in the literature. Research shows that students who have an adult involved in their education, whether it be to help them, or just to check up on them, have higher achievement (Boyer, 1991; Brown & Thomas, 1999; Bryan, Burstein, & Bryan, 2001; Gold, Rhodes, Brown, Lytle, & Waff, 2001). Muscott (2002) wrote that families were not just traditional two-parent homes and that non-traditional families as well as extensions of these families must be valued as well. Cobe did not live with his grandmother, but because of her job assignment in the school and her close relationship with Cobe she was instrumental in his success. This study confirms the importance of support and involvement of an available adult, in this case an extended family member.

The findings of this study are consistent with the body of knowledge about the benefits of parental involvement generally. In all of the cases I studied the parents were actively involved in the education of the child. In the case of Cobe, his extended family support is included in this summary. Parents and teachers agreed that this involvement positively affected student achievement. Also, this study adds something new to the literature about parental involvement with children with 504 Plans. The literature does not mention how parental involvement affected children with 504 Plans even though it touched upon students with disabilities and students with IEPs. The findings from the current study show the importance of parental involvement for children with 504 Plans.

Medication

A significant issue in the renewed awareness of Section 504 is the great number of children who have been diagnosed with ADHD or ADD (Kardon, 1995). Children

with either of these disorders exhibit problems with inattention, impulsivity, and over activity (Semruc-Clikeman, 1999). These characteristics affect learning, a major life activity, thus qualifying the student for a 504 Plan (Reide, 1995).

Medication, especially methylphenidate is helpful for people who experience ADD or ADHD. This medication addresses the core symptoms such as inattentiveness and impulsivity (Edwards, 2002). During the time of this study, Les and Cobe were on medication for their ADHD and Chris was taking medication for his panic disorder. In all three cases the parents attributed changes in their behavior to the medication.

Support Staff

Students have a variety of educational needs. These needs are not only met by teachers but by occupational therapists, physical therapists, counselors, speech and language pathologists, and psychologists. The students in this research were tested by a psychologist who then conveyed the results of the test to their parents. One student saw a counselor, two received occupational therapy, one participated in physical therapy, and one participant saw the speech and language pathologist. This support staff collaborated with the regular education teacher and the families of these students to ensure an educational program that met their needs.

The literature identifies the aforementioned support staff as well as others. The importance of these people and the roles they play in the education of all students is identified by educational research as well as medical and psychological research. For example, Cox (1994) found that counselors needed to be aware of the specific needs of students and be able to generate the appropriate support. In Chris' case the counselor was

able to help him control his fears and come back to school. According to his teachers, this regular attendance certainly improved Chris' achievement.

Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) may require modifications and interventions within the classroom and still need other services. Social skills training, anger management, and problem solving skills are just a few of the skills these students may have difficulty with. Support staff may need to work with students in these areas and such intervention needs to be written in the 504 Plan (Abramowitz & O'Leary, 1991). In the current study, Chris is a case in point. He had ADHD combined with Panic Disorder, thus it was necessary for a counselor to help him control his fears and better manage his emotions, as was directed on his 504 Plan. His mother praised the efforts and intervention this therapist provided.

Shandra and John both benefited from the services of an occupational therapist who integrated motor activities with handwriting and educational achievement. Their experiences are consistent with prior research on the importance of the therapists and their roles in helping children succeed. For example, Luhm, Foley, and Corcoran (1998) studied the accountability schools held for the education of their students; they found that services and supports made a difference to the success of students. Similarly, in their study of high performing schools Miles and Darling-Hammond (1997) found that the allocation of resources, and support staff was considered a resource, played an important role in student achievement.

In addition to seeing an occupational therapist Shandra worked with a physical therapist who provided instruction for gross motor exercises and strengthening exercises

to decrease the clumsiness and coordination problems Shandra had. Shandra met all of the goals the physical therapist had for her and was dismissed from services this school year. One of the reasons Shandra was so successful in physical therapy was because her physical education teacher had once worked with orthopedically impaired students and was able to adapt all physical education experiences to better meet Shandra's needs. Her classroom teacher was also aware of what the physical therapist was trying to do; she observed them at times. Again, the literature supports the involvement of therapists and other professionals in the education of all students; Abramowitz and O'Leary (1991) suggested that schools must work with therapists to fulfill the educational needs of students, not leave it up to the therapist.

