LEADERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION

by

Samita Berry Arora
A Dissertation
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Fairfax, VA

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at George Mason University

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my paternal grandparents, Bauji and Amma, my maternal grandparents, Nana and Nani, and dear aunt, Manjul Bery. Nani, you always said that there is no substitute for education. My grandparents always taught me to finish what I started. Bawji – this advice has stuck with me always. Amma – Jai Ram ji ki. You are greatly missed. Any time I needed extra encouragement, you understood and stood by me. You kept telling me to stay focused and that I could finish. I wish you were here to share this wonderful time with me. I miss you. Manjul Aunti – I remember when you made me practice my writing and copy articles from newspapers to do so. Your persistence and hard work has paid off. I am so grateful. Thank you. I miss you also. You are my inspiration. You always found the positive in everything, no matter how bad things got. You never let anyone see or feel your pain while you were sick. You kept on moving with a smile. Thank you for your encouragement, love, and support. I am grateful to have such great people in my life and know that you are watching over me as my guardian angels. There were days that I didn't know how I would write a chapter or a section and you were there to guide me. Thank you!

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Early Childhood Education ..... ECE
Early Childhood Special Education ..... ECSE
Individualized Education Program ..... IEP
Preschool Autism Class ..... PAC
Preschool Program of Studies ..... PreK POS
Professional Learning Communities ..... PLC

ABSTRACT

LEADERSHIP IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION

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George Mason University, 2013

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With the demands of high quality early childhood special education programs within public school settings, there is a need to place emphasis on research and training regarding early childhood leaders and managers in this complex and diverse field. The focus of this research is to examine what early childhood special education (ECSE) leadership looks like in a public school setting. This study is important in order to gain a better understanding of the complex demands placed on early childhood special education leaders, and to examine the practice, education, and personal factors that influence decision making by early childhood special education leaders. Along the way, I aspire to fill in the research gap on early childhood special education leaders in public school settings.

Specifically, I utilize the three leadership practices Leithwood and Riehl (2003) identify as relating to effective school leadership and integrate these with the five leadership dimensions suggested by Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) to better

understand if early childhood special education leaders display the leadership characteristics advocated in the literature.

Using multiple sources of data collection allowed me to investigate ECSE leaders in a real-life context. I used interviews, observations, and document analysis as sources of evidence to draw conclusions from the data that I collected. The findings of this study reveal that ECSE teachers' perceptions of their ECSE leaders' leadership behaviors are different from those of the ECSE leaders themselves. The behaviors observed and reported are those of management not leadership.

CHAPTER 1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Federally funded, public school early childhood programs such as Head Start are required to enroll children with special needs up to at least ten percent of their total student population. Emphasis on the importance of this kind of mandate for early childhood special education in public school settings makes research on leaders in this field very timely (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act -IDEA, 2004). All states are required to provide similar services to children ages two to five with special needs, within a public school setting, who qualify for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA, Part B, Section 619).

Housing these programs in public schools has been challenging (Brotherson, Sheriff, Milburn, & Schertz 2001; Lieber, Hanson, Beckman, Odom, Sandall, & Schwartz, et al., 2000). More and more principals are finding themselves responsible for early childhood special education programs in their school buildings. Principals differ in their understanding of early childhood special needs families, children, and staff (Brotherson et al.). For this reason, other administrators such as early childhood special education (ECSE) curriculum specialists may be associated with early childhood special education programs. These ECSE curriculum specialist positions are designed to support elementary school principals and ECSE teachers.

ECSE teachers are concerned about the varying levels of principals' and ECSE leaders' knowledge about early childhood special education programs, which poses the need to examine administrators' leadership (Garwood & Mori 1985; Johnson, Kilgo, Cook, Hammitte, Beauchampt, & Finn, 1992). There are many educational opportunities for school-aged leadership. However, despite all of the high demands on ECSE leaders, there is little to no preparation specific for these administrators who lead ECSE programs located in public schools.

The demands of high quality early childhood special education programs within public school settings have increased the urgency of research and preparation regarding early childhood leaders and managers in this complex and diverse field. Examining leadership behaviors of ECSE leaders will aid in providing quality education to young children.

Purpose

Previous studies have focused extensively on describing regular early childhood program models, identifying administrator competencies from supervisors' perspectives in the private sector, and interviewing early childhood teachers in non-public school settings (Johnson, 1992; Lieber, Beckman, Hanson, Janko, Marquart, Horn, et al., 1997). However, there is minimal research on leadership in an early childhood special education setting. I want to examine what early childhood special education (ECSE) leadership looks like in a public school setting. Specifically, I am interested in learning if ECSE leaders display the core leadership qualities of setting directions, developing people, and developing the organization (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) and Robinson, Lloyd, and

Rowe's (2008) five leadership dimensions of establishing goals and expectations; promoting and participating in teacher learning development; strategic resourcing; planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching; and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment. I will employ the core leadership qualities and dimensions to examine: 1) how early childhood special education leaders perceive and describe their own leadership; 2) what strategies ECSE leaders actually employ to lead early childhood special education programs; and 3) whether or not ECSE teachers perceive ECSE leaders' leadership behaviors the same way the leaders do.

Previous research in the field of early childhood education (ECE) draws conclusions from quantitative and qualitative research indicating that managers or leaders in this field enjoy interactions with parents and children and do not enjoy the management responsibilities of their jobs (Bloom, 1992). These findings are consistent with studies conducted in Australia which find that early childhood leaders mainly focus on direct interaction with children and are uncomfortable with their management roles. Other practice issues with respect to early childhood leadership include: difficulties with interpersonal relationships, administration, and decision making (Rodd, 1996). These research findings highlight the importance of how leaders in early childhood have difficulty accepting management responsibilities, let alone leading. It is vital to examine the two closely. Managerial responsibilities may be intertwined with leadership roles, but they alone do not represent leadership behaviors in early childhood programs. These practice factors have very real implications for programming and determining who may be influential with respect to particular responsibilities, especially in an early childhood

special education setting. This makes it important to discover the extent to which ECSE curriculum specialists are actually leading because their expertise is critical. By understanding their leadership roles, in an early childhood special education setting, I want to learn the degree to which ECSE leaders display leadership qualities and dimensions and whether or not these affect how ECSE leaders are perceived by ECSE teachers.

The central purpose of this research is to discover the actual leadership behaviors of early childhood special education leaders. In a study by Bloom (1997), early childhood leaders were asked what skills they considered important and they identified: good relationships with staff; a commitment to meeting organizational goals; a commitment to fulfilling the roles of an early childhood professional; acknowledging others' strengths and weaknesses; a desire to extend their professional knowledge; access to clearly defined roles and responsibilities; and responsiveness to the needs of parents. Additional factors included: being visionary; coordinating and motivating; and being able to make decisions. Although leaders identified these factors as important, they themselves did not exercise these characteristics in practice. The discrepancy is not in the presence of the core leadership practices (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) in ECSE, but in the implementation of the leadership dimensions (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008) mentioned in the literature on school leadership. This confirms that early childhood leaders are aware of some positive leadership behaviors. However, they are not actively practicing them. Additionally, with respect to the issue of relationships and communication, early childhood managers believe that they have provided staff with a great deal of feedback,

which is not a belief that is reciprocated by the staff (Bloom, 1997). Focusing back from the literature on early childhood to early childhood special education, I want to learn if ECSE teachers' perceptions of leadership qualities and dimensions are similar to those of the ECSE leaders themselves.

Significance

Research Significance

This study utilizes research on how effective school leaders lead in a fashion that impacts instruction in school settings. An important part of this study is to discover if accepted dimensions play out in early childhood special education settings. I am able to make an important impact on research because I apply what is known about leadership generally to ECSE leadership specifically.

The research significance of this study is to identify what early childhood special education leadership looks like from early childhood special education leaders' and teachers' perspectives, in public school settings, and to add to knowledge about the characteristics and behaviors that are displayed specifically by early childhood special education leaders. After completing numerous searches through ERIC, PSYCINFO, and Google Scholar, using different keyword combinations such as early childhood special education leadership, leadership in early childhood special education, leading early childhood special education, and early childhood programs in public schools, I could not find literature specific to ECSE leadership. My searches led me to articles on early childhood programs in public schools, leadership in special education, and benefits of early intervention in early childhood programs. I borrowed what I could from ECE

leadership, using the works of Bloom (1992; 1997) and Rodd (1994) but there was very little in the ERIC and PSYCINFO databases focused on ECSE leadership. After an extensive search, I found one quantitative study on the skills needed by early intervention supervisors by Johnson, Kilgo, Cook, Hammitte, Beauchamp, and Finn (1992). However this study did not specifically focus on leadership behaviors of early childhood special educators.

Due to the absence of research on leadership on early childhood special education, I borrowed heavily from the education leadership literature. The work of Leithwood and Riehl (2003) and Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) is extensive in terms of examining leadership in schools and it gave me the framework that I was looking for to guide my research in ECSE leadership. Their investigations emphasize what leadership behaviors to look for in ECSE as well as how these leadership behaviors may actually play out in school settings. Therefore, my study draws from leadership literature outside of ECSE.

Even though early childhood special education programs are located in school buildings, they are unique because their teachers have two supervisors: the ECSE curriculum specialist and the school principal. In most of the literature on leadership, there is one primary supervisor, usually the principal. Early childhood special education is exceptional that way, with these programs being located in school buildings, for children with special needs aged three to five years old. This makes early childhood special education leadership unique. ECSE leaders rely on a distributed leadership

(Gronn, 2008) model of necessity, in addition to displaying some of the leadership behaviors described in the literature on school leadership.

I use concepts from K-12 education leadership studies and apply them to ECSE. Doing so is novel because the literature does not address ECSE leadership. More important, this research helps me gain new insights into what ECSE leaders are doing, how they perceive themselves, and how they are perceived by others.

Practical Significance

In order to provide quality education to young children with special needs, there is a need to identify and implement effective leadership in early childhood special education. There is increasing attention from the No Child Left Behind Act and enhanced demand for early childhood special education services with an emphasis on accountability. With this urgency, it would be helpful for education leaders to understand what is needed for the preparation of ECSE leaders.

Since principals are the second most important influence behind student achievement after teachers (Leithwood, Jantzi, Earl, Watson, & Fullan, 2004), practicing and prospective ECSE leaders need to know which leadership behaviors they can employ and how, in order to make their ECSE programs successful. In order to lead, ECSE leaders bring different levels of educational experience to their leadership roles. Not all ECSE leaders have educational backgrounds in ECSE. Some may not have even taught ECSE before becoming ECSE leaders. For these reasons, it is necessary for school systems to allow for continued professional development and more leadership training that is specific to early childhood special education, and hire leaders with at least some

early childhood special education development experience. This is extremely important because the implementation of the strategies that ECSE leaders use will vary depending on their previous experiences, knowledge base, and leadership preparation in ECSE. In order to ensure that ECSE leaders have the knowledge of the ECSE curriculum and leadership behaviors they need, emphasis can be placed on preparing ECSE leaders to lead, rather than merely manage, prior to taking on leadership positions in ECSE.

Research Questions

To learn how ECSE leadership is practiced and how this impacts teachers' perceptions of leadership, I ask the following research questions: (1) How do ECSE leaders perceive and describe their own leadership? (2) What strategies do ECSE leaders actually employ in order to lead early childhood special education programs? and (3) How do ECSE teachers perceive their ECSE leaders' leadership behaviors?

In this chapter, I present a rationale for investigating ECSE leaders and teachers' perceptions about ECSE leadership regarding ECSE programs. I identify the importance of ECSE leaders' leadership behaviors as well as recognizing how these behaviors are practiced and how they impact ECSE programs. In the following chapter, I present my conceptual framework to illustrate what leadership practices and dimensions to look for in ECSE leadership based on the research on leadership outside of ECSE.

CHAPTER 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Given the limited research on early childhood special education leadership, I draw from existing evidence regarding the importance of school leadership more generally. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) provide information about how leadership works in schools. They emphasize that leaders serve functions more than take on roles. The main functions of leaders are to provide direction and exercise influence. Leadership practices consist of setting directions, developing people, and developing organizations.

This conceptual framework incorporates the concepts that are constantly reoccurring in the research on leadership in education. Specifically, I integrate the three leadership practices from Leithwood and Riehl (2003) with five leadership dimensions suggested by Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) to better understand if early childhood special education leaders display the leadership characteristics advocated in the literature. The leadership practices and dimensions, along with a discussion of distributed leadership, guide my development of a conceptual framework for early childhood special education leadership.

Definitions in ECSE

Prior to examining leadership in ECSE settings, some operational definitions are needed:

- ECE: Early childhood education refers to schooling of young children from ages three to five, prior to entering kindergarten.
- ECSE: Early childhood special education services are provided to children, two through five years of age and their families, through local school districts. These young children have significant delays in one or more areas of development.
- ECSE leaders: For this study ECSE leaders are the ECSE curriculum specialists (a local title) who provide support to ECSE teachers in Edgewood Public Schools[1]. According to job descriptions, they develop, disseminate, and/or implement early childhood special education instructional programs and materials for special student populations and act as a resource for schools, staffs and the community. They support and supervise instructional teams providing services to early childhood special education students, educational diagnosticians involved in assessment, and office staff. Additionally, these ECSE leaders manage and guide the assessment process for initially identifying students who have special needs.
- Inclusion: This refers to the inclusion of young children with special needs in classrooms and programs with their typically developing age appropriate peers.
- IEP: Individualized Education Program designed for children with special needs that addresses areas of identified delays in development.
- PreK POS: Preschool program of studies that is used in Edgewood Public Schools to guide instruction.

[1] Edgewood Public Schools is a pseudonym for the school district in this study.

- PLC: Professional learning communities include a team of people, mostly teachers and administrators, working collaboratively to focus on ways to improve student learning.
- Head Start: Federally funded program for low-income families with children birth to five that promotes school readiness.
- PAC: Preschool autism class that has six to seven early childhood special needs students who have an autism diagnosis or display characteristics of autism and need the structure of this program.

Leadership in General

I want to begin by distinguishing between leadership and management. Cuban (1988) provides a clear distinction between these two concepts. He links leadership with change and sees management as a maintenance activity. He also stresses the importance of both dimensions of organizational activity:

> By leadership, I mean influencing others' actions in achieving desirable ends. Leaders are people who shape the goals, motivations, and actions of others. Frequently they initiate change to reach existing and new goals … Leadership … takes … much ingenuity, energy and skill. Managing is maintaining efficiently and effectively current organizational arrangements. While managing well often exhibits leadership skills, the overall function is toward maintenance rather than change. I prize both

> managing and leading and attach no special value to either since different settings and times call for varied responses. (xx)

Understanding and distinguishing between Cuban's (1988) definitions of leadership and management is essential. In order to lead early childhood special education programs effectively, early childhood special education leaders need to recognize that they are actively promoting change and improvement to work with and provide support to other people. These ECSE leaders need to be able to both lead and manage and recognize when each is appropriate. For Cuban, leadership means fostering change. Therefore, I expect to see ECSE leaders making changes that improve the programs they supervise.

Effective leaders encourage staff to be self-sufficient and interdependent. This enables colleagues to contribute and draw upon each others' talents. A leader's actions are a model for the people following him or her. Leadership behaviors of ECSE leaders affect ECSE teachers and make a difference with regard to how ECSE programs function. Various publications have identified specific qualities and behaviors that are fundamental to effective leadership, such as the work of Cuban (1988) and Leithwood and Riehl (2003).

An important component of ECSE programs in public schools is the ECSE leaders who supervise them. Since ECSE programs are housed in public schools, there are principals who are the leaders of their schools and then there are ECSE leaders who are responsible for specifics relating to ECSE programs. In an ECSE setting, since these programs are located in elementary school buildings, principals are the direct supervisors

of ECSE staff and provide guidance for day to day occurrences. Principals have great influence particularly because each of the ECSE leaders in this study is supervising at least 16 early childhood special education programs within public schools. These ECSE leaders are not housed in elementary school buildings and are consulted when programming and due process issues arise relating to state and federal mandates. They very rarely initiate contact, with schools that have ECSE programs in them. I believe that the lack of accessibility and visibility of ECSE leaders at the school level has an impact on leadership in ECSE.

Core Leadership Practices

To construct this conceptual framework, I used the work of Leithwood and Riehl (2003) as the basic building blocks of leadership in Early Childhood Special Education. Leithwood and Riehl identify three core leadership practices: setting directions, developing people, and developing the organization. I use these leadership practices as a basis to describe what qualities to look for in early childhood special education leadership.

Setting directions. The first core leadership practice of setting directions consists of helping develop a set of shared goals that encourage a sense of common purpose. In order to set a clear direction, a leader must be able to articulate a common vision, create high performance expectations and then communicate the vision and expectations effectively (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

For example, in an ECSE setting the program's mission statement, vision, and goals are usually discussed at the beginning of the year in-service activities. The ECSE

program as a whole has high expectations for teachers. They are held accountable for student outcomes on the basis of their individualized education programs (IEP). Assessment data and the preschool program of studies (PreK POS) are used to motivate and guide continuous improvement of instruction. ECSE leaders in Edgewood Public Schools emphasize the importance of these uses of data and the PreK POS. They are expected to carry the centrally-determined direction forward to the ECSE programs that they supervise.

