

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

DISTRICT LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS', SECONDARY SCHOOL
ADMINISTRATORS', AND TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE OF DISABILITY LAWS
AND RECENT LEGAL DECISIONS

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The purpose of this study was to examine superintendents', secondary school administrators', and teachers' knowledge of laws and recent court decisions regarding students with disabilities. School districts have the responsibility of identifying and evaluating students who may qualify for services under IDEA (1997). In order to carry out this assignment, district leaders, administrators, and teachers must be knowledgeable about the laws that affect students with disabilities. When a multidisciplinary or IEP team is convened, that team must be knowledgeable about the evaluation process, placement or service delivery options, and the kinds of services that are available for students with disabilities. Options include making appropriate accommodations and modifications so that students with disabilities can participate in the general education program.

The instrument used in this study is a modified version used in a previous study of faculty knowledge of disability laws in higher education. Of the 426 surveys sent, 200 district leaders, secondary school administrators, and teachers responded to a survey designed to measure their knowledge and application of disability laws and recent court cases, namely IDEA (1997). The respondents represented 5 middle schools and 4 high schools in 1 rural southwest Georgia school district.

Findings in the current study revealed that superintendents with 56% of correct responses and secondary school administrators with 56% were somewhat familiar with the application of the IDEA (1997) law. Middle school general education teachers scored 56% correct responses, and high school general education teacher scored 54% of responses correctly. Their responses were similar to superintendents and administrators in knowledge of the IDEA (1997) law. Special education teachers in self-contained settings were the most familiar with the IDEA (1997) legislation with an average score of 72% on correct responses. However, special education teachers who were speech therapist scored the lowest correct responses than any other group with 42% correct responses. Most respondents indicated that they would like to have more training in the area of disability laws (72%). Results indicate that district leaders and secondary school educators could benefit from further education and training in the area of disability laws, specifically IDEA (1997).