One of the most influential people in John's school career was his speech pathologist. She not only taught him speech and language skills he lost due to seizures, she also helped him learn new vocabulary and speech sounds as he aged. The speech pathologist was also vital to John's success in school because she researched his syndrome (Landau-Kleffner Syndrome) and then explained to his parents and teachers how it affected John. Her support seems to have been critical to his success. She first created a design for intervention, decided upon the specifications, developed materials and processes for improvement, and acted on them. The approach that this therapist took matches the research that Cohen and Ball (1999) conducted when looking at instruction, capacity, and improvement. Cohen and Ball agreed that a systematic design for instruction must be developed first. Once this design is implemented then teachers need to evaluate the capacity the students have for learning, and then to find how to improve

instruction so that this capacity for learning is met. It is this intervention that Cohen and Ball idealized when writing about educational improvement.

Implications for School Administrators

The America's Choice School Design, a school reform model developed by the National Center on Education and the Economy, named several essential principles of successful schools, one of which was a distributed school leadership structure. A principal who led and coordinated the implementation of best practices and ensured that the resources necessary to do this were provided was a principal who modeled the practices of America's Choice School Design (Suppovitz & May, 2003). Finkenbinder (2001) reported that administrators who were reliable sources of information for regular educators when planning the education of students with disabilities helped ensure success. Crockett (2002) proclaimed that leaders must be prepared to manage schools that included a variety of special needs students. Administrators must know how to foster the successful education of all students (Crockett, 2002). Without any previous studies administrators have no empirical study to guide their practices in implementing 504 Plans.

Findings from the current study suggest that administrators should communicate with parents, staff, and support staff to provide the best education for students. They must be willing to listen to parents and to educators, serve as liaisons, and be aware of the 504 Plan and the accommodations it guarantees.

According to this study, administrators must also provide resources and time to teachers so that they can successfully implement 504 Plans. Teachers need time to collaborate with other educators and time to implement some of the individual

accommodations such as oral testing. Teachers also need resources such as the pencil grips for Shandra or the tape recorder for Les.

When talking with parents I found that they wanted administrators to be more knowledgeable of the law and the requirements it guaranteed their child. There was an underlying tone when talking to Cobe's mother and perhaps John's father that the administration was not as aware of their child's rights as they should be.

The research in Children Achieving, a school reform initiative, concluded that administrative leadership was pivotal in allowing, providing, and promoting parental involvement (Gold, Rhodes, Brown, Lytle, & Waff, 2001). Parental involvement also was apparent in the success of each of the students in this study. Therefore, principals should attempt to increase parental involvement in their school and utilize the many skills parents of students with 504 Plans have to offer. For example, Shandra and Les' mothers were school teachers so they had access to information that empowered them. An administrator who provided this same kind of information might have expedited the process for Chris and perhaps gotten him the attention he needed much quicker. Chris' mother was involved in his education and she was often seen at the school Chris attended. Again, a school principal could have tapped into this resource and used her presence constructively, perhaps as an office helper or library assistant. Cobe's stepmother was involved in obtaining the 504 Plan with the help of the school administration and she took an active role in making sure he stayed on track. She also communicated frequently with his teachers in an effort to help him succeed, a practice that was encouraged by the school administrator. John's mother was also a teacher, but not at the school he attended. This allowed her to be involved but not to usurp John's teachers. In all cases, the

parents' involvement helped the child achieve and this involvement should be pursued by administrators.