The development of professional learning communities at each school is a policy mandate in Edgewood Public Schools. Professional learning communities are a means by which to emphasize the importance of shared goals and efforts. These professional learning communities are used to ask critical and constructive questions in order to monitor both teaching and student progress, and adjust instruction accordingly. They are a positive means of setting directions (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) so that all ECSE teachers work towards a common goal set forth by their ECSE leaders.

Developing people. This involves effective educational leaders' ability to influence the growth of others by offering intellectual stimulation, providing individual and collective support and providing appropriate models consistent with the school's values and goals (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). This includes giving information and resources; promotion and support of those engaged in change; and modeling of shared beliefs. Leaders can enhance teacher effectiveness by collaborating with them, creating trust, nurturing commitment, as well as involving them in the sharing of decisions about curriculum content and teaching strategies. When ECSE teachers are asked what types of

professional development they would like and then they are actually provided, they feel more intellectually stimulated. Including ECSE teachers in brainstorming professional development training is one example of how ECSE leaders build relationships, share decision making, and empower others, important leadership actions (Scrivens as cited in Nivala & Hujala, 2002).

Developing the organization. The final leadership function, as described by Leithwood and Riehl (2003), developing the organization, consists of facilitating the work of the school and community to strengthen school culture, modify organizational structure, build collaborative processes, and manage the environment (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Collaborative responsibility for student learning gives teachers a sense of control over decision making (Lee & Smith, 1996). ECSE leaders need to be aware of and attuned to transforming the ECSE setting through people and various ECSE teams across the school system. They can utilize the professional learning communities within Edgewood Public Schools to address shared goals that will foster good teaching.

To build the conceptual framework of ECSE leadership, Figure 1, displays the three core leadership practices that could be evident in early childhood special education leadership.

Figure 1. The core leadership practices to look for in ECSE leadership.

Leadership Dimensions

Building on Leithwood and Riehl's (2003) work, Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe's (2008) meta-analysis results indicate five specific leadership dimensions that can be looked for in leadership settings, such as early childhood special education. I will define all five terms and provide examples of each leadership dimension.

Establishing goals and expectations. Robinson, et al.'s (2008) leadership dimension of establishing goals and expectations, is related to Leithwood and Riehl's (2003) core leadership practice of setting directions. It includes the setting, communicating, and monitoring of learning goals, standards, and expectations, and the involvement of staff and others in the process so that there is clarity and consensus about goals. The key is that all of this leadership must be organized around a common task and shared common values.

Providing direction at individual schools, ECSE leaders can create the goals and expectations for ECSE programs in public school settings. While monitoring to see if the goals are being pursued, ECSE leaders can leave the actual implementation of the curriculum to ECSE teachers as they see fit. Leaders fulfill their core responsibility by

creating individual implementation of instruction rather than micromanaging it. Elmore (2008) cites the "principle of comparative advantage," which states that people should lead where they have expertise. When applying this to schools, policymakers should use their knowledge to set overall goals and let individual school districts determine the best way to get there. In turn, superintendents' expertise lies in setting a strategic direction for the district and supporting effective school-level leadership. Ultimately, principals can create a core culture centered on instruction, and teachers can determine the particular methods needed to help particular students (Elmore). These same lines of thinking can be applied to ECSE leadership. ECSE leaders can provide the goals and expectations of the ECSE program and let the teachers determine the best ways to implement them for each individual student, allowing them to be actively involved in setting directions (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Promoting and participating in teacher learning. This leadership dimension means that leaders are involved in formal or informal learning (Robinson, et al., 2008). ECSE leaders may be involved in formal professional learning with teachers which may include professional development and staff meetings. Informal learning between ECSE leaders and teachers can take the form of discussions about specific problems or issues relating to teaching students in ECSE classrooms. This learning alongside teachers approach provides ECSE leaders formal and informal collaborative learning opportunities with ECSE teachers, making them lifelong learners. This aligns with Leithwood and Riehl's (2003) leadership practice of developing people. When ECSE leaders have positive interpersonal relationships and share a vision they are able to participate in

effective team building and provide support for individualized learning (Leithwood & Riehl). It is vital for ECSE leaders and teachers to support one another by building on each others' strengths so that this individualized learning can be an outcome. ECSE leaders can share the latest readings and research in the ECSE field as well as being active participants in the learning process themselves.

Another example of leaders learning alongside teachers in an ECSE setting would be ongoing professional development. It is important for ECSE leaders to go into classrooms and give ECSE teachers quality feedback, particularly in terms of curriculum implementation. Using PLCs and finding ways in which to individualize professional development to the varying levels of teacher credentials is helpful. PLCs are an important available tool in Edgewood Public Schools for leading learning. In practice, ECSE leaders and teachers would work collaboratively to analyze and diagnose how to improve student learning. By working and learning together, ECSE leaders and teachers bring complementary skills and experience that exceed that of any one individual. ECSE leaders would not only plan professional learning communities and professional development, but also participate in the process. This allows them to become learners alongside the teachers. This in turn builds trust, collective responsibility, and mutual interest to improve student learning (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Three more leadership dimensions. Robinson, et al. (2008) describe leadership dimensions of strategic resourcing; planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum; and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment. These leadership dimensions are examples of developing the organization (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Strategic resourcing involves aligning resource selection and allocation to priority teaching goals and includes provision of appropriate expertise through staff recruitment. For example, ECSE leaders with high academic goals for their students may be more selective in hiring ECSE teachers, keeping student achievement in mind.

Planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum consists of direct involvement in the support and evaluation of teaching through regular classroom visits and provision of formative and summative feedback to teachers (Robinson, et al., 2008). There is also direct oversight of curriculum through school-wide coordination across classes and year levels and alignment to the school and the school district's goals. ECSE leaders need to spend time in classrooms monitoring instructional programs, curriculum implementation, and the quality of instructional practices demonstrated by ECSE, kindergarten, and first grade teachers. Evaluations can be evidence-based and foster inquiry into teaching and achievement relationships. ECSE teachers can be involved in every step of their evaluation process and ECSE leaders and principals can better understand the unique needs of ECSE.

The leadership dimension ensuring an orderly and supportive environment means protecting time for teaching and learning by reducing external pressures and interruptions and establishing a safe and supportive atmosphere both inside and outside classrooms (Robinson et al., 2008). This situation would allow ECSE teachers to focus strictly on teaching. ECSE leaders can be creative in using their budgets and resources effectively to improve teaching and learning.

In their meta-analysis, Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) determined the strength of each of each leadership dimension in terms of their influence on student achievement. They used effect size as their measure. Strategic resourcing and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment have a low effect size. Planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum, along with establishing goals and expectations have a moderate effect size. Promoting and participating in teacher learning has a large effect size. Due to the thorough findings on education leadership by Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008), I am looking for the more powerful behaviors in an effort to identify more powerful leadership in ECSE.

Building the conceptual framework further from what core leadership practices to look for in ECSE leadership,

Figure *2* illustrates the relationships among leadership functions and leadership dimensions.

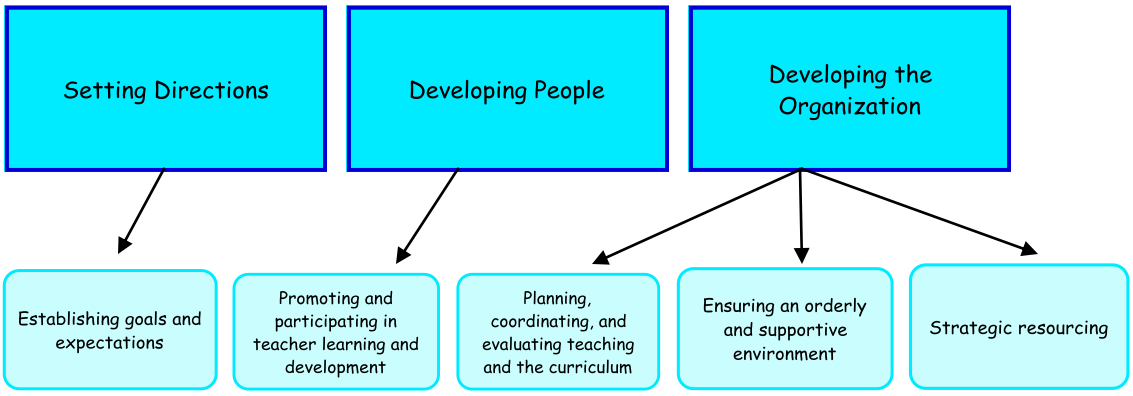

Figure 2. How leadership dimensions manifest in ECSE leadership.

Distributed Leadership

As Spillane (2004) points out, distributed leadership "in practice is basically a question of how and why people act in certain manners and not singularly about what they do" (p.7). It is "a product of the interactions of school leaders, followers, and their situation" (p. 8). Essentially, leadership is more than the individual ECSE leaders' actions. It is the effort, understanding, and paying attention to the interactions among people. Distributed leadership is also seen as supporting and strengthening already outstanding individuals. Leadership is distributed not by delegating it or giving it away, but by weaving together people, materials, and organizational structures in a common cause (Spillane).

In an ECSE setting, there are many professionals involved in the overall success of a child. By recognizing the power of distributed leadership and the nature of their situation, ECSE leaders would allow teachers to have discretion as an extension of the

leaders' practices and dimensions. Instructional processes must be *guided* rather than *controlled*. No matter how deep the ECSE leader's understanding of instruction, only ECSE teachers have the day-to-day knowledge of specific students in specific classroom settings, since they are the ones teaching the classes. Essential knowledge is distributed across individuals. Therefore, it makes sense for leadership to be distributed among teachers. (Elmore, 2000).

Of the five leadership dimensions from Robinson, et al. (2008), the three that are most closely associated with distributed leadership are: promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum; and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment which are encompassed in the yellow rectangle below in Figure 3. These leadership dimensions are designed to influence the motivation, knowledge, and practice of other organizational members in an effort to change the organization's core work (Spillane, 2006).

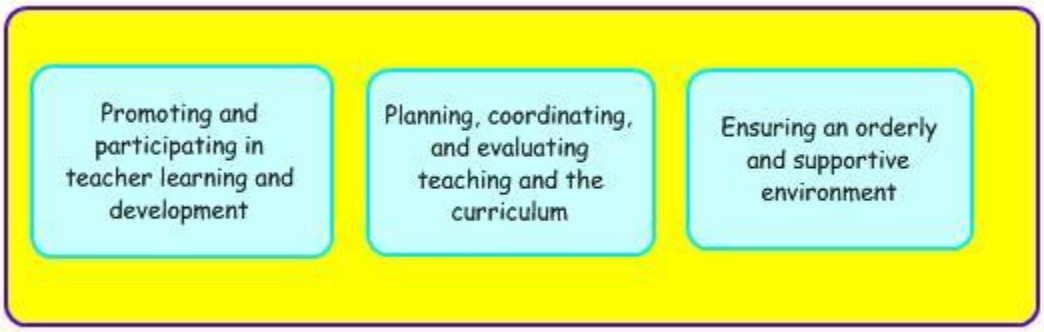

Figure 3. Potential Distributed Leadership

To explore the concept of distributed leadership, I found Gronn's (2008) view pertinent to ECSE. Gronn describes distributed leadership where one person can initiate change, with others following, contributing and adding to or altering it in various ways. Their actions react back and alter the conditions, relationships, rules, etc. of that context. Leaders become followers and change agents at times and followers become leaders. In an early childhood special education setting, distributed leadership may be seen as a collaborative approach in which leaders and teachers have mutual trust and support each other. It may also be demonstrated by strong collegial relationships and teachers' self-efficacy (Gronn 2008). In an ECSE setting, this would be demonstrated by ECSE leaders eliciting leadership from ECSE teachers as the experts in their field. I expect distributed leadership to be deliberate within an ECSE setting.

This study will examine the extent to which leadership behaviors are demonstrated by and observed in ECSE leaders and how they manifest based on the perceptions of ECSE teachers and the leaders themselves. The earlier figures are pieces of my conceptual framework which are displayed in the graphic representation of my entire conceptual framework below (Figure 4). The blue circle titled, "ECSE Leader Behavior" represents the extent to which these ECSE leaders' display Leithwood and Riehl's (2003) leadership practices and Robinson, et al.'s (2008) leadership dimensions. The blue oval at the bottom takes into account all of the leadership practices and dimensions to provide insight into how ECSE leaders actually employ leadership strategies.

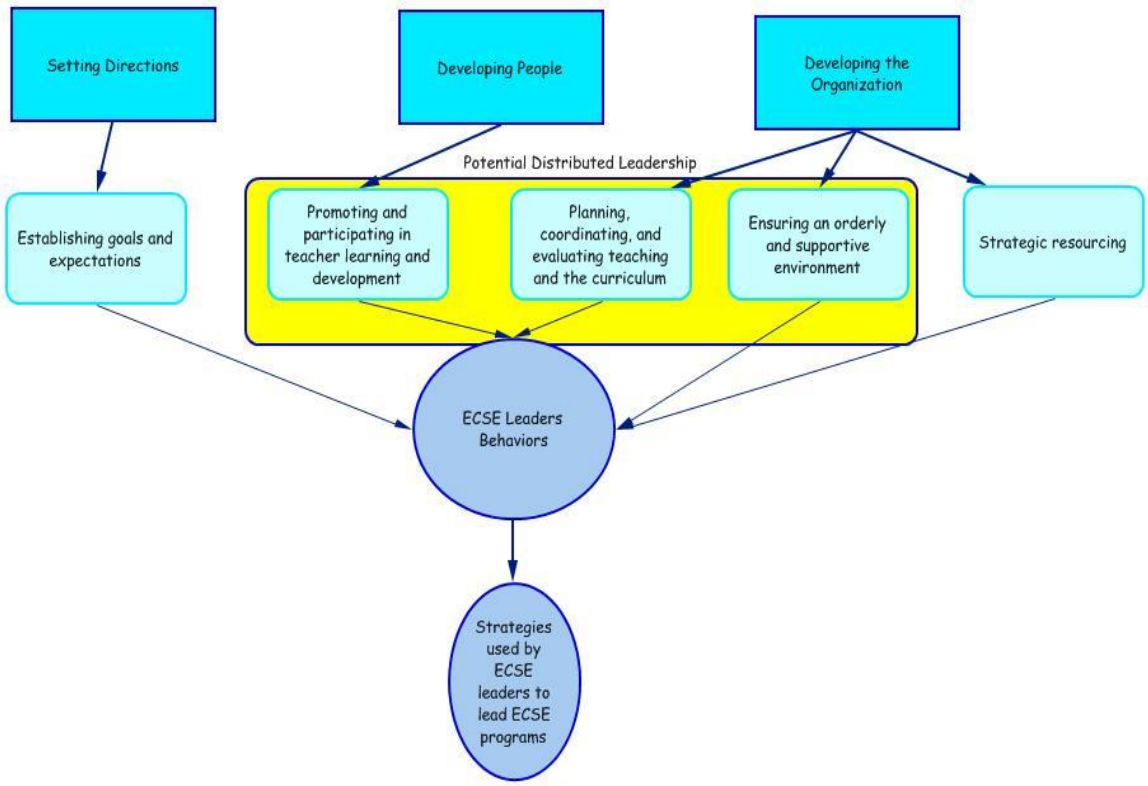

Figure 4. Conceptual Framework for ECSE leadership

Combining these leadership constructs creates a conceptual framework which can be used to examine if these leadership behaviors are evident in early childhood special education leaders. In the following chapter, I will present the methodology used to conduct this research. I use the conceptual framework described in this chapter to guide and inform my methodology.

CHAPTER 3. METHODS

This study begins to fill in the gaps in the literature regarding ECSE leadership. Specifically, this research was conducted to gain insight into ECSE leaders' and ECSE teachers' perceptions about leadership in early childhood special education programs, and to determine what ECSE leaders actually do as they interact with the teachers they supervise. The observations of the ECSE leaders are an important part of the design and help to reinforce why a case study makes sense. I want to know what is going on at a micro level. The observations allow me to compare leaders' self-perceptions and teacher perceptions to leaders' actions. Case study design was used because not much is known about leadership in ECSE and the interviews and observations uncover a phenomenon, with the conceptual framework guiding my perspective (Yin, 2009). Also, this case study focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from my perspective as a participant observer, the perspectives of those being studied, the ECSE leaders and teachers and with the hope to make significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education (Merriam, 2001). The research purpose of this study is to examine if early childhood special education leaders display the characteristics of leadership that were advocated in the literature by examining the following research questions: (1) How do ECSE leaders perceive and describe their own leadership? (2) What strategies do ECSE leaders actually employ in order to lead early childhood special education programs? and

(3) How do ECSE teachers perceive their ECSE leaders' leadership behaviors? These questions gave me insight into ECSE leaders' and teachers' perceptions about leadership in early childhood special education programs, housed in public schools.

Research Design

This research employed a case study design because it best contributes to the greater understanding of perceptions, attitudes, and processes of people (Maxwell, 2005). I structured data collection and analysis around interviews, observations, and document analysis, in order to gain maximum insight into perceptions about leadership in ECSE. Case study design is appropriate for this research because little is known about ECSE leadership (Yin, 2009). Case study is defined "as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (Yin, 1984, p. 23). This case study method "gathered extensive material from multiple sources of information to provide an in-depth picture of" (Creswell, 1998, p.36) ECSE leadership, as perceived by ECSE leaders and teachers.

