

THE BELIEFS OF K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ABOUT DISABILITIES AND
HOW THOSE BELIEFS INFORM THEIR LEADERSHIP OF STUDENTS WITH
DISABILITIES

A Dissertation
by
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ABSTRACT

THE BELIEFS OF K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ABOUT DISABILITIES AND
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The leadership of the school principal is an integral part of a successful school. A principal's leadership goes beyond hiring teachers, managing building, and balancing budgets. The leadership of principals involves their work with instruction and influence on students. A principals' leadership is shaped by factors that include knowledge, skill, experiences, and beliefs. The beliefs of principals have a direct impact on the leadership of principals.

One of the student groups that are directly influenced by the principals' leadership is students with disabilities. This phenomenological case study investigated what principals' believed about disability and how these beliefs influenced their leadership of students with disabilities. Principles developed by the Council of Exceptional Children were used as the conceptual framework of the study. Through the use of interviews, principals indicated what they believed about disability, leadership of students with disabilities, the relevancy of degree programs, and needs they had in leading students with disabilities. Principals described their

leadership, work involving students with disabilities, and the importance of their experiences with disability.

Three major themes were drawn from the interviews. These themes included leadership, experiences, and knowledge. In addition to the emerging themes, the study provided answers to the original research questions and a revision to the original conceptual framework. Implications for principals, local education agencies, and graduate school programs are included along with suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Disability, Students with Disability, Special Education, Principal, Beliefs