Teachers vary in their ability to interpret and adapt to student differences (Cohen & Ball, 1999). Administrators may find it necessary in their role to encourage teachers to become more willing to offer help as was the case with Shandra at one time. In order to encourage teachers, administrators must first know how to accommodate students and how to implement the modifications necessary. According to Thurlow (2002), administrators should facilitate accommodations for all students who qualify when it comes to school wide testing. Administrators need to know how to accommodate students, how to implement these modifications before test taking, align the curriculum accommodations with the assessment accommodations and then analyze the data to determine if appropriate modifications were made. This knowledge allows administrators to encourage and support teachers who must meet the demands of a 504 Plan. Based on my findings, administrators who know how to make accommodations and stay abreast of new findings and materials available to help teachers make accommodations are instrumental to the success of students with 504 Plans. For example, administrators may need to purchase raised lined writing paper to help a student who has trouble spacing his words or letters or teachers may need access to assistive technology that they do not currently have.

School administrators have many roles; ensuring student success is perhaps the main one of these. Helping teachers learn to make modifications and giving them the access to the help they need to do this is critical to the success of students with 504 Plans. A leader must know why it is advisable to pursue accommodations and be informed

about exceptionalities (Crockett, 2002). This study provides school leaders with new knowledge about working with students with 504 Plans. First, it is essential that administrators know the law and understand the entitlements and rights of students as described in Chapter One. Secondly, administrators must actively seek parents' involvement; they must create a climate where parents feel comfortable and accepted. In addition to these tasks, administrators must lead teachers in the direction of educational progress for all students, including those with 504 Plans. They must provide them the resources and materials as well as the time and knowledge to implement necessary modifications. Having the information provided by this study will assist administrators in doing these things.

Cooper (1999, p. 201) said, "For the education slogan 'success for all' to be meaningful, all children have to be included..." With this in mind, administrators may want to consider the findings of this study as they plan for school experiences to meet the needs of students with disabilities particularly those who qualify for 504 Plans.

The common elements of these successful 504 Plans were (a) open communication, (b) necessary accommodations and modifications, (c) student willingness to work and (d) active parental involvement. Also unique to some cases were (e) extended family, (f) medication, and (g) support services. By considering these findings administrators may be better able to facilitate and model the practices that help students with 504 Plans to be successful.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study or one similar to it could be strengthened by using a longitudinal approach. Finding out if the same students were successful for the remainder of their

school careers and whether or not these factors affected that success would be a recommended study. In addition to this, finding out if the factors did not change whether the child was still successful would add to the generalizability of this study. Further research could look for these factors listed as essential to success of the implementation of 504 Plans in plans that were not considered to be successful to see if they existed there as well.

APPENDIX A

TERMINOLOGY AND ACRONYMS

- AEL** Appalachian Education Library
- This is an online resource agency that performs research and completes evaluations. This organization also provides consultation and integrates project management, system thinking, and educational expertise.
- ADA** Americans with Disabilities Act
- This law gives citizens with disabilities the right to be employed and receive services from all public programs.
- ADD** Attention Deficit Disorder
- A neuro-biological disorder which limits the attention span of an individual.
- ADHD** Attention Deficit Disorder with Hyperactivity
- A brain dysfunction that limits the attention span of a person who also is affected by hyperactivity.
- BD** Behavioral Disorders
- Problems with behavior that impede the learning of the student or his classmates. These problems must be documented and identified in order to be addressed on the IEP. Strategies to decrease troublesome behaviors must be implemented.

- COTA** Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant
- A health care professional who works under the direction of an occupational therapist in the implementation of therapy to restore or teach self-care, work, and leisure skills of students or clients (O’Toole, 1997).
- ED** Emotionally Disturbed
- This is a condition that occurs over a long period of time and to a significant degree in a manner that adversely affects the child’s educational performance (Bateman & Bateman, 2001). Characteristics of this condition are:
- Child cannot build or sustain interpersonal relationships with peers or teachers.
 - Physical symptoms or fears that are associated with school problems appear.
 - Depression or unhappiness.
 - Behaviors that are either abnormal or inappropriate under normal circumstances occur.
 - Learning problems that can not be explained by intellect, sensory, or health deficits (Bateman & Bateman, 2001).
- FAPE** Free Appropriate Education
- The education that all students are guaranteed under the IDEA. It guarantees related services and accommodations that help students gain an education at no cost to the parents.