I use Maxwell's (2005) Interactive Model of Research Design to illustrate how each of the pieces of this qualitative case study interacts with each other (Figure 5). This model includes the research purposes, conceptual framework, methods, and validity, in which the "different parts of the design are integrated and interacting as a whole. Each component is closely tied to several others, rather than being linked in a linear or cyclic sequence" (Maxwell, 2005, p.216). This case study research is designed to achieve triangulation and enhance trustworthiness by utilizing interviews, observations, and

document analysis in order to confirm my findings. The case study is strengthened by using multiple sources and techniques to collect data. Each of these data sources helps support each other. The interviews provide revealing information about ECSE leaders which is further confirmed from observations and document analysis. I discuss each of the data collection tools in more detail in the appropriate subsections below.

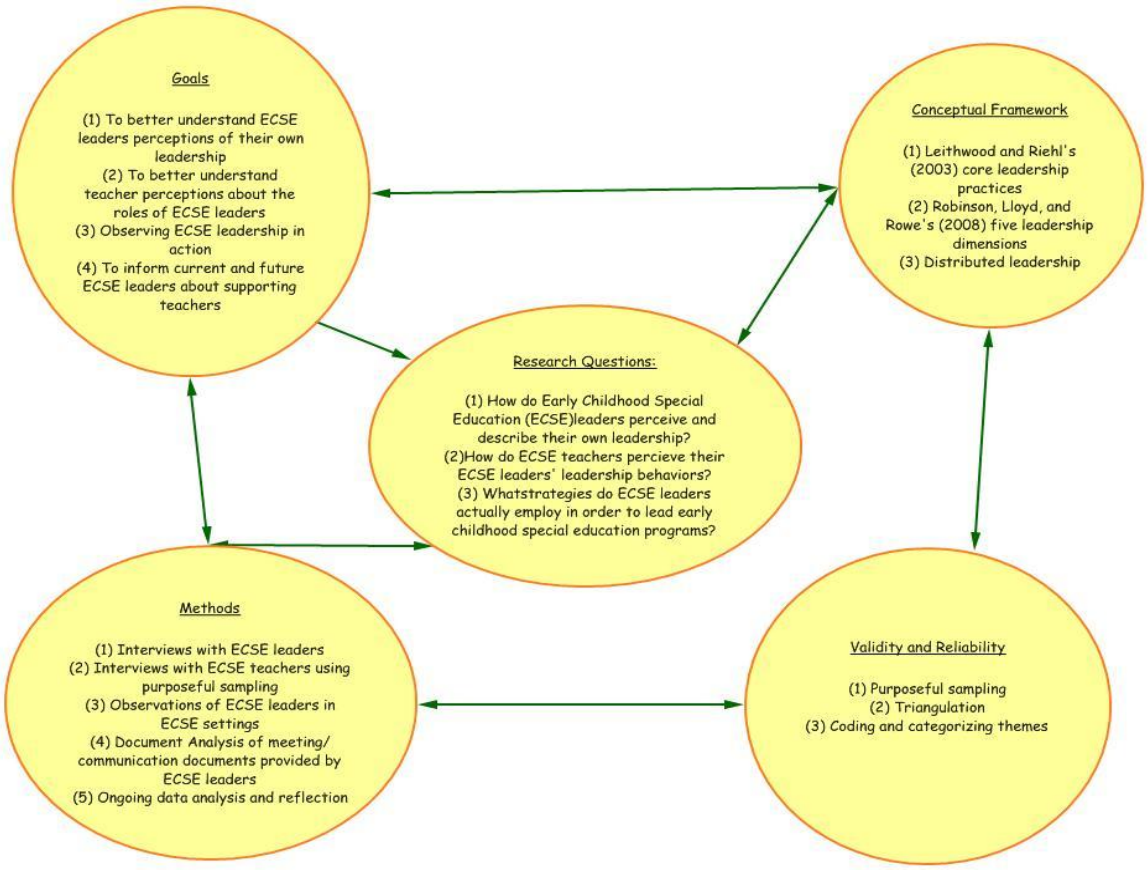

Figure 5. Design Map

Setting

The interviews and observations for this research took place in nine elementary schools that house early childhood special education programs within the Edgewood Public Schools system in the Mid Atlantic region of the United States. The demographics of the schools varied depending on the geographic location. Not all of the elementary schools in Edgewood Public Schools house early childhood special education programs, and many of the programs are placed in schools with low enrollment of general education students. These ECSE programs are supervised by ECSE specialists within given geographic clusters throughout this large school district. I am studying the leadership behaviors of the ECSE specialists. There are eight areas and fifty-one ECSE program sites in the Edgewood Public Schools system.

The primary goal of ECSE programs in Edgewood Public Schools is to prepare children with readiness skills needed for success in kindergarten. The curriculum used by these programs is play-based, which includes a language rich curriculum used to provide a comprehensive approach to education that facilitates intellectual, physical, language, and social-emotional development. The ECSE programs also encourage independence, curiosity, self-confidence, and positive relationships with others. They usually serve eight children with special needs with one teacher and one instructional assistant. Teacher qualifications consist of a master's degree and state certification in early childhood special education. Some ECSE programs include the component of community peers, in which ECSE teachers add two typically developing children into their classes to be role models for their students with special needs. Schools can have one to six early childhood

special education classes, with one teacher being the team leader, at that site. The team leader is responsible for communicating information from ECSE curriculum specialists to all of the ECSE teachers on the team. . These team leaders are usually ECSE teachers who have at least three years of experience teaching in ECSE.

Since not all elementary schools have ECSE programs located in them, these ECSE programs tend to stand alone in buildings. Even though ECSE leaders are in charge of ECSE programming, principals in the building are in charge of day to day issues that arise within these ECSE programs. The principals also evaluate the ECSE teachers, hire, and release them. This makes relationships among staff, principals, ECSE teachers, and ECSE leaders ambiguous because ECSE programs do not fit into the structure of the remainder of the school.

Participants

I created a purposeful sample, "a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can't be gotten as well from other choices" (Maxwell, 2005, p.88). I interviewed and observed three ECSE leaders within Edgewood Public Schools. These three ECSE leaders are referred to as early childhood special education curriculum specialists and are the only three ECSE leaders in the Edgewood Public Schools system, making this a total sample. I interviewed three teachers supervised by each of the three ECSE leaders, for a total of nine. Each teacher works in a different site. Furthermore, I interviewed teachers with varying years of experience (i.e. novice to teaching, teaching 10-15 years, and teaching over 15 years) in order to capture variation within early childhood special education teachers. I was not

able to create a systematic variation among sites based on demographic and size differences between the various areas, since ECSE programs are lumped by areas, and one ECSE specialist is assigned to a given number of schools within a given area.

Data Collection

I used interviews, observations, and examination of relevant documents as my data collection tools and to provide triangulation of my data. The interviews allowed ECSE leaders and teachers to describe their perspectives on ECSE leadership. The observations allowed me have direct contact with the ECSE leaders and teachers to visibly observe the presence or absence of leadership behaviors. Document analysis was used to confirm the information gathered from the interviews and observations. The interview and observation protocols are attached (see Appendices A, B, and C).

Interviews. Interviews with ECSE leaders were one hour each, and were held in their offices and at the participants' convenience. I also interviewed ECSE teachers, for up to one hour, at their assigned ECSE sites. The interviews were designed to focus on their stories and participants were interviewed using an audio-tape recording. I developed interview questions based on my research questions, not duplicating them (Maxwell, 2005). The interview questions were open-ended, contextual, creative, and were less mechanical than my research questions (Glesne, 2006) and were specific to ECSE leadership. I conducted short, follow up interviews to gather additional data to verify key observations or check facts. I pilot-tested (Maxwell, 2005) my interview questions with a colleague to make sure that the questions were clear and on topic. The goal of this pilot

test was to reflect on the usability of my questions, making sure that the meaning matches the semantics (Glesne, 2006).

After gaining HSRB and Edgewood Public Schools approval for both of my interview protocols, I used the same interview protocol for each of the three ECSE leaders. The interview protocol consisted of ten questions that were open-ended with prompts for clarification. I used a modified version of the ECSE leaders' interview protocol for the ECSE teachers, which also contained ten open-ended questions. The teacher protocol was modified because some questions were more relevant specifically to ECSE leaders and only they could answer those questions directly. I was cognizant of themes and categories that came to mind, during the interviews, as they relate to ECSE leadership. This helped me keep some etic categories (Maxwell, 2005) in mind to help me analyze my data at a later time. I listened, affirmed, and asked follow up questions, as needed.

Observations. Along with interviews, I made observations of the ECSE leaders in their leadership capacity. These observations added to the triangulation of my data, looking for consistencies among all three data collection tools – interviews, observations, and document analysis. I observed these leaders' interactions with staff in a leadership capacity, keeping field notes by writing a running log of my observations and, by writing memos. The observation protocol was adapted from Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, and Namey's (2005) work on observational research. This particular protocol was used because it helped me get an insider view and learn the perspectives held by the

participants. I was able to gain an insider's view by observing meetings that were not open to all ECSE teachers in Edgewood Public Schools.

I engaged in observations in two different formats – scheduled meetings and more spontaneous gatherings. Observations occurred before and after interviews with the ECSE leaders and teachers. The spontaneous observations were done as situations naturally presented themselves, during informal classroom visits and conversations before and after meetings. The ECSE leaders scheduled meetings and I observed them. Observations of ECSE leaders were made in a variety of different settings, including in the classroom, at meetings with staff, and informal observations of classrooms at various sites. These observations were useful in gaining an understanding of the ECSE leadership practices and dimensions that were reported by the participants. They also gave me an indication of the relationships and interactions between ECSE leaders and teachers, as well as their behaviors and activities with respect to one another. Although I anticipated truthful answers to my questions during the interviews, I could not be absolutely sure that I was asking the right questions. By observing ECSE leaders in their leadership capacity, I was able to triangulate what I learned through my observations with multiple other sources of evidence, strengthening my findings (Yin, 2009).

Document analysis. Relevant documents also helped with the triangulation of data. These included meeting agendas, mission and goals statements of the program, and written communication among staff to inform my interpretation of the data that were collected during various observations and interviews. I selected these documents from the past year, based on the meetings and committees in which ECSE leaders participated.

Vision and goal statements, emails, and meeting agendas were used to confirm the evidence that was gathered through the interviews and observations, and further add to the triangulation of the data.

Using these multiple sources of data collection allowed me to investigate ECSE leaders within a real-life context. I was able to use the interviews, observations, and document analysis as sources of evidence to confirm the interpretation and accuracy of the data that I collected (Yin, 2009). The document analysis provided me with more insight into the operations and features of ECSE leadership. Using the data collection methods of interviews, observations, and document analysis gave me a better understanding as to whether or not the leadership behaviors described by the ECSE leaders and teachers were actually implemented in day to day practice.

Table 1 shows the different data collection tools that I used to analyze the core leadership practices and leadership dimensions that were described in my conceptual framework.

Table 1

Data Collection Tools

Data Collection Tools/ Conceptual Framework Chunks	Interviews	Observations	Document Analysis
Setting Directions	X		X
Developing People	X	X	X
Developing the Organization	X		
Establishing goals and expectations	X		X

Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development	X	X	X
Strategic resourcing	X		X
Planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum	X	X	

Data Analysis

I used Dragon Naturally Speaking Software Version 11, to transcribe the interviews. I found this software to be more efficient for me than typing from the audio. I double checked my transcriptions for accuracy by listening to the audio recordings while I read the transcripts. As I transcribed and reviewed each of the transcriptions for accuracy, I used etic and emic coding categories to begin my analysis (Maxwell, 2005).

I utilized my conceptual framework to develop my etic codes. These included the core leadership practices of setting directions, developing people, and developing the organization (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). They also included the leadership dimensions of establishing goals and expectations; promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum; ensuring an orderly environment; and strategic resourcing (Robinson, et al., 2008). I was able to sort my data by codes, developing themes that I put into a matrix (Maxwell, 2005). This method also allowed me to manage large amounts of data derived from analytic categories (Merriam, 2001).

As I analyzed the interviews and observations, I used emic codes to sort through my data and formulate important themes, based on interviewees' responses. I used emic codes for which the categorical schemes were defined by the participants' words and concepts (Maxwell, 2005). This approach brought out the voices of ECSE leaders and teachers. I wanted to know from their responses how ECSE leaders and teachers perceive leadership. I believe that this emic coding provided a vivid and candid picture of ECSE leaders, especially from the ECSE teachers' perspectives. These codes organized my data and served as the source for understanding what was going on with the phenomena (Maxwell). Coding helped manage the data by giving it conceptual and structural order (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I used NVIVO software to code text, which allowed me more freedom to play with ideas, as well as link and compare patterns within and across matrices based on notes from my interviews and observations. For example, as I came up with themes among the ECSE teachers and leaders, I could highlight comments, classify them, and sort them into different categories.

As I interviewed and observed participants, I analyzed my data, taking field notes on margins of paper. I observed and took notes regarding their body language and any long pauses in between my questions, for further analysis. I used my field notes to group together similarities in order to determine categories or themes (Merriam, 2001). Etic and emic codes were used to link the analysis of what ECSE leaders and teachers told me and compared their perspectives with specific concepts in the conceptual framework (Maxwell, 2005).

Limitations

Limitations of this study include research bias, validity, reliability, and generalizability. I might have brought my own biases about each of the leaders whom I interviewed. I work in the same school system as they do as an ECSE teacher. One of the ECSE leaders is my supervisor. I also work with each of the ECSE leaders in some capacity outside of the classroom. I am on two committees with them that look at professional training and programming needs. In order to deal with these potential sources of bias, I needed to remove myself by not getting too personally involved in the interview process. I maintained my professionalism and asked open-ended questions, leaving the interviewees to answer as they wished. I needed to be careful not to steer the conversation or purposefully look for or obtain certain answers. I needed to be careful not to use the same words in my interviews that described leadership characteristics that I had read about in the literature. In order to ensure this, I conducted member checks and asked my participants to help me verify that what I recorded in the interviews was accurate information by sharing samples of my analysis based on their interview responses.

Since I am a "part of the social world" (Maxwell, 2005, p.82) that I am studying, I needed to be aware of "reflexivity" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.16). I had to be careful to understand how I might have influenced ECSE teachers during the interviews. I tried not to include my potential bias by following the interview protocol and consciously examining myself to detect any potential bias that I may have had to influence the conclusions that I made about my data. To minimize this reflexivity, I interpreted the data by relying on participants' interviews to develop emic codes.

I also saw validity threats as a limitation to my study. I was afraid that my judgment and heavy dependence on my own interpretation would impact the validity of my research. For this reason, I used "rich" data from my interviews and observations and triangulated it. Respondents may have had their own biases and may have varied in their degree of truthfulness and accuracy. In order to mitigate these biases, I triangulated my data by interviewing and observing both ECSE leaders and ECSE teachers and by "collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods" (Maxwell, 1996, p.93). The spontaneous observations allowed me to observe participants in their everyday activities and behaviors and compare that information to my interviews.

In terms of observations, I needed to stay focused and record my observations based on the observation protocol I created. I made certain that I did not infer or "read" into an observation based on my own biases. I did, however, make inferences about why participants were doing something and tested those further by asking follow up questions of the ECSE leaders and teachers. By being aware of and consciously recognizing these potential disadvantages, I employed interview and observation protocols to mitigate my bias.

With respect to the participants, since I used a total sample by interviewing three ECSE leaders and three ECSE teachers from the areas that each of the ECSE leaders is responsible for. I was not able to generalize the findings of these ECSE leaders' behaviors to those of other ECSE leaders in other settings Generalizations may be made to this particular case rather than from it (Yin, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

I had to be cognizant of these limitations of the study as I interpreted my data. I had to be systematic about maintaining consistent codes and keeping working definitions of the codes. By creating interview and observation protocols, I hoped to minimize these limitations of researcher bias and researcher and participant reactivity.

This qualitative study may not be able to reproduce consistent results from future researchers because it depends heavily on the researcher's knowledge and interpretation. Another researcher might ask the interview questions in a different way or may interpret the observations differently. In order for there to be analytical generalizability, the same conceptual framework template would have to be utilized and compared with the empirical results of the study (Yin, 2009).

Summary

Research relationship was an important part of this case study and is a partnership between the researcher and the participants. I maintained rapport with my participants by keeping them informed about my research. The previous relationships and trust that I have established by working with these ECSE teachers and leaders was maintained throughout this study.

A qualitative case study was the best design because it ensured that ECSE leadership was explored through a variety of lenses and it was a unique way of observing a natural phenomenon (Yin, 2009). This qualitative case study allowed me to identify important patterns and themes from the data that I collected as I examined leaders' behaviors in an ECSE setting.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

I begin this chapter by describing each of the ECSE leaders, Ann, Amanda, and Lynn, separately. The descriptions are based on interviews of the leaders and teachers, observations, and documents. I will then present a cross-case analysis to further describe the behaviors seen through the lenses of their self-perceptions, the views of ECSE teachers, and my own observations and document analysis.