- IDEA** Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997
- This act requires public schools to search for and to identify students with disabilities who may need the assistance of special education. These students will have a FAPE available to them. To ensure their rights are met their parents are entitle to be informed of testing, ask for testing, be notified of eligibility, and be a part of the IEP team (Wright & Wright, 2002).
- IEP** Individualized Education Plan
- The IEP formalizes the student’s educational needs and specifically states the goals and objectives necessary to meet those needs (Bateman & Bateman, 2001).
- LRE** Least Restrictive Environment
- Students with disabilities must be educated with their like peers to the maximum extent possible and appropriate for them. This may be an inclusive setting or it may be a self-contained classroom. (de Bettencourt, 2002).
- OCR** Office of Civil Rights
- The federal government office that interprets statutes and laws that are based upon a person’s civil rights. School systems must comply with the findings of this office.
- OHI** Other Health Impaired
- Chronic or acute health problems that are deleterious to a student’s functioning (Bateman & Bateman, 2001).

- OT** Occupational Therapist
- A health care professional who provides services to students or clients in order to restore or teach self-care work, and leisure skills. The OT evaluates and treats problems that arise from developmental delays, physical disabilities, emotional disorders, the aging process, and psychological or social disabilities (O'Toole, 1997).
- PT** Physical Therapist
- A professional that works to rehabilitate individuals so that they gain their optimal health and functional independence. The professionals do this through assessment, correction, or alleviation of movement dysfunction (O'Toole, 1997).
- PTA** Physical Therapy Assistant
- Work under the direction and supervision of licensed physical therapists to implement the programs that help clients or students to gain their optimal health functioning (O'Toole, 1997).
- SBAT** School Based Assistance Team
- This student assistance team carries out a school-based, systematic, and professional process of early identification, screening, referral, and support for students with identified needs which may affect school performance and healthy development. This process utilizes concrete observable data such as the student's grades, attendance, behavior, and social skills to help identify needs. Student assistance must be available to, and understood by, all school staff, parents, and students. Effective

student assistance is an integral part of the school system and should be embedded in school change efforts. Administrators and school boards must support, understand, and recognize the need for student assistance so they can establish clear, concise, and enforceable policies as a foundation for the student assistance process (Wright & Wright, 2002).

APPENDIX B

ACCOMODATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS

Modifications that were specific to certain disabilities were previously mentioned in the body of this document. This list specifies others that were not put into the narrative form.

- (1) Preferential seating
- (2) Study buddy
- (3) Peer helpers (Conderman, 1995).
- (4) Peer mediated consequences with students who have ADD or ADHD (Semrud-Clikeman, 1999).
- (5) Posted schedules on the board
- (6) Posted classroom rules
- (7) Organized workspace
- (8) Color codes
- (9) Private work space such as a reading center, listening center, and a hands on area (Blazer, 1999).
- (10) Modified text books or workbooks
- (11) Tailored homework assignments
- (12) One to one tutors (Adults)
- (13) Classroom aides and note takers
- (14) Simplified directions
- (15) Examples
- (16) Oral feedback from student

- (17) Make eye contact
- (18) Demonstrations
- (19) Directions provided in written form
 - (a) On board
 - (b) On worksheet
 - (c) Copied in assignment notebook by student and initialized by teacher
- (20) Individualized homework assignments
- (21) Reduced volume of homework
- (22) Manageable tasks
- (23) Extended time without penalty
- (24) High interest low vocabulary supplemental texts
- (25) Visual cues
- (26) Cue cards
- (27) Study guides with page numbers or other clues included
- (28) Highlighted or underlined key terms
- (29) Preprinted lecture notes (Conderman & Katsyannis, 1995).
- (30) Technological learning aides
- (31) Tape recorder use for lectures, prerecorded lectures, or stories on tape
(Conderman & Katsyannis, 1995; Blazer, 1999).
- (32) Computers
- (33) Multi-sensory teaching materials
- (34) Calculators (Conderman & Katsyannis, 1995).
- (35) Modified testing or testing delivery

- (36) Distraction free area
- (37) Possible adjustment of nonacademic times such as lunchroom, recess, and physical education (US Department of Education, 1995).
- (38) Supplementary materials
- (39) Administration of medication as per school policy (US Department of Education, 1995).
- (40) Structured learning environment (Reid, Katsiyannis, 1995).
- (41) Counseling and therapy (US Department of Education, 1995).
- (42) Modified physical education program (US Department of Education, 1995).
- (43) Collaboration with the special education teacher (Katsiyannis & Reid, 1999).
- (44) Social skills training (Katsiyannis & Reid, 1999).
- (45) Student participation in meetings (Blazer, 1999).

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Eugenia Webb-Damron

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EDUCATION

- 2002-Present Marshall University Graduate College
Doctoral Program
- 1999-2002 Marshall University Graduate College
Education Specialist Degree (Ed.S.)
Supervisor's Certificate
- 1989-1999 Marshall University Graduate College
Master of Art's Degree: Administration and Principalship
Elementary, Middle, Junior High and Senior High School
Certification
- 1987-1990 Marshall University
Master of Art's Degree: Preschool Special Needs
- 1984-1987 Marshall University
Bachelor of Art's Degree: Mental Retardation K – 12
Elementary Education 1 – 6

EMPLOYMENT

- 2005 *Principal, Kellogg Elementary, Wayne County*
As principal of Kellogg Elementary I lead the school towards educating all students and making positive changes in their lives. I am the facilitator for a staff of over 50, encouraging them to meet state standards and meeting a curriculum that reaches all students.
- 2001-2003 *Assistant Principal, Kellogg Elementary Wayne County Board of Education*
As the assistant principal I work directly with the principal in managing the school, supporting staff, and maintaining a rich, rewarding learning environment. I help manage fifty employees as well as supervise 487 students. During my term at Kellogg Elementary I have been instrumental in securing the West Virginia School of Excellence Award and helping the school reach Exemplary Status from the state.

1988-2001 *Preschool Special Needs Teacher, Wayne County Board of Education*
I taught Preschool Special Needs children in both a center-based program and an out-of-school-environment capacity. I was responsible for countywide screening and identification of students. Testing, writing Individualized Education Plans (IEP's), and instructing students in order to meet the goals on these IEP's were responsibilities of this job. At the end of each year I was responsible for updating tests and IEP's to determine needs and assess student achievement. I was hired as the first Preschool Special Needs teacher Wayne County had and pioneered the program. Based on my experiences I wrote my own Preschool Special Needs Curriculum. As all teachers do, I served on committees within my school and performed duties as required.

GRANT WRITING

2003 Marshall University Community Learners \$1000
2002 The Education Alliance "Classical Music for a Classical education" \$200
1999 West Virginia Department of Education "TECK Grant" \$175000
1998 West Virginia Department of Education Discretionary Grant \$15000
1998 WVEA Grant for Classrooms "Get Ready, Get Set, Go to Kindergarten" \$496.87
1998 Hills Ecological Grant \$300
1995 West Virginia Education Fund "The New Discovery Zone" \$350
1994 West Virginia Department of Education Office of Technology "Distance Learning Grant" \$1033
1993 West Virginia Education Fund "Stories "R" Us" \$257.19
1991 West Virginia Department of Education Discretionary Grant \$10000
1990 West Virginia Education Fund "Look What We're Cooking Up" \$150
1987 West Virginia Education Fund "Family Involvement" \$335
1988 West Virginia Education Fund "Parent's Can Be Teachers" \$100

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

1998 Lincoln County Parent Resource Center "What Am I Going to do with this Child?"
1994 South-Eastern Regional DEC/ Head Start Conference "Playing to Learn, Learning to Play"
1993 Exceptional Children's Conference "We've Come A Long Way Baby"
1991 South-Eastern Regional DEC/ Head Start Conference "Parents as Teachers"
1990 West Virginia Council for Exceptional Children "Collaboration: Parents and Teachers"

PUBLICATIONS

- 1991 Journal of Early Intervention Book Review Children with Cerebral Palsy:
A Parent's Guide
- 1999 Mail Box "Ideas for Teachers"