Based on my interviews, observations, and analysis of documents, ECSE teachers and leaders agree that the current leadership in ECSE is moving the program in a positive direction. However, these ECSE teachers perceive leadership very differently from the ECSE leaders in this study. I find that these ECSE leaders are partially in charge of ECSE teachers and are more supervisors than leaders of change. They engage in minimal leadership behaviors as described by the literature. Given the organizational structure of the ECSE program within Edgewood Public Schools it is not surprising that Ann, Amanda, and Lynn make choices to manage much more than lead.

Ann

Professional Experience

Ann is an outgoing, active person, with 23 years of teaching experience and aspirations to be a good ECSE leader. She is an ECSE curriculum specialist who has been in her position for two years. Prior to taking her ECSE curriculum specialist position,

Ann worked at the elementary school level. She worked a few years in general education and then moved into a special education position for the remainder of her teaching years. Ann has worked with children with diverse needs such as intellectual disabilities, severe mental retardation, and many variations in between. She has an understanding of the special education law, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). However, she is not familiar with the early childhood components of the law, since her focus has been on the school-aged special education population. Her specialty is applied behavior analysis, with a background in autism. She had some administrative responsibilities within her school which she felt "kind of prepped me up to come, slightly, into this role as a specialist."

Ann, like her specialist counterparts, works out of a central office, supervising seventeen different early childhood special education classrooms housed in public school buildings. This physical set up is prone to leadership complications which will be addressed in this chapter.

Ann supervises Heather, Debbie, and Stacy. Heather has a master's degree in special education, a graduate certificate in information technology and is finishing her master's degree in education leadership**.** She has seven years of teaching experience in ECSE. Debbie also has a master's degree in special education and has prior experience teaching students with severe disabilities outside of this school system. She has been teaching ECSE for eleven and a half years. Stacy has a master's degree as well and has sixteen years of experience teaching Preschool Autism and Preschool Non-Categorical classes.

Interpersonal Relations with ECSE Teachers

Ann states that she collaborates with her teachers and has positive communications with them. When asked about her leadership behaviors, Ann says,

> I want people to know that they can count on me. That I've got their backs. Those are really big things: that communication that goes to being available. Those are critical components. If you guys don't feel like you can get in touch with me and you can reach me then you start to lose confidence and things just fall apart. I know that I'm not the type of leader that's going to hand you the answers. I might have the answers. I might have suggestions. But by no way is my way the only way and I like it to be an open dialogue. These are guidelines and suggestions. Now as a group let's figure out the best way to go about it.

Ann sees this approach as a positive way to engage ECSE teachers in dialogue.

I wanted to know about how Ann communicates her vision to the ECSE teachers that she supervises. When asked about her vision of the program, Ann says,

> Over the course of this year it seems as if one of the big pushes that I really believe in is the inclusive part of it and getting more typically developing kids with our students and how to merge more of the Head Start programming with our kids with unique needs in order to really get the best of both worlds. I'd like to see a little bit more hard data being taken so that we can really use that data to formulate IEP goals and objectives. Those are my two biggies.

Ann's vision seems to be at odds with Edgewood Public Schools because what she describes seems to more like program initiatives defined by the ECSE program, rather than actual visions of the program.

Observations of Ann further reveal that she tends to lean towards answering procedural questions, such as what paperwork to fill out and return when students are found eligible for services or the process for validating the number of students in ECSE classes. She uses her access to information as a way of leading. At a lead teachers' meeting, a teacher asked a procedural question that the ECSE program manager started to answer and then turned over to Ann to answer. Ann proceeded to answer the question, with confirmation from Amanda, another ECSE leader. Ultimately, the answer seemed to satisfy the teacher. Ann feels that providing teachers with procedural information is a form of good communication and that she is doing her job well. She states,

> I almost see us [ECSE leaders] as a jack of all trades. We need to be proficient in the procedures because a lot of times our procedural support liaisons are unavailable for meetings so we need to be able to answer those types of residual questions. We need to have a good handle on the preschool curriculum and what is expected of the children there. We support ECSE teachers. I have eighteen resource teachers here, and then there are however many schools with the teachers out in the schools that we try and support.

Ann believes that she regularly collaborates with the ECSE teachers that she supervises. She adds, "I think it all comes down to being able to work collaboratively and if you have all the characteristics that I value in a leader the only way that you can work

is collaboratively with people." Ann views collaboration as, "being available to respond to questions. Those are huge things to me. I want people to know that they can count on me. I got their back."

Along with communication and collaboration, visibility of ECSE leaders is a common theme among interviewees. Ann makes a statement about her own visibility in the program, as a leader, saying, "I can't tell you how many times, because my background is in behavior, I went out and did observations on kids and was then able to lend support to teachers to try this or try this. It's about that accessibility." Ann further reflects on her visibility in the ECSE program and says, "my personal goal is to spend more time being a resource out in the schools to the teachers. I think that's the part this year that slipped a little with my learning curve, if you will." Ann acknowledges her lack of communication, collaboration, and visibility in ECSE classrooms, which may be hindered by her managerial responsibilities. Ann says, "Next year, I think I need to be more of a resource to the teachers and working with them on implementing the curriculum and on things that teachers need from me." Ann attributes her own limitations to time pressures and prioritizing administrative responsibilities.

In addition to communication, collaboration, and visibility, inclusion of ECSE students in public schools is seen as important by these teachers and leaders. Inclusion is more of a program component, but it is one that both ECSE leaders and teachers express to be essential. Ann's thoughts about inclusion are,

> I like the direction that we're going with more and more inclusiveness. Having not done pre-school up until this year it's a little hard to really have a handle on

> where we were to know where I want the progression to go. But over the course of this year it seems as if one of the big pushes that I really believe in is the inclusive part of it and getting more typically developing kids with our students and how to merge more of the Head Start programming with our kids with unique needs in order to really get the best of that world.

Ann has further thoughts on inclusion. Even though she thinks that inclusion is a great idea, she "actually has administrators who won't let teachers bring in community peers." Ann sees principals as a roadblock to inclusion saying that principals perspectives is that,

> why bring in community peers. We have all these kids in the building. To them it's okay. Even though we have kindergartners and preschoolers that may be close in age, they have huge developmental differences and the way that a kindergartner plays and interacts is substantially different than how a two or three-year-olds play and interact. And I don't think they get that part.

Ann seems to understand early childhood development to some degree. However, I did not find any evidence through observations or document analysis that she pursues inclusion in a meaningful way. There are Head Start programs in some buildings that also house early childhood special education classes, so the two programs participate in inclusion through efforts made by the teachers. It is not an ECSE program requirement for there to be typically developing students in early childhood special education classes. The inclusion that is happening is occurring due to teacher initiatives, not Ann's. It is something that the ECSE teachers are doing as a part of best practices.

Ann would like to implement different ideas and have more access to communicate with her ECSE teachers but recognizes some difficulties in doing so,

> The only road block that I can really see is the possibility that there are administrators that will not release teachers. They tend to be very territorial of you guys. And I've also learned that depending on the building you have a lot of the creative extra duties in the schools.

During interviews with the ECSE teachers, the lack of Ann's experience in early childhood special education was stated as a cause of concern. They believe that a background in early childhood special education is vital to the success of the young children that the ECSE program serves. Stacy makes a strong statement about Ann's leadership, saying that "We go over Ann and call the ECSE program manager. We know Ann and like her but know that her experience is not in preschool." ECSE teachers seem to feel that they cannot go to Ann for curriculum or programming related questions because they feel that Ann lacks the knowledge and experience of early childhood special education. Debbie shares similar thoughts, "I think it would be helpful in selecting someone for a specialist job that had been an Early Childhood special education teacher at some level or multiple levels." She goes on to say,

> I understand that these are portable skills as far as leadership goes but by the same token, they say "you can program transfer from program to program," but it's difficult if you haven't taught in that program. And to then understand what somebody else is saying as far as a constraint or as far as why they think that

> something would or wouldn't work because theory and practice are sometimes two different things especially when you're dealing with preschoolers.

Heather comments,

> I personally am frustrated with the number of people in the past who have been hired for the position that have never had a day of ECSE experience. I think that is one of those things where the leadership having a background in ECSE is key.

Stacy shares similar thoughts, "There are so many of those logistics that if you have somebody who has never even been exposed to it it's hard to look towards them." When I asked Stacy if she had a question relating to ECSE, would she go over Ann, Stacy replies, "Probably. Yeah. Because she [Ann] doesn't have the knowledge base."

When I ask Heather about the vision of the ECSE program, she responds, "the vision is to help students and families make progress, to provide special needs and help children with five skills with special needs." Stacy takes a moment to think about the vision of the ECSE program and says that it "would be to provide an appropriate education for these young children and the services that they might need to meet their needs." Debbie says, "that the vision would be to have an actual continuum of services to meet every child's needs." These teacher comments about the vision are based on the mission statement for the program, not from interpersonal communication promoting the vision from Ann.

Teachers' interpretation of the ECSE program's vision is consistent with the document analysis that I conducted. I found that the core values of the program are written on the bottom of each meeting agenda. The core values for the ECSE program in

Edgewood Public Schools states, “We are committed to: using developmentally appropriate best practices; building positive relationships; providing family focused services; expanding collaboration; and meeting the needs of our children in the most appropriate environment.” These core values embody the vision of the ECSE program. Ann's vision is different from that of the teachers *and* the vision expressed in the documents. Ann is more focused on program adjustments than achieving a vision that is consistent with that of the ECSE program.

Communication and collaboration are real issues that ECSE teacher identify. Collaboration is a reoccurring theme in the interviews with the ECSE teachers. Stacy’s thoughts on collaboration are that

> there’s no real collaboration anymore. Four years ago I felt like there was much more collaboration. At least when you had team meetings resource teachers came to it and you felt like there was a team thing with your resource person but there's none of that this year.

ECSE teachers are left to collaborate and consult with each other, unless the presence or support of an ECSE leader is absolutely necessary. Having the monthly meetings was a way for teachers to collaborate. Stacy comments, “We went together, we visually saw each other. Granted they weren’t necessarily ideal but at least you saw the people that are doing the same thing that you’re doing. If you planned on it, it gave you the chance to collaborate. The teachers that Ann supervises believe that she does not collaborate with them, is not easily accessible, which is all made worse by teachers’ perceptions of her lack of communication.

The theoretical categories of visibility and accessibility are brought up by all three teachers, but they have different views on these from Ann. The ECSE teachers talk more about Ann's lack of visibility and accessibility in their classrooms. Interviews of these teachers occurred in June and when asked how times they have seen Ann during the school year, Heather replies, "I think I've seen ours [Ann] twice this year at school. I haven't. I don't go to her. We use our team a lot. We have ***great*** team communication here." Stacy makes a similar comment, "If you can count on one hand the number of times you talk to the person all year, that's bad. She's [Ann] come once. I know that they probably have things that keep them busy but it would be nice to visually see them out more and in rooms. I'm sure they're putting fires out and doing what they need to do. But it is nice to just send a message out about who they are and what they're doing."

Debbie feels that the ECSE program is on the right track with inclusion as a part of the vision of the program. However, she sees "integrating our students in other settings, but that also has budget constraints right now." Heather participated in inclusion with Head Start at her previous school and says of the Head Start teacher that she taught with,

> She was an amazing teacher. I learned a ton from her. The kids, just, I can't even explain how much they learn from the experience and it reminded me of what typically developing kids do. Sometimes no matter how much I know the research and what they're not doing when you focus on deficits all day, you forget, oh man, they should be talking a lot more than three word utterances right now.

Along with Ann's comment of principals being territorial, they do not fully understand the workings of ECSE programs and therefore are not able to provide adequate support to teachers. Stacy says,

> Our previous leadership was better. Even though she [new principal] goes around the building saying that an administrator has to be at every IEP meeting, she has never included us in that. She has not sat in on one transitioning IEP even if the child is coming into her own school. That's a big problem with me. At every other school the principal is there to welcome that family and set that tone.

With Ann not being in the school building on a regular basis, the ECSE teachers are having to rely heavily on their principals.

Observations of Ann at meetings, and document analysis of her emails, indicate that indeed the amount of communication and support towards ECSE teachers is more about maintaining and monitoring the number of students in the program. Most of Ann's emails addressed to ECSE teachers are to provide classroom numbers for planning purposes. These emails are usually sent out at the end of the month. She also sends out emails that remind teachers of upcoming meetings. Another reason for her emails is to let teachers know that a child was found eligible for special education services, the packet is being sent to a school, and that the team needs to coordinate and complete an individualized education program (IEP) within the thirty days timeline. When the packets arrive to the ECSE sites, they are accompanied by an IEP processing sheet, which I learned about through my document analysis. This sheet is required to be filled out after an initial IEP has been completed and then returned to their ECSE leader via inter-office

mail. Ann's written communication is managerial in nature and she is focused on a few issues related to keeping the program functioning on a daily basis.

Ann may see these emails as forms of communication but ECSE teachers feel otherwise. Heather comments, "I have a huge pet peeve of people not getting back to you when you e-mailed them, in a timely manner. Or if the response is, 'I'll find out' and never letting you know." When asked about communication with Ann, Debbie comments that, "I just think that they have much on their plates and I think that it's difficult sometimes when you need an answer right away, it's difficult to get one. And when you're sitting in an IEP meeting and everyone's waiting for the answer and you can't get a hold of anybody, that's not good."

Document analysis also indicates that emails from Ann cannot go out to teachers directly. By Edgewood Public Schools guidelines, the emails have to go to the designated team lead at the school. The team lead is an ECSE teacher at the school site with at least three years of ECSE teaching experience. She then disseminates the information to the remainder of the team. Sometimes that information does not make it past the team lead. Heather indicates that,

> I know some team leaders aren't necessarily as good at forwarding every annoying email that comes out. I get that when you get seventeen a day and you think well no one needs to know this, but sometimes they might need to know it and it's not being forwarded.

Ann sees her communication attempts as being a part of her leadership. However, interviews of the ECSE teachers reveal little evidence that this type of communication is effective for them.

Observations of Ann over several lead teachers' meetings present a pattern. She is either late to the meetings or focuses her conversations on how things need to be carried out. An example follows: The meeting begins on time, but Ann is late. ECSE teachers discuss the information that needs to be included in IEPs. Ann arrives twenty minutes later and begins by reminding the teachers about issues such as weekly data, for which new forms have been created. In addition to tracking the number of students at ECSE sites, Ann reminds teachers to look at the entire continuum of special education services prior to moving children from services in the home to class based ones. An added responsibility for teachers is to fill out processing sheets from Infant and Toddler Connection, an early intervention program for children ages birth to three years, to indicate that transition conferences were offered to families with special needs children, whose children have turned two years old. She reminds teachers to finalize and close out transmittal letters which track how many hours of special education children receive a week, for state reporting purposes. Ann also asks teachers if they need materials such as red file folders for Extended School Year services. She says, "Tell me how many and I will send them out." After going through all of her procedural information, Ann was observed going in and out of the team meeting and having discussions with Infant and Toddler Connection staff in the hallway. She was not observed to be fully engaged in, or be an active member of the meeting.

Ann talks about having brown bag luncheons to discuss topics of importance to ECSE teachers in the geographic area that she supervises. “They are going to become breakfast with Ann. Or brown bags with Ann and we’re going to do a.m. and p.m. sessions at a host school. I only want to shoot for four times a year, so once a quarter.” After our interview, Ann took the time to show me a map with the different ECSE programs that she supervises and how she would like to group together sites close in proximity and have one site host a brown bag luncheon. During the interview, Ann mentions that this is a program she would like to implement at the beginning of the school year by “talking to the principals over the summer and getting them on board with this because I think the one thing that we lack is enough time to get together and talk about strategies amongst ourselves with our peers.” Since the summer, document analysis and observations indicate that although her intentions may have been genuine, there is no indication that these brown bag lunches will be occurring any time soon.

Being able to go to the professional development opportunities that are of interest to the ECSE teachers is something that Ann has given some thought to, in terms of curriculum support for the upcoming school year. She states,

> I want there to be a focus but I don't want it to be so focused that we’re discussing an article. I want it to be a practical application so that we talk about the POS curriculum and how to develop IEP goals around that. That would be a very practical application and something you all could probably benefit from. Especially having some dialogue with your peers and not with me standing there saying this is this and this is this.

The ECSE teachers Ann supervises believe that the meetings that were previously held for them throughout the school year were a great way for teachers to collaborate with others and for leaders to be visible as well. There used to be team meetings of morning and afternoon teachers with their ECSE leaders, which are missed by the ECSE teachers. They saw the meetings as a way to collaborate. Stacy recalls,

> I remember seeing the same teachers that are still here after coming back and I know all of them and have great relationships with them. We've been out in each others' rooms, remember each other teaching. That's something that doesn't happen anymore.

Stacy believes that in previous meetings different departments came in like transportation, and that "You felt like there was this network but if I were walking in now, I'd be clueless about who anybody is." Stacy refers to the meetings with the ECSE leaders and says that if you miss a meeting, and if you don't hear or see any of them for a long period of time, you can take it as 'if you don't see her you're well-off.' Collaboration with the leaders as well as with other disciplines is something that these ECSE teachers miss.

ECSE teachers want professional development activities that are quick, hands-on, and give them time to collaborate with their colleagues. Heather misses the professional learning designed to address the needs of younger students,

> They were awesome. Even if you weren't a teacher of twos and wanted to go once in a while, it was the most beneficial meetings I ever went to in seven years

> in this county of real, here's what I need and then share ideas and go back and put it into place the next day.

Looking at current professional development, Stacy likes the "way the monthly trainings are more focused. I think that's a good thing. I like this overriding topic for the year and they follow it through the year." These are meetings designed for the whole ECSE program, not just for the teachers that Ann supervises. Her staff is looking for professional development that meets their individual classroom needs.

Heather thinks that "increased professional development opportunities are always huge. We lose that disconnect of not having quick stuff. It has to be a full program and obviously it is still limited to time and frequency and how you can do it. And I think a lot of times our inservices don't dive in deep enough." Heather likes how the ECSE teachers

> plugged into the Head Start ones [inservices]. I thought that was ***fantastic.*** A, the vision of us trying to mold into our general education population, that's huge. B, it gave you the option to go to something that was interesting to you. I don't just have to go and hear about another ABC chart, like the others did. I came back with something else. It gives people the option of going to what that particular teacher feels like they need to improve on.

This thinking supports what the ECSE teachers are wanting, but this has not occurred yet.

Structural Barriers

Ann supervises seventeen early childhood special education sites, making it very difficult for her to get to individual classrooms for months at a time. She is consumed by her daily managerial responsibilities and is not readily accessible for ECSE teachers.

With these programs housed at elementary schools, a lot of the collaboration and communication is at the school level, particularly with school principals. Principals are in charge of ECSE teacher evaluations in Edgewood Public Schools, even though they may be unfamiliar with the components, expectations, and workings of early childhood special education. Heather has strong opinions about her evaluation being conducted by someone who does not have an early childhood special education background saying that

> the person doing my evaluation should know best practices. They should know the research and have experience in the classroom. If you're not from that background then you should have some seriously required hours of general observations before you're in charge of someone else's observations.

These interactions and collaboration among different disciplines, such as with occupational therapists, physical therapists, and speech clinicians, in addition to ECSE teachers, is absent from my observations of Ann. This supports the finding that she is functioning at a managerial, rather than a leadership level.

Ann's Leadership in Relation to the Conceptual Framework

The day to day management of the environment and organizational structure Ann displays fits into the core leadership practice of developing the organization. She is involved in monitoring, adjusting, and discussing operating procedures of the program (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

From the interviews, observations, and document analysis, it is apparent that Ann is not fully involved in teacher learning (Robinson et al., 2008), which has been found to have the largest effect size on student achievement. Teacher learning includes leaders

learning alongside teachers, through professional development and professional learning communities. Ann has opportunities within Edgewood Public Schools to participate in these activities. However, these are opportunities that she does not take advantage of. Ann is not involved in extensive communication with ECSE teachers or in any formal interactions of teacher learning and monitoring progress towards improvement (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Although, from her perspective and not from those of the ECSE teachers, Ann's going into the classrooms to trouble shoot behavior issues is a type of support and can be viewed as an example of learning alongside teachers (Robinson et al., 2008).

ECSE teachers and leaders need to work together to collaborate and improve teaching. Ann is not engaging in meaningful collaboration around curriculum. Some of this lack of support for the curriculum may be tied to Ann's lack of experience in early childhood special education. She has not been observed to go into classrooms to provide support or feedback about teaching to the ECSE teachers that she supervises. Even though the ECSE teachers are a part of professional learning communities at their school, Ann has not been observed to be a member of those meetings to assist in developing people and the organization (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Collaboration and visibility ties into Leithwood and Riehl's (2003) leadership practice of developing the organization, where "leaders work with representatives from the school's environment. They pursue positive interactions with the goals of fostering shared meanings, garnering resources and support, and establishing productive inter-organizational relationships" (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003, p.5). These interactions and

collaboration among different disciplines is absent from my observations of Ann and interviews with teachers, which again supports the finding that Ann has more of a managerial role than a leadership one.

Ann is involved in the logistics of her job. She is looking at the number of early childhood special education students in the program for instructional purposes and considers herself to demonstrate the leadership dimension of strategic resourcing by focusing on staffing (Robinson, et al., 2008). Most of her time is spent in what she considers to be an important leadership component, when in fact this strategic resourcing has a low effect in terms of student achievement. During a few observations, ECSE teachers spoke to Ann about student placement into their classrooms, validating that Ann is really spending time engaging in management responsibilities (Bloom, 1992).

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) describe the articulation of a vision as setting direction. Implementing directions is described as establishing goals and expectations, a leadership dimension with moderate effect size (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). This finding makes sense because in order for ECSE programs to continue providing adequate services, goals and expectations need to be consistent across the program. However, the ECSE teachers' vision and goals seem to vary from Ann's indicating that she has not worked with the ECSE teachers that she supervises, to establish common goals (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Thoughts on experience in ECSE fit into Leithwood and Riehl's (2003) developing the organization leadership practice and Robinson, et al.'s (2008) leadership dimension of strategic resourcing. These leadership practices and dimensions are

behaviors that ECSE teachers are looking for in their ECSE leader. They believe that their ECSE leader should have knowledge of both early childhood special and general education curricula, so that they can have conversations about the best way to meet students' needs. However, Ann does not have the background in ECSE to practice these leadership behaviors. Recruitment of teachers and leaders with appropriate expertise is important, although it has low effect size in terms of student achievement.

Inclusion is a significant and important part of early childhood special education and how it ties into the preschool curriculum. It is difficult for teachers to provide appropriate programming to students when they have not had exposure to typical early childhood development on a regular basis. This in turn, fits into teacher learning and learning alongside teachers. Ann's conversations of inclusion are an example of Robinson et. al's (2008) leadership dimension of promoting teacher learning. This dimension was found to have a large effect size in terms student achievement. The ECSE teachers agree that inclusion is important but when they have been teaching in special education for so long, they forget what typical development looks like. Ann's lack of follow through in this area may go back to her unfamiliarity with early childhood and early childhood special education development. Learning alongside teachers is important, but Ann is only talking about this with respect to inclusion.

Data analysis also indicates that ECSE leaders have no say over how principals want ECSE teachers to function in their buildings. Principals can override them at the school level. There are things that Ann can and cannot say to her ECSE teachers which not only have an impact on planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the

curriculum; promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment (Robinson, et al., 2008), but they also fall into components of distributed leadership. This refers to "a product of the interactions of school leaders, followers, and their situation" rather than "as a product of a leader's knowledge and skill" (Spillane, 2006, p.144). When thinking of distributed leadership in terms of ECSE, it is important to think about who is responsible for the activities of the ECSE program within a school. Ann has trouble distributing leadership to teachers because building principals can contradict what she wants and expects from them.

In terms of leadership practices and dimensions, Ann claims that she has relationships with the ECSE teachers. The ECSE teachers, however, believe that there is a lack of visibility and accessibility of their ECSE leader. Keeping my conceptual framework in mind, and paying particular attention to Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe's (2008) five leadership dimensions, it is evident that relationships are embedded in each dimension. This strong root of relationships is evident throughout the interviews I had with both the ECSE teachers and with Ann. Ann's descriptions of her leadership behaviors, particularly the relationship building component, are generally not observable and are not reported in the same way by the ECSE teachers. As a result, her most prevalent behaviors are managerial and her leadership is weak.

Amanda

Professional Experience

Amanda is a kind, caring, and soft spoken person who is well liked by the ECSE teachers at the sixteen sites she supervises in Edgewood Public Schools. She supervises Sue, Mary, and Sally who have twelve to twenty years of ECSE teaching experience with Edgewood Public Schools. Sue has been with the school system for fourteen years and has been a teacher for early childhood special education, for twelve of them. Before that time she taught and directed a private community preschool in the same county. Mary has been in the public school setting for seventeen years. All of these have been in early childhood special education, of which five years were with Head Start, including private early childhood preschool programs. Sally started in Edgewood Public Schools almost twenty years ago. Her son was in the ECSE program and did well, which prompted her to become an ECSE teacher. She was an instructional assistant for approximately a year and a half and was a long-term sub for about six months in an ECSE program. She went back to school and got her licensure in early childhood special education and has been teaching ECSE since then. Sally feels that she's "got a good handle on what the whole program kind of looks like, although it's changed over the years."

Prior to becoming an ECSE curriculum specialist, Amanda started with Edgewood Public Schools twenty years ago as a substitute teacher and was eventually hired as an early childhood special education resource teacher and taught that until she was appointed three years ago to her current position of ECSE curriculum specialist. She thought she might change positions, from a resource teacher to class-based, but she

> definitely loved it. Every year, the position seemed to evolve and change. It allowed me opportunities to do other things that I don't think I would've been able

> to do had I been in the classroom. Like participate in testing, local screening, and eligibilities. I could kind of fit my schedule to work around those other things that I wanted to be a part of. So it was an awesome job that I had.

Some of the previous experiences that Amanda had in participating in testing, screenings, and finding children eligible for services, may have possibly prepared her for her current position. She has the most experience in early childhood special education as compared to the other two ECSE leaders. Her experience as a teacher in early childhood special education is an asset because it is very different from school-aged programs. The delivery of these services follows the federal law, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These services are more specialized and individualized to meet each child's unique needs, including assistive technology, classroom modifications and accommodations, and related services of speech, occupational, and physical therapies. With specialized needs for instruction and particulars of the law, Amanda is at an advantage with her experience in early childhood special education, whereas Ann is at a disadvantage with her lack of understanding of the needs of these young children.

Interpersonal Relations with ECSE Teachers

Amanda makes an attempt towards collaboration by communicating with the ECSE teachers. She says, "I hate to make decisions without taking into consideration the stakeholders. Like who's going to be impacted the most?" Not only does Amanda consult the teachers that she supervises, but she also makes an effort to give teachers an opportunity to collaborate with one another. Amanda gives an example of how she puts new teachers in touch with experienced ones. She makes the initial contact and tells

teachers that, “I've got a teacher that I would love for her to come over and see your class and how you're doing things.”

Amanda mentions the numerous supports available to new teachers. She says,

> a lot of the new teachers call for support which is nice because I like to see that they're reaching out and they just don't know where to go and collaborating is so huge. We have so many resources but they have no idea where the resources are so I feel like a lot of times I'm just directing them in the right direction.

I ask Amanda if the new teachers come back and follow up with her. She responds that, “Some of them do. Yeah, so that's been really nice. And other times I hear about from coworkers that so-and-so did come out and we collaborated about this child.”

Amanda realizes the importance of collaboration and accessing resources from her own experiences as a teacher. She says,

> I think for new class-based teachers it's got to be so scary and if you're in a building where there’s only one other teacher with you and you don’t get to see them teach in the afternoon because you teach in the morning.

In this case, Amanda tries to pair up

> teachers that are very different in their teaching style because I know when I first came in, I felt like okay there's only one way to do this job. What I learned the most from my peers and everyone else, is there so many different ways to teach. They are all good and you just have to figure out if it works for you. I think it's a great way for new teachers to see this, especially if they are very black and white.

> That there are varying ways and that they're still meeting the goals and objectives, just a different way and that they come at it differently.

So far, Amanda says that this has "worked really good." It has been "beneficial for the teachers to go out and see the other teachers teach and come back and say, 'I tried this. I tried that.' The time for collaboration and communication that teachers have with each other has been nice, but it takes some coordination of schedules. Amanda comments,

> Luckily the class-based teachers teach in the morning and have some time in the afternoon. I've just had to be creative as to where they can go and sometimes they've had to travel a little bit to get to another place. But so far they haven't had to get subs. Because of that they had been able to go out when they're not teaching. So that's worked out good.

Amanda puts in the initial call to get teachers together. These are positive collaboration opportunities for teachers. However, Amanda is not going out to provide the support directly to the teachers at the sites, she is pulling together her resources and getting teachers to observe each other's teaching.

In addition to teachers' collaboration with each other, Amanda sees herself and the other two ECSE leaders as working collaboratively and feels that she has a good understanding of what the teachers are looking for in terms of leadership and programming,

> We're out at the sites. The overall vision guides us. But it's very collaborative and that's one of the things that I really, really like. I think with the three specialists, we all come from different places, which is really kind of beautiful. It really

> works very nice. We all have different lenses that have come from the elementary schools. [Ann] has super strong ABA and special education background. I've definitely been entrenched in this program for many years and [Lynn] comes from a whole new background, with a little bit of everything. It's nice to have all our perspectives. I really do think we collaborate and problem solve well together.

Amanda has a very positive outlook on the collaboration efforts among all three specialists, based on their varying experiences.

Along with collaboration, I wanted to know how Amanda tries to foster good teaching. She says,

> Leading by example. Definitely in our program with all the teachers – resource and class based, getting them in contact with each other. In our program you learn the most from each other. So I think just making sure they have the opportunities to share between themselves and to learn from each other.

Amanda encourages teachers to collaborate and use each other as resources. This is a positive way to build relationships among teachers. However, with her title as ECSE curriculum specialist, it would be beneficial for her to go into classrooms with teachers to provide support. Sally points out,

> that personal piece now seems to be gone. There needs to be that face, that "oh so she came in this week or she came in last week." I think that it's just a smart thing that makes things run smoother. That makes people feel better.

Even though the ECSE leaders are located in central offices, they are in charge of a number of ECSE programs within schools. This makes it very difficult for them to be

visible at sites, but perhaps they can start to prioritize that as a part of their leadership behaviors, since that is something that ECSE teachers want more of.

Amanda really strives to help teachers problem-solve. She says,

> I would feel bad if they couldn't come to me with that kind of stuff. If they felt like it just doesn't matter anymore. No one can help. Obviously we can't solve every problem, every day. But I would feel bad if they had nowhere to turn. That would be my saddest thing that if teachers weren't happy.

Amanda sees these types of problem solving issues as collaboration and communication with her staff. However, when I talked with Sally, she expresses a lack of communication saying, "There's never a memo. It's always, 'didn't you know that?' and I think that's a problem. I think that's a huge problem."

Along with supporting her teachers, Amanda is concerned about decisions that affect ECSE teachers directly. Based on her interview, Amanda puts a lot of thought into how decisions affect teachers working out in the field,

> I hate to make decisions without taking into consideration the stakeholders. Like who's going to be impacted the most. Of course it's going to impact the kids too and we want that to be positive. But the people who have to do it, it impacts them. I want to hear about that. I kind of always put feelers out there when we're thinking about changes. How would you do this better? I like to get ideas from the teachers because I always wanted to be heard when I was a teacher. I often hear, "If only they had asked us before they've done that. We had all the answers." I always try to think about that when we're getting ready to do some big change.

> [Edgewood Public Schools] always has to have big changes and I want to make sure that we include everyone in the decision even though the decision may have already been made for us. I like to think about "how can we make this change positive?" And "how can we make it a positive outcome?"

Amanda makes a couple of interesting points in her comments. One is that she is consistent regarding her thoughts on collaboration with teachers. She has given yet another example of collaboration with ECSE teachers. Second, what I found intriguing was the fact that she said that decisions may have already been made, but they have to be presented to teachers in a positive way. This is consistent with the ECSE teachers' interviews. They want to be involved in decisions and feel that collaboration and communication are important.

I went on to ask Amanda what her vision is for the early childhood special education program. She responds by saying,

> Oh gosh. You know we have those core goals and the one that sticks with me most all the time is family-friendly services. I am always looking at it from that perspective because I think in early childhood you're dealing with the families as much as you're dealing with a child. You know that. And just making sure that we are providing the kiddos exactly what they need in a family-friendly way.

Even though there are core values of the ECSE program, the one of providing family-friendly services is especially important to Amanda. She has made this known to the ECSE teachers that she supervises as well. When I spoke with Sue, she sees the vision of the program as,

> going with all these core values. We're developing the family centered focus, participating in collaboration, and going in the direction of working with the families and trying to get them to understand their children's disabilities and helping them by giving them as many resources as possible to do that.

When I ask why the vision is so important and what evidence there is that it is being acted upon, Amanda replies,

> I think definitely we act on that. I think that's always the first priority with the specialists and with [ECSE program manager] that we respond to parents quickly and listen to them. As you know, sometimes they're very demanding on what they want. But certainly be there as a resource and advocate for support and let them know that we are all working towards the same thing. We want to do what's best for their babies.

Amanda adds that "if I didn't feel like those [family-friendly services] were important goals, I won't have worked here for so many years." Sue provides an example of Amanda's vision saying,

> I think [Amanda] does a very good job and the reason she does such a good job is that she looks at the individual child. I've given a couple of my students preschool waivers [an additional year of early childhood special education, instead of being transitioned to a school-aged program] and she's been the specialist. She comes out and she listens. There was one child that we battled back and forth. We ended up not getting that child a waiver. The one on one discussion was good to have with [Amanda] to make the right decision.

This individualization for students is important to the ECSE teachers.

When looking at ECSE programs in school settings, integration of typically developing children is also an important component to examine. Amanda recognizes the significance of integrating early childhood special education children in with typically developing ones,

> I think we're doing a better job about reaching out to the community preschools so they might be more receptive about taking some of our kids and I even love it when the kids are going to two programs. I know that they really can't do that until they're older 4-5. But when children are in class-based and then they're doing one or two days in the private community preschools setting, they can make that transition over to one more easily. But you have to have good private community preschools too. They aren't under the Edgewood Public Schools curriculum like our [Head Start] programs are. So sometimes their expectations, as we know, can be so different. You have the Montessori schools and then you have some that want them to know their ABCs. It would be nice if it was state or federally mandated.

This integration would assist in more program successes.

When asked to describe some successes, Amanda talks about the initial assessment process of finding children eligible for special education services. She says,

> the staff is not always happy with the decisions, but I have to say that parents have loved the new process. We have found kids eligible more quickly and have attended to the needs of the kids that we really would suspect with the delay and

have done some pre-intervention and send them off to another avenue. Our families have been very complimentary and happy with how they feel like it's a wonderful service. After their screening we sit down with the parents right there and then do local screening. That takes a lot of people to juggle to be able to do it the right way. It's so fresh and then we schedule the appointments if we find that we need to do further testing right there and then. It goes much more quickly, much more smoothly for the families. So I feel like as far as the big goal of being family-friendly. I feel like we're going above and beyond.

Amanda sees her leadership as an,

open-door policy definitely. Definitely always there to support. With the teachers that I work with it's kind of an unusual situation because I was one of them so recently. I feel like I'm more of a support for them, not necessarily a supervisor. They seek me out as a supervisor which a lot of the newer teachers have but I just feel like I'm kind of the person they come to, to problem solve with them. I feel like I almost did some of those things just as an older teacher. I just do it more often now.

Amanda describes the ease with the relationships that she has with the ECSE teachers, which gives her an advantage in her role as a leader.

When I ask Amanda about her leadership behaviors, she says, “I want to expand more on my leadership skills personally and just getting better at what I'm doing. I feel like I am kind of like a first-year teacher when you go back and say those poor students.”

Even though Amanda is a little critical and reflective of her leadership behaviors, Sue has a positive comment to make about her ECSE leader,

> I think that she's brought a breath of fresh air into that type of position. I think she brings her skills from having been a teacher into that position as opposed to going straight through administration which gives you a very different bend on things.

Amanda spends a lot of time collaborating, communicating via email, and problem solving with ECSE teachers. I asked her what roadblocks she runs into, in terms of her goals being achieved. She replies,

> Time. I feel like I never have enough time to get everything done. And then I think about the daily struggles of the job. When I wake up in the morning, I have that action plan in the head and there's a crisis. It seems like there's always a little crisis.

She adds,

> that's the frustrating part because you're like, 'I have to have this done by the end of the day' and then you end up spending most of the day problem-solving. Ultimately it's a good thing because you worked out what was immediate and needed.

Amanda is learning to "delegate some things out and knowing what things I can let go of. And not say that I'm responsible for everything," demonstrating some distributed leadership.

Amanda relies on written communication to get work done in a timely manner. When asked what she tries to accomplish as an ECSE leader, Amanda responds,

> I think the first and foremost thing I try to do is to directly supervise teachers. I feel the most responsibility to them and to make sure that they have everything they need to do their job. Resources, materials, contacts, whatever I can do to support them and facilitate them in being able to do their job to the maximum. That's a huge responsibility. Then I'm kind of like support for the assessment team and the teachers in the class based programs so I also try to be accessible to them. It's frustrating because I can't physically be with them as much as I'd like to, but at least if I can respond to e-mails or get them in contact with whom they need to be in contact with and help problem solve some things. I see myself most of the time as just problem-solving with them.

Amanda seems to be managing crises most of the time in her role as ECSE Curriculum Specialist. She tends to find a quick, band-aid, solution to what needs to be attended to. An example of this immediate fixing is given below:

> I got three e-mails today, from all different people. ESY [Extended School Year Services] just started this week. I've got an issue at one school where we need a stroller and another school where we need changing tables and of course those are super immediate needs, to those teachers that are working with those kids. Of course, I don't have them. I have no access to them, but they have both come to me with e-mails this morning. So before you came, that is what I was doing. I was sending out e-mails to everyone else I know as to how I could get these two items. I said that I'm here at the [office] and if you have access them now, I will come get them and put them in my car and get them out to the teachers. I feel like I

> understand the urgency, even though it might not be high on my personal list for the day. It's really important for them to have what they need to teach. I feel like that's what they need, so I need to drop what I'm doing to make sure those immediate needs are met. I think that's what happens pretty much every day. Reprioritizing your day to take care of what needs your immediate attention.

These types of things are easy for Amanda to understand because "she has been in the trenches." To somebody else these issues may not be so important. Amanda knows, "that without that changing table or without that stroller especially the stroller, the day cannot go on."

As we were talking, Amanda kept checking her computer for an email from anyone who may have what she was looking for. Amanda said she was willing to personally take the items to the classrooms that needed them. She comments,

> The specialists are crazy like that. I can't tell you how many times we packed things into our cars and vans and taken them over. And heaven forbid if [an eligibility] packet doesn't get in the pony [mail] early enough. One of us is on the road dropping it off over to a school. Again we understand when a teacher says, 'I only have 30 days to do this IEP I didn't find out about it until yesterday, the family is going on vacation, I need it today.' We're like, 'okay we'll be there.'

Amanda is also pleased with the increased "collaboration among the resource teachers, the class-based teachers, and the PAC teachers and the fact that they are making decisions together and that the decisions about where children are going are not being pre-determined." This refers back to initial eligibility packets being routed to schools and

teachers working as teams to complete the IEP. With the new process in place, Amanda feels

> like we're doing less of that and I see teachers going out and doing home visits much more often and saying wow on paper this kid looks this way but I just went with the resource teacher to see this kiddo and we both agreed on what the child needs. It's just really good decisions. Really starting out with the least restrictive setting first. So I think better decisions are being made for kids. So I'm happy about that.

Amanda sees the routing of the initial eligibility packets, with written communication back and forth, as helpful in placing students into appropriate programs.

I am a member of a professional development committee that meets one hour before teachers' planned professional learning. Amanda is not a part of that committee, nor are Ann and Lynn, the other two ECSE leaders. When I arrived to a professional development, Amanda was already there. She came early to set up with the presenters for the professional development and took care of logistics, such as making sure there were enough handouts on the table, a projector was available, and a microphone was working. A teacher walked in late and Amanda got handouts together and gave them to the teacher. Amanda was managing the physical logistics of the training but she wasn't an active contributor to the actual information that was later shared at the meeting. She kept going in and out and was absent for most of it. This professional development was on applied behavior analysis and by being an active contributor or participant, Amanda could go

back into the classroom and support ECSE teachers in using these strategies, since they are not commonly used in early childhood special education non-categorical classrooms.

Observations of Amanda show her to be interactive at staff meetings and professional developments by answering questions that came up from ECSE teachers and making sure everyone received handouts with information. She even says things like, "I know. I understand," with genuine empathy in her voice. When speaking with Mary, she said, "I love Amanda. She is a great leader. She was a teacher before becoming an ECSE leader so she understands us." She is also compassionate towards her teachers. Sue recalls, "When one of our teachers was having some family issues with medical things she was very careful about not burdening that person as much as she could." These examples illustrate Amanda's true compassion for her staff. The professional development opportunities help Amanda further build relationships with the ECSE teachers whom she supervises, since all of the teachers are present at one location, at one time.

I observed Amanda run a meeting with another ECSE leader, Lynn, at the end of the school year, in June. Most of the meeting was procedural, referring to transition IEPs, transportation issues, closing out IEPs, and setting up transition meetings for parents. Again, Amanda was observed to be involved in managerial tasks rather than leadership ones.

Structural Barriers

Aside from day to day problem solving, Amanda has to work with principals at different schools. When asked to describe her experiences when dealing with principals at different schools, her response is similar to Ann's,

> Dealing with the school-based level and every principal is different. That is frustrating. Definitely. Because you could say one thing to one principal and they're good with it and you could say the same thing to another one and they have a problem with it.

Amanda attributes these differences to the "culture in one school is totally different than another. How they do eligibilities, IEP's, screenings, is different. And every school thinks they're doing it the right way." When asked how Amanda handles these types of situations, where she has to go into a school and support a teacher with a difficult IEP, Amanda explains,

> you really have to respect the culture of the school. Some schools have great support as far as special education. The administration has a background of early childhood and in some schools support is just not there at all. And that's hard because you're stuck in between the school, the teacher, and the parent. The three-way, that's hard.

Without being physically in the building, it is hard for Amanda to be a direct, accessible supervisor to ECSE teachers. They will most likely go to their principal first, because they are the most accessible. Some principals are receptive to having ECSE programs in their school buildings. Heidi comments, "Our principal is a supportive and

non confrontational kind of guy that he tends to be able to get the families on board and then if we can't manage things out here, then will refer them up the chain."

Overall, Amanda tends to focus on building relationships with her ECSE teachers by providing them support and opportunities to collaborate. She does this by being proactive and attuned to her staff's needs. Amanda spends time doing managerial type things such as being involved in administrative activities and implementing different plans set forth by Edgewood Public Schools.

Amanda's Leadership in Relation to the Conceptual Framework

Amanda is involved in collaborative efforts that are a part of developing the organization "garnering resources and support, and establishing productive inter-organizational relationship" (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p.5). Even though Amanda is able to problem solve and get teachers in touch with each other, she is not directly supporting the performance of ECSE teachers by observing or working with these teachers to improve their teaching, which is found to have a moderate effect in terms of student achievement. Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) refer to this leadership dimension as planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching.

Amanda spends most of her time providing support to teachers so that they can teach their classes. Amanda clearly develops the organization by building in the common behavior of teachers observing each other and learning together. The one thing she lacks is learning alongside teachers (Robinson, et al., 2008). Amanda has had the chance to learn alongside teachers, but she does not take advantage of the opportunity, as was demonstrated through interviews and observations. She displays the leadership behavior

of ensuring an orderly environment, where external factors are alleviated so teachers can focus on teaching (Robinson, et al.). Although Amanda is spending time managing different issues, they have a low effect size with respect to student achievement.

Amanda's interview illustrates that she has some aspects of leadership. The theme of building relationships is seen throughout. Her show of respect and concern for her staff is an example of Leithwood and Riehl's (2003) developing people core leadership practice. Amanda's beliefs and her vision of family-friendly services fit in with the leadership practice of setting directions (Leithwood & Riehl). Amanda's vision of focusing on relationship building with parents as well as teachers was found to be an important skill that supervisors need to have (Johnson, et al., 1999). By having positive relationships with the ECSE teachers, Amanda is able to incorporate problem-solving into her leadership style. Amanda has good knowledge of the ECSE curriculum that she can share by learning alongside teachers (Robinson, et al., 2008). This allows for further relationship building with the ECSE teachers. She displays a couple of leadership dimensions that work, but they do not have strong effect sizes in terms of student achievement. These are ensuring an orderly and supportive environment, which has a low effect size, and planning, coordinating, and evaluating the curriculum, which has a moderate effect size. Although this leadership dimensions are demonstrated, they are not significant in terms of the quality of ECSE programming students receive. This in turn, only allows for the maintenance of the ECSE program, rather than being visionary and focusing on changing and improving the ECSE program.

Amanda discusses the complicated dynamics of housing ECSE programs in public schools. With regard to inclusion, principals do not view themselves as a part of that solution (Brotherson, Sheriff, Milburn, & Schertz, 2001). If Amanda distributed leadership to her teachers, the ECSE teachers might be able to do more problem solving with the principals where they include both ECSE and typically developing early childhood students into their buildings and where the "school culture sets a tone and context within which work is undertaken" (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, pg. 5). This would allow for distributed leadership to occur which is not evident from interviews, observations, or documents.

Thinking back to Cuban's (1988) definition of managing, where leaders are efficiently running a program and leadership, where leaders are creating a vision for the organization and ensuring that activities and goals are accomplished, Amanda displays more managerial skills than leadership behaviors.

Lynn

Professional Experience

Lynn is a sweet, funny, and friendly person who supervises Katie, Heidi, and Emily. All three ECSE teachers have master's degrees in special education. Katie was previously a non-categorical teacher in an elementary school, taught special education resource in kindergarteners and first grade, and has been an early childhood special education teacher in the class-based preschool program for two years. Heidi has been teaching early childhood special education for twenty eight years in the same school

within Edgewood Public Schools. Emily has been teaching early childhood special education for four years. She previously taught inclusion for two years with Head Start, and was a community integration teacher where she went out to community preschools to provide support.

At the time of the interview, Lynn has over 25 years of experience working as a resource teacher for assistive technology and as a teacher working with students with autism, emotional disabilities, and learning disabilities. She began her ECSE curriculum specialist position in the winter, closer to the end of the first semester of the school year. She did not have much time to establish herself as an ECSE leader before this study.

Interpersonal Relations with ECSE Teachers

I ask Lynn her views on leadership and how would describe her leadership behaviors. She states, "I feel that building rapport with the staff is crucial. It is important to be available, to follow through on requests, and to build a confidence so they know they can count on you."

I ask Lynn what she tries to accomplish in her work as an ECSE Curriculum Specialist. Her reply is as follows,

> As an Early Childhood curriculum specialist my goal is to fulfill the responsibilities of the job which include the following: sit in on [initial meetings to find children eligible for special education services, also known as eligibilities] on a weekly basis, review fifteen to twenty student eligibility packets and sit as principal designee at eligibilities. In addition, I supervise, support, and evaluate

> 18 early childhood resource teachers, three educational diagnosticians, and supervise, support and evaluate two administrative assistants.

In addition she,

> supports preschools in twenty one different buildings which includes: clarifying curriculum concerns, clarifying preschool specific procedural concerns, attending IEPs that require extra administrative support, accompanying parents on tours to Preschool Autism classes, and addressing/responding to about 60 – 80 emails daily.

Lynn's list didn't end there. She seems to be involved in and preoccupied with management responsibilities. Lynn "oversees the Early Childhood Assessment Team (ECAT) [which is involved in initial identification of children with special needs]." She runs and attends monthly meetings. Lynn is in charge of "collecting, tabulating, monitoring, and submitting the enrollment of ECSE students in the program on a weekly basis." She participates in other managerial roles such as overseeing

> the ECSE summer school program; acting as the principal designee for IEPs as needed; working with transportation to decide where a student would attend and prepare and send the packet to a school with openings so the teachers can develop an IEP; and organizing and providing training as needed.

Lynn gives a very long list of what she tries to accomplish as an ECSE leader. Most of the things that she describes are on a managerial level.

I ask Lynn what her vision is for the ECSE program. She replies, "to provide a continuum of early childhood special education services to children with possible or

identified developmental delays." Lynn then refers to the mission statement that is posted on her wall and adds,

The mission of the ECSE program is its commitment to:

- Providing family focused services
- Meeting the diverse needs of our children in the most appropriate environment
- Building positive relationships to enhance our children's learning
- Providing quality services to improve our children's learning through the use of developmentally appropriate best practice and
- Expanding effective collaboration across the Early Childhood professional community

She lists the mission of the ECSE program. However, she does not focus on any of the vision or the mission pieces as her own. This is even more apparent when I ask her why she thinks this vision is important. Lynn replies, "This vision ensures that members in our program know exactly what our goal is and then we can develop strategies to achieve this goal." I found this to be a very vague answer. Lynn herself does not have a personal connection to the vision of the ECSE program, particularly building positive relationships to enhance children's learning, and the vision has not been conveyed to the ECSE teachers that she supervises. This is apparent from Emily's comment as she struggled to tell me what her understanding of the vision of the ECSE program is.

> I'm trying to think of those core values. To be parent friendly and to be child centered, to focus your instruction on what the child needs not what you need. Let's see, collaboration among other teachers and other support staff. I'm trying to think what else was in the core values. I don't know. Commitment to providing

excellent instruction to children and focusing on developmentally appropriate practices.

I also ask Lynn what evidence there is that the vision is being acted upon. She says that, "we can measure the number of children ages 2-5 who we assess in the [initial testing] process and the number of identified children ages 2-5 who receive special education services as a result of the [testing] process." This very clearly indicates that Lynn is most concerned with the number of children receiving special education services and not so much about the quality of the services being delivered.

The vision of the ECSE program in Edgewood Public Schools is to improve student learning using developmentally appropriate practices. It is not focused on the number of children served. There was no extension of the conversation as to what Lynn wants to personally accomplish in terms of the vision. Similarly, when I ask Lynn about the goals of the ECSE program, she says that they are derived by Edgewood Public Schools and are not her own. Lynn has not gone out into the classrooms to create personal connections with these goals by supporting her staff so that they can "do their jobs effectively and efficiently."

When I ask Lynn about other goals she has as a leader, apart from "putting out fires," she says that her "goal is to fulfill the responsibilities of the job so that my staff has the support they need to do their jobs effectively and efficiently." Lynn does not elaborate on the type of support that teachers may need to accomplish this. This could go back to lack of experience as an ECSE teacher and not knowing where to even begin to support teachers in their teaching.

Being absent from ECSE classrooms also affects these ECSE teachers' relationships with Lynn. Building these relationships seems to be important to all of the ECSE teachers and I wanted to see if relationships were something that Lynn referred to in terms of her own leadership behaviors, so I asked her to tell me a story that illustrates her leadership behaviors. Lynn responds,

> On Monday when we arrived [to the office] with no power, an alternate plan needed to be made. I identified what needed to be done and organized the staff so that evaluations and meetings could continue as scheduled only at an alternate site. This involved contacting parents and interpreters, moving testing materials and files, and figuring out logistics at our new location. For the most part, the rest of the week progressed as usual and timelines remained intact.

This is an example of Lynn's managerial skills which she views as leadership. In addition she says that "the teachers have expressed an appreciation for my open door policy and prompt responses to questions." This is happening as Katie indicates from her interview but there is a "lag time" in the responses to the questions. Lynn tries to foster good teaching by sharing and expecting "best practices and making additional trainings available." I did not observe Lynn indicate or discuss any professional development for the teachers that she supervises.

Collaboration and communication can only occur when there is visibility. Katie has not seen her specialist all year. She says that, "she's [the specialist, Lynn] really busy with her e-mails though, transitioning into this position." Heidi doesn't even expect the

visibility of the ECSE leaders, she is looking for communication. “They don't have the time.”

Collaboration and communication are things that Lynn says are occurring but these are not things that the ECSE teachers believe are actually happening. Heidi makes a strong statement saying that, “I think sometimes decisions are made without them taking the time to come and talk to us and get the background information they need to help them make a decision.” This comment referred to changes in school sites that affected some students and their families. It became a big problem and if Lynn had communicated with the teachers first, Heidi believes that the teachers “could have helped facilitate that process or maybe made some different selections of who would be better served by going to one site verses another.” Heidi strongly believes that Lynn needs “to take the time to talk to us and they [ECSE leaders] don't even have the time to do that.”

This sense of Lynn being overwhelmed is understood by the teachers, but at the same time, the teachers are feeling as though they have to rely on each other or the principals in their schools for support. Katie says, “I've had really good communication with other preschool teachers and teams. I always feel comfortable that I can just ask somebody and they'll shoot an e-mail back about ideas.” Heidi relies on support from her school principal. She says, “I've been here for 20 years and I didn't go anywhere because our principals have been good.” These ECSE teachers are relying on other resources for communication because Lynn is not available for them on a one on one basis.

A reoccurring comment about the lack of experience that Lynn has in ECSE is shared by the ECSE teachers that she supervises. This is expressed by several of the teachers. Katie comments,

> I always think, check your sources like: 'what are they?' and 'what do they know?' and 'what are they really good at?' Obviously I would feel comfortable asking her [Lynn] more things about Assistive Technology, if I had a question like that. I don't know her background in early childhood.

Heidi also worked with Lynn when she was the assistive technology support person to her school site. Heidi remembers, "when she used to come and when she worked with us, in that capacity, she walked in I remember very clearly in the beginning she's like, 'I don't know anything about preschool.'

Heidi further adds,

> And, I love the woman. She's great. She had a great attitude and she said, 'I don't know anything about preschool but I'm here to help you.' I'm like okay, cool fine. We would roll our eyes, whatever. She was lovely and then when she got that in that position, we were all like, 'Really? This is the woman who said she doesn't know anything about preschool.'

This lack of ECSE experience is a problem for the ECSE teachers because they are looking at Lynn to guide discussions around curriculum and student progress.

Lynn needs to be present in ECSE classrooms in order for collaboration to occur. The ECSE teachers that Lynn supervises, have not seen much of Lynn in their classrooms all school year. Some of this could be due to time constraints and

administrative responsibilities. When interviews took place in June Lynn had at least six months to establish relationships with the teachers that she supervises. I ask Katie how many times Lynn has visited her classroom and Katie says, “if she came once at the beginning of the school year.” She adds, “Maybe I'm too understanding of a person because I feel like they [ECSE leaders] probably have enough cases where they’re troubleshooting, but even that is not as proactive.” Katie’s comment references leadership behaviors where Lynn needs to anticipate rather than react, by being visionary.

Observations of Lynn reveal a heavy dependency on written communication. This is evidenced by a comment she makes about her goals being achieved. She states,

> Our office is increasing their utilization of technology (spreadsheets, Outlook, utilization of the server, etc.) in order to increase efficiency. When efficiency improves, we can increase the number of children we assess or shorten the amount of time it takes for students to go through the assessment process.

Lynn seems to be concerned about the efficiency of the initial testing process for finding children eligible for special education services.

Lynn’s excessive time on her laptop is noticed by the ECSE teachers as well. Katie comments, “She's really busy with her e-mails though, transitioning into this position.” Heidi adds,

> My supervisor, my specialist [Lynn] is e-mailing me at 1:30 in the morning and 3:00 o'clock in the morning and I’m like, “what are you doing awake at this hour?” She can't sleep. I feel so bad about that and I try not to burden her with stuff, but you know stuff comes along and she's the one I have to turn to. And you

know, quite frankly, she doesn't have a lot of experience with the early childhood special education programs.

Lynn's extreme use of written communication is apparent to the ECSE teachers and based on their interviews, they empathize with her, but they do not necessarily value her as a leader. She was also observed to have two pieces of technology, a laptop and an iPad. Lynn relies on note taking on her laptop. She was observed taking meeting minutes. However, this information was not distributed to other members of the meeting at a later time. Lynn's focus is not on planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum (Robinson, et al., 2008). She seems to use written forms of communication and reliance on technology to address issues relating directly to ECSE.

I observed Lynn over several teacher meetings, and at each meeting, most of her time was spent on her laptop. She was minimally involved in the meetings and only actively participated when asked a question. Most of the time she was a silent participant and searched for answers to questions that people were asking by referring them to website for references, or letting them know which form number to use based on the internal forms page for Edgewood Public Schools. This type of engagement and sharing of information seemed to suffice Lynn as a form of communication with ECSE teachers.

Even though Lynn herself is not actively collaborating with ECSE teachers, she recognizes that "the ECSE teachers work together, sharing materials and strategies," without any support and encouragement from her. I observed Lynn over several occasions and based on my field notes, I did not observe any instance of her learning or

collaborating with other teachers. Emily describes a professional learning on the preschool program of studies saying,

> I don't think it was very helpful and I know it's not something that we really do here. (laughing). Because I feel like, we feel like, nobody's ever really enforced it and there's really no direction of how you do it.

Observing Lynn's absence from professional development, I was not surprised to hear that there was not any follow through with the professional opportunities provided. For Katie, "picking up different things from the professional development opportunities in the subject areas that seemed to be areas of deficits" is helpful. Emily looks at the professional development as an opportunity to

> get together and do trainings together and having the small breakout sessions at the end, for other teachers to talk to each other about the things that they're doing. I think that's a good way to promote the collaboration and being child centered and developmentally appropriate and carrying it out to the trainings.

Overall, ECSE teachers are pleased with the professional development opportunities available, allowing them some time to collaborate in small breakout sessions afterwards.

Structural Barriers

When I ask if Lynn foresees any roadblocks for her goals to be achieved, her response is, "Yes. People can be resistant to change." She did not elaborate on this any further. I continue the interview by asking Lynn to describe program successes. She talks about family friendly services that Amanda also indicated when asked about program successes. She says,

> We have assessed more children than last year and continue to offer high quality reports. We have added recommendations to the assessment reports so parents and others who work with the child will have strategies that may benefit the child. This can reduce the possibility of over-identification of students who require special education services. On multiple occasions parents have left eligibility saying that the process was a pleasant surprise; supportive and helpful which was in contrast to their initial expectation.

This is a part of the ECSE program that seems to be working well, based on interviews of both Lynn and Amanda. Parents are pleased with the initial process of finding their child eligible for special needs services. This goal and vision of family-friendly services that Amanda mentioned earlier, is something that Emily describes as well. She says, "So I think we are really good at being family-friendly. And providing appropriate instruction for these kids and meeting their needs. I think that's something that we can pat ourselves on the back for." Emily has been an ECSE teacher for four years and has been focusing on the goal of family-friendly services prior to having Lynn as her ECSE leader. Family-friendly services have been implemented prior to Lynn becoming an ECSE leader, but she has not necessarily led any aspect of providing good services to families.

When thinking about ways in which students are not meeting program goals, Lynn again refers to logistics of the program by responding, "Only once this year have we been out of timeline." Her thoughts are not about programming, curriculum, going out to the classrooms to support teachers. She seems to be more focused on the numbers and

meeting timelines. I ask Emily a similar question about meeting program goals. She comments,

> I think there is a disconnection between being and saying that we are parent friendly or family-friendly and then sometimes we are not. So it's hard to bridge that gap in the middle. I don't know. I also think it's hard to say that we are providing developmentally appropriate practices but then sometimes there are some teachers that aren't. So there's kind of, I don't know, big brother kind of watching over what's going on in some of those classrooms. So we are saying that there are developmentally appropriate practices occurring in our community but we both know that there are teachers in our program that aren't. So that's hard because not one family's experience is going to be similar to another's.

Lynn is not reported to be out at different sites to supervise, observe, and evaluate that these services are streamlined among the sites that she supervises. This could be due to the fact that the sites are so spread out that Lynn cannot feasibly to get to all of them in a timely manner.

I ask Katie to describe Lynn's leadership behaviors. She says,

> actually I worked with [Lynn] previously. She was my assistive technology support person in her job before this. So I really like her. I know she has a lot going on. Everybody always seems really busy, but they do get back to you about things. Whatever you need but you can just tell that there's a lag time.

This delay that Katie refers to creates roadblocks for both the ECSE teachers and the students.

There is evidence that what Lynn aspires to be is far different from what she accomplishes, as indicated through teacher interviews and observations. Her perception is vastly different from the perceptions described by Heidi, Katie, and Emily, all of whom are supervised by Lynn. Observations of Lynn are consistent with the information previously shared by the teachers. When observing Lynn at meetings, I found that she spent most of her time on her laptop. Observations, interviews, and review of documents all support that Lynn displays more management rather than leadership.

Lynn's Leadership in Relation to the Conceptual Framework

Lynn seems to display more support for the teachers rather than "participating in the learning as a leader" (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 663), which is an important leadership dimension. With these thoughts in mind, another observation that I made was that Lynn was not present at the beginning of the year meeting for teachers on applied behavior analysis, which is the main focus of the ECSE program for the upcoming school year. Without Lynn being present at the start of the initiative and being involved in the learning process along with the ECSE teachers, it will be difficult for her to provide support to the teachers when they ask curriculum related questions, or questions relating back to Applied Behavior Analysis. This is yet another example of Lynn not being a part of teacher learning (Robinson et al.,) and not being fully engaged in the core leadership practice of developing people (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

It is apparent that Lynn is not going into classrooms to make sure all programming is consistent and developmentally appropriate. She is not involved "in classroom observation and subsequent feedback" (Robinson, et al., 2008, p. 662), which

is discussed as a part of the leadership dimension of planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum.

The ECSE teachers could be involved in the actual monitoring of student progress and in providing suggestions for making improvements to the ECSE program. By not having a full awareness of ECSE, Lynn really does not have any additional curriculum knowledge or support in ECSE to provide to the teachers that she supervises (Robinson, et al.).

Relationship building, which is evident across all three of Leithwood and Riehl's (2003) core leadership practices of setting directions, developing people, and developing the organization, is something that is minimally observed and not talked about by Lynn. She does not appear to have the behaviors and dimensions on her mind. Whenever I probe about leadership, she gives me management, and the teachers recognize that they are not getting leadership from her.

With Lynn being fairly new to her position, her focus seems to be on learning the different aspects of her leadership position and focusing on getting a handle on the logistics of how the program works rather than focusing on building relationships with the ECSE teachers that she supervises.

What I find the most fascinating is the fact that Lynn does not have any experience in ECSE coming into her position. Knowing this, she is still absent from the professional development opportunities that are offered throughout the school year to ECSE teachers within Edgewood Public Schools. These are opportunities for Lynn to learn alongside the ECSE teachers that she supervises (Robinson, et al., 2008). When

Lynn is present at a meeting, it is usually an informational meeting about program updates. At a recent teachers' meeting, Lynn relied on her laptop again to provide teachers with sample forms and information that they could use in the future. She even passed around her laptop so teachers could see what different forms looked like. Lynn is not using professional development as continuous learning opportunities for herself and for improvement of ECSE teachers' implementation of the curriculum. Lynn is participating in managerial tasks which she is perceives as leadership.

Lynn is not fully supervising and supporting staff most of the time, which is an important leadership dimension defined by Robinson, et al. (2008) as promoting and participating in teacher learning and development. She is taking care of the logistics, which is more strategic resourcing (Robinson et al.) of the ECSE program.

Based on her interview and my observations of Lynn, she does not display the core leadership practice of setting directions, where the vision and goals are set forth by the leaders (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). This indicates that Lynn does not "inspire others to reach for ambitious goals" (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p.3) because she herself has not identified with the ECSE program's goals and she has not internalized the vision as her own.

Distributed leadership did not surface in my interview with Lynn. The ECSE teachers tend to rely on their building principals as needed, possibly by default rather than by choice. This leads me to believe that Lynn is not involved in leadership behaviors. Not once in her interview did Lynn mention the importance of collaboration

and communication opportunities through the professional development available to ECSE teachers. Lynn did not appear to be conscious about what is important to the ECSE teachers, although she has stated that it is so important to support this. These core leadership practices of setting directions and developing people (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) are lacking in Lynn's leadership behaviors. Overall, Lynn is viewed as a good person, but she minimally displays the leadership behaviors advocated in the literature and is engaged in more managerial tasks.

Cross-Case Analysis

The overarching theme from all of my interviews with the ECSE teachers and leaders is relationships. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) report the importance of leading through relationships, across all three of their core leadership practices. The five leadership dimensions of establishing goals and expectations; ensuring an orderly environment; promoting and participating in teacher learning; planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching; and strategic resourcing (Robinson. Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008) are also influenced by relationships. In these leadership dimensions, "relationship skills are embedded in every dimension" (Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe, 2008, p.659). The document analysis, observations, and interviews of ECSE leaders and the interviews of the ECSE teachers indicate that the three ECSE leaders, Ann, Amanda, and Lynn, all demonstrate varying degrees at the very low end of the scale of the leadership practices and dimensions based on their own perceptions and those of the ECSE teachers whom they supervise.

Core Leadership Practices

Ann, Amanda, and Lynn all bring different expertise into their positions as ECSE leaders. These differences factor into how they relate and communicate with ECSE teachers. Even though they all have leadership experiences and qualifications, their level of experience in ECSE seems to be a factor in their leadership behaviors.

Setting directions. Setting directions (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) is a foundational start to any organization or program. By setting directions for the ECSE program, the ECSE leaders provide a vision and goals that everyone works toward and tries to achieve. All of them have differing ideas as to the vision and goals of the ECSE program. This may be correlated to the amount of experience each of them have in ECSE. Amanda has the most experience in this field and understands these families and children have unique needs. She believes in the vision and has communicated it to the ECSE teachers that she supervises. Ann and Lynn have previous experience working in non-early childhood special education settings. However, they have not fully embraced the ECSE vision as their own.

Through my interviews, I learned that Ann and Amanda are friends outside of their positions and that Amanda encouraged Ann to apply for the ECSE curriculum specialist position when it became available. Ann commented, "[Amanda] told me to apply. She said, 'You'll be good at it.' The familiarity of the goals and vision for the ECSE program could have also come to Ann with her prior relationship with Amanda. For Amanda, she was an ECSE teacher before taking on the ECSE Curriculum Specialist position. She was already familiar with the ECSE program's goals and expectations. Each

of the three ECSE leaders bring different background experiences into their positions and ultimately to their visions and goals of the program.

Developing people. All three of these ECSE leaders were observed to be minimally involved in any aspect of developing people (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Even though Ann, Amanda, and Lynn are a part of the professional development activities, trainings, and meetings, they are not using these training opportunities "to promote change, as well as opportunities for individual learning and appropriate means for monitoring progress towards improvement" (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 4). They choose to engage themselves in logistics, rather than learning from the professional development. They are so involved with time pressures and administrative responsibilities that Ann, Amanda, and Lynn are managing more than they are leading.

Collaboration was a reoccurring topic with both the ECSE teachers and leaders, with regard to developing people. The ECSE teachers spoke more about collaboration amongst themselves, not with the ECSE leaders. Likewise, the leaders spoke of collaboration mostly amongst themselves and not so much with the ECSE teachers. It seems as if the ECSE leaders see collaboration with each other as more important than that with the ECSE teachers (Johnson, et al., 1992). Based on document analysis and information from interviews, Ann and Lynn see their email correspondence as collaborating with ECSE teachers. In contrast, the teachers are looking for more hands on collaboration, intellectual stimulation, and shared decision making.

Developing the organization. In order to develop the organization (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003), Ann, Amanda, and Lynn do need to keep track of the number of ECSE

students per site. They ask the ECSE teachers for the number of students on their caseloads via email. Even with this written communication, students are placed at sites and in programs that may not best meet their needs and may not foster good teaching.

Leadership Dimensions

Establishing goals and expectations. Comments from the ECSE teachers that Ann and Amanda supervise indicate that these leaders have established goals and expectations (Robinson et al., 2008) that are a part of the vision. Both Ann and Amanda have been in their ECSE leadership positions longer than Lynn. They emphasize the importance of family friendly services and these same services are what the ECSE teachers believe in and implement on a daily basis when working with their students. Lynn is newer to her ECSE leader position and is still feeling her way through. She is more systematic in her responses and observations did not reveal that she has communicated the goals or visions of the program to her staff adequately. When I interviewed Lynn, she did not state the goals and vision as her own. Instead she just read off the goals and mission statement of the program from a sheet of paper hanging on her wall. The vision was something that was in place for at least two years prior to Lynn being in her current ECSE leadership position. Lynn's short time in her position and lack of knowledge of ECSE, in general, may be a reason why she hasn't connected personally with the vision and goals of the program.

Promoting and participating in teacher learning. Ann, Amanda, and Lynn participate in minimal opportunities to learn alongside ECSE teachers (Robinson et al., 2008). They are engaged in more managerial tasks during meetings rather than being

active participants. I observed all three ECSE leaders during different professional development opportunities offered with Edgewood Public Schools. Ann was at a recent meeting on Applied Behavior Analysis. During the breakout sessions of the professional development, instead of being an active participant in the group discussions, she was observed to be involved in side talk and was distracting and deviating from the purpose of the group discussions. Ann also mentioned a great idea during her interview of having "Brown bag lunches with Ann," to discuss topics of interest to the ECSE teachers. She spent time after our interview talking to me about how she would group the teachers together based on physical proximity so they would not have to travel far for these "mini meetings." Ann had ideas of having a different school "host" the lunches. I interviewed Ann at the beginning of the summer and she had not yet implemented her idea two months into the school year. Her lack of experience and knowledge in ECSE may be a reason why she didn't start the lunches. Perhaps she needs more experience and knowledge of ECSE, prior to heading meetings on it.

Based on interviews and observations, Ann has not developed a strong enough relationship with her ECSE teachers to inspire or encourage them to further enhance their teaching. Ann's lack of knowledge of ECSE ultimately affects her leadership behaviors. She is not able to effectively communicate and support ECSE teachers because she is not familiar with what to look for in her observations. ECSE classrooms are designed differently than special and general education in elementary school settings. Ann can learn from the ECSE teachers and the implementation of the curriculum in their classrooms. She can then take this information and make suitable adjustments to ECSE

programming as needed. Similarly, Lynn was absent from important professional development opportunities and beginning of the school year initiatives. She was not at all an active participant in these activities when I observed her. Without an understanding of ECSE, Ann and Lynn's leadership behaviors are affected.

There were similarities in Ann, Amanda, and Lynn's leadership behaviors, despite Amanda having much more expertise in ECSE than Ann and Lynn. Amanda was observed at a few teacher meetings and professional development opportunities. Her role seemed to more "in charge of logistics" than actually learning alongside teachers (Robinson, et al., 2008), as well. She made sure all necessary equipment was available for presenters and she walked around the room to make sure teachers were actively listening to the presenter. Amanda has ample experience in ECSE, having taught it for 23 years and has had the opportunity to get to know a lot of the ECSE teachers over the years. This explains why she feels "the most responsibility" to the ECSE teachers that she supervises and tries "to make sure that they have everything they need to do their job." Amanda focuses on managerial tasks, rather than learning alongside the ECSE teachers. This interview comment is consistent with my observations of Amanda. She was observed to be most concerned with making sure that all materials were available for the professional development of teachers rather than actively participating in learning opportunities alongside the teachers (Robinson et al., 2008).

With these leaders working out of central offices, and due to time pressures, they do not go into the classrooms often and provide minimal support to teachers with their teaching issues in their classrooms. This leadership dimension of promoting and

participating in teacher learning and development is so important, and yet is not fully demonstrated by any of these ECSE leaders (Robinson, et al., 2008). Ann, Amanda, and Lynn are missing valuable opportunities for instructional leadership of learning alongside teachers (Robinson, et al., 2008) and are more focused on managerial activities (Rodd, 2005).

Three more leadership dimensions. The ECSE leaders are so involved in logistics and the issues surrounding caseloads, that they are overwhelmed and are not available to help and support their ECSE teachers in the classroom. This sense of being inundated with a large number of children being found eligible for special needs services and the administrative responsibility of finding places for them to be served have caused these ECSE leaders to reprioritize what is most important, and in this case, it is obviously finding a class or a teacher to serve these children, rather than focusing on the actual quality of services that the students are receiving.

There is also the lack of visibility of the ECSE leaders in ECSE classrooms. Ann and Lynn both do not have any prior experience in ECSE. Their lack of ECSE curriculum knowledge and focus on other job responsibilities could be a major reason why both are minimally visible in ECSE classrooms. Ann and Lynn believe that they collaborate with the ECSE teachers, yet the ECSE teachers believe that Ann and Lynn tend not to collaborate much with them, based on their interviews. Amanda, on the other hand, has a positive relationship with the teachers that she supervises. She was an ECSE teacher prior to becoming an ECSE leader and has earned her respect from the

teachers as a colleague first and then a boss. Amanda also shows support for her teachers by "putting herself in their shoes."

The ECSE leaders are relying on each other to find the most efficient way to get things done. Lynn makes a comment at a teacher's meeting saying that "we are going to use the forms like Amanda uses. It is just easier." Again, these ECSE leaders are so involved in the logistics and the numbers that they don't have the time to devote to actual planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching (Robinson et al., 2008). They are more concerned about developing forms to get paperwork completed more efficiently, which again is an example of managing the program rather than leading it.

All three ECSE leaders, Ann, Amanda, and Lynn, spend a majority of their time sitting in on initial screenings and assessments to find children eligible or ineligible for ECSE services. ECSE teachers are not asked to be involved as part of this initial testing process, alleviating some of the external factors so teachers can focus on teaching (Robinson, et al., 2008).

Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership is somewhat displayed amongst the three leaders. Ann, Amanda, and Lynn are involved in collaboration amongst themselves. They bounce ideas off of each other and use the same forms amongst all three central sites. Ann, Amanda, and Lynn have also left some decisions about the ECSE program to individual principals at schools, but not by choice. This occurs due to the organizational design of the ECSE program within Edgewood Public Schools. In some ways, the ECSE leaders themselves have left the principals with the discretion to hire and evaluate the ECSE teachers in their

buildings because they just don't have the time to do so. This can have long term implications if people experienced in ECSE are not hired into ECSE leadership positions.

Principals are responsible for ECSE teacher evaluations and they also decide whether or not to have an inclusion component in their schools, where typically developing preschool children are included in ECSE classes as peer models. Along with knowing what typical preschool development looks like, inclusion came up as a reoccurring topic among these teachers. These ECSE teachers want to give their special needs students opportunities to be integrated into regular preschool classrooms, whenever possible. However, they are limited in their capabilities to do so, mostly because of school principals' influences. Some school principals are more receptive to the idea of having typically developing children join the special needs classrooms. Heather has a positive experience with inclusion saying that "the inclusion in our school is amazing." Some principals within Edgewood Public Schools do not agree with inclusion (Brotherson, et al., 2001). Heidi makes a comment that, "I know that there are individual problems at different sites with trying to get that [inclusion] actually implemented." Ann adds, "in terms of the inclusion part of it, I've actually got administrators who won't let teachers bring in community peers."

By being housed at central sites, these ECSE leaders have to defer some decision making to the principals within school buildings. They are also supervising at least sixteen ECSE sites each and do not have the time to engage in distributed leadership in order to give principals and teachers at the schools the resources and information they need to ensure that this type of leadership takes place. The distributed leadership that is

occurring is due to the organizational design in which the ECSE leaders being forced into it with the principals.

Summary

Leithwood and Riehl's (2003) core leadership practices of setting directions, developing people, and developing the organization are minimally displayed by Ann and Lynn. Amanda is much more adept at leadership. They are all more followers of the vision and goals that are in place, rather than being the visionaries for their ECSE teachers and having them be a part of the process in creating the vision and goals. Ann, Amanda, and Lynn's lack of involvement with determining a vision and helping teachers to do so is a missed opportunity that works against them with the ECSE teachers (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). The ECSE leaders' choices are having a negative effect with their teachers. All of the ECSE teachers interviewed were consistent about their perceptions of their ECSE leaders managing more than leading.

Collaboration among teachers is beneficial. This sharing of ideas between ECSE teachers and leaders will increase the interpersonal skills that the teachers are looking for and help ECSE leaders to be viewed as effective leaders. In order to develop the organization (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) these ECSE leaders need to "enhance the performance of their schools by providing opportunities for staff to participate in decision making about issues that affect them and for which their knowledge is crucial" (Leithwood & Riehl, p.5). By consulting with the ECSE teachers that are actually in the classrooms, the ECSE leaders and teachers can develop positive relationships with each other. Heidi mentions that, "sometimes decisions are made without taking the time to

come and talk to us and getting the background information to help them make a decision." These types of conversations with the ECSE teachers can only be accomplished when both ECSE teachers and leaders have the knowledge and experience in early childhood special education to make informed decisions.

A cross-case analysis of all three ECSE leaders, Ann, Amanda, and Lynn, reveals that although all three of them perceive themselves as being involved in leadership behaviors, they are really participating in managerial activities on a day to day basis. They are involved in the "details of efficiently running a program" (Humphries & Senden, 2000, p. 42) rather than developing an environment around performance and organizational achievement (Rodd, 1994). Based on their interviews, it is not surprising that these ECSE leaders perceive themselves as displaying leadership behaviors that are advocated in the literature. However, Amanda's perceptions of her leadership behaviors and her actual attempt at being a leader are more consistent based on observations and interviews of the ECSE teachers, than the leadership perceptions of Ann and Lynn. Perhaps, the time pressures and administrative responsibilities that these ECSE leaders have make them assume that they are leaders, when in fact they spend the majority of their time and attention on management.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to examine the leadership behaviors of ECSE leaders. The data collected from interviews, observations, and document analysis was designed to gain a deeper understanding of ECSE leaders' and teachers' perceptions about leadership behaviors. The data collected are intended to demonstrate the degree to which ECSE leaders exhibit behaviors recognized in the K – 12 leadership literature to be effective for improving student achievement. This qualitative research brings out the voices of the ECSE teachers and leaders. In this chapter I revisit the conceptual framework used to demonstrate the leadership behaviors displayed by ECSE leaders, based on the perceptions of these leaders themselves, the perceptions of the ECSE teachers that they supervise, observations, and document analysis. These data collection tools reveal that the three participants in this study display minimal behaviors that could be classified as leadership according to Leithwood and Riehl (2003) and Robinson et al. (2008). Given the organizational design of the ECSE program, these ECSE leaders are spread so thin and they lack expertise, making leadership in ECSE challenging for them. Therefore, I conclude that three ECSE leaders are managing, not leading, due to the tremendous time pressures and administrative responsibilities of their jobs and personal choices made by each of the ECSE curriculum specialists.

Discussion of Significance

One important piece of research significance of this study is that I am looking at ECSE leadership through a K - 12 leadership lens. It is remarkable that there is so little research specific to leadership in early childhood special education in public school settings. Borrowing from research outside of the ECSE field is required to make this research possible because leadership in this discipline is largely unexplored. Using a K – 12 leadership lens, I find that ECSE leaders perceive their behaviors as leadership when, in fact, data analysis discloses that they are managing in their roles as ECSE leaders. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) and Robinson et al. (2008) concepts of leadership behaviors that I applied to ECSE reveal that these ECSE leaders are predominately managing, rather than leading. I also find that the organizational design makes leadership in ECSE challenging for Ann, Amanda, and Lynn.

An important distinction to make from this investigation is that there is a difference between management and leadership. Humphries and Senden (2000) suggest that "managers attend to the details of efficiently running a program; leaders are oriented to the broader issues and future developments" (p.1) What these ECSE leaders are doing is definitely more management. Ann, Amanda, and Lynn are involved in the day to day running of the ECSE program. This includes dealing with legal issues, record keeping, and meeting state and federal requirements. The leadership component consists more of actively listening to ECSE teachers, delegating responsibilities, building positive relationships with ECSE teachers, and ensuring that everyone understands the vision of the ECSE program. "Future leaders need to be proactive rather than reactive" (Bass,

2000, p.22). Leaders also foster change and improvement (Cuban, 1988). Amanda is the only ECSE leader who is the closest in displaying such leadership behaviors. Leadership also involves recognizing and facilitating growth and development of other ECSE teachers as well as placing high expectations on ECSE teachers, while respecting them as people and professionals. Amanda has this mutual respect with the ECSE teachers and she also has high expectations of herself. She helps others grow by connecting experienced ECSE teachers with new ones.

More important, based on the conceptual framework described earlier, leadership involves not only following a vision but enhancing the vision to provide inspiration to ECSE teachers to shape the future of ECSE programs (Rodd, 1994). These ECSE programs need to be more visionary (Feeney, 1998; Morden, 1997)in order to improve student achievement. By being more visionary, there will be more quality early childhood special education programming. This will set the foundation for future school success for these young children, making leadership in ECSE a vital area of school leadership to focus on in the near future. Presenting the ECSE vision is a core leadership practice of setting directions (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). It is challenging for these leaders to present this vision to these ECSE teachers because the ECSE program represents a small part of the entire mission of Edgewood Public Schools, yet it is an integral part of this school system. In order for these ECSE teachers to believe in the vision, Ann, Amanda, and Lynn must be active participants in the implementation of the vision.

Keeping the conceptual framework in mind, I further investigated the research on early childhood. Interviews with early childhood professionals identify the following

characteristics as key to being an effective early childhood leader: being patient, warm and kind; being goal-oriented, using planning, assertiveness, vision, and confidence; having good working relationship with staff, who participate in leadership and; being responsive to parents' needs and able to communicate with them. Rodd (1996) asked leaders what skills they consider important and they identify: good relationships with staff; a commitment to meeting organizational goals; a commitment to fulfilling the roles of an early childhood professional; acknowledging others' strengths and weaknesses; a desire to extend their professional knowledge; access to clearly defined roles and responsibilities; and responsiveness to the needs of parents. Additional factors include: being visionary; coordinating and motivating; and being able to make decisions. It is interesting to note that although ECSE leaders identify these factors as important, they themselves do not exercise these characteristics in practice. This discrepancy validates the gap between leaders' daily tasks and the leadership characteristics that are thought to be important (Bloom, 1997).

Summary of Findings

The core leadership practices of Leithwood and Riehl (2003) and leadership dimensions of Robinson et al. (2008) are an adequate place to begin to explore leadership in ECSE. Regardless of different types of school-aged programs, the basic leadership behaviors described in the conceptual framework, are relevant to any organization, including ECSE.

As discussed in the previous chapter, relationships are embedded throughout the core leadership practices of setting directions, developing people, and developing the

organization (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) and the five leadership dimensions of establishing goals and expectations; strategic resourcing; planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum; promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment (Robinson, et al. 2008). These behaviors are important because when ECSE leaders build positive relationships consisting of open communication and trust, then ECSE teachers may be more responsive to their decision making out of respect, even though they may not agree with it. The need for positive relationships with ECSE leaders is reiterated by all of the ECSE teachers that I interviewed. The need for these relationships is directly tied to the leadership practices and dimensions, which will eventually lead to student achievement in the ECSE program, as indicated by Robinson, et al. (2008). The significance of these relationships is emphasized through the discussions on visibility in ECSE classrooms, communication, collaboration, training, and knowledge which ultimately tie into the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2. The ECSE teachers are seeking the behaviors and practices described in the conceptual framework.

Distributed leadership is another important component of the conceptual framework in terms of ECSE leadership. Distributed leadership is "a form of collective leadership in which teachers develop skills and expertise through working collaboratively" (Harris, 2002, p.3). It was anticipated to be more helpful than proved to be the case. These ECSE leaders are forced into a position of sharing leadership with elementary principals; therefore, they are helpless to distribute leadership to their ECSE teachers. I was expecting distributed leadership to be deliberate.

Extent of Ann, Amanda, and Lynn's Leadership

Research question one asked: How do ECSE leaders perceive and describe their own leadership? Each of the ECSE leaders, Ann, Amanda, and Lynn believe that they are practicing leadership behaviors. These components are clearly lacking according to the ECSE teachers and the observations made, and this is what teachers miss the most. There are not enough ECSE leadership opportunities for these leaders to learn, practice, and enhance their leadership behaviors. Looking back at Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe's (2008) leadership dimension of promoting and participating in teacher learning is the most important leadership behavior, which is absent from Ann, Amanda, and Lynn's leadership.

Amanda identified some leadership behaviors in herself that are consistent with the research on school leadership. She actually focuses on relationships with the ECSE teachers as her prominent leadership behavior. This is demonstrated by examples that Amanda gives of her own leadership and by the interviews with Sue, Mary, and Sally. Amanda displays some components of setting directions, developing people, and developing the organization (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). She has a personal interest in the ECSE program's goals and vision and the ECSE teachers agree with her self-perceptions. They report the same goals and visions in their interviews as Amanda does. She spends a lot of time on developing people by having ECSE teachers collaborate with each other. She could strengthen her skills in this area by being an active participant in this collaboration and teacher learning, just as Ann needs to be (Robinson, et al., 2008). Although Amanda participates in mostly managerial tasks (Rodd, 1994), she seems to

have some of the qualities and behaviors needed to be an effective leader. She tries to utilize a collaborative approach by effectively involving the ECSE teachers to help facilitate change and tries to include them in the vision of the ECSE program which helps build their investment and ownership in the ECSE program (Kunesh & Farley 1993).

Ann, Amanda, and Lynn are most involved in the logistics of the ECSE program and have minimal contribution to providing any type of support to the ECSE teachers. They demonstrate managerial skills of planning, organizing, and focusing on staffing needs. Based on the conceptual framework, Ann, Amanda, and Lynn demonstrate few leadership practices (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) and leadership dimensions (Robinson, et al., 2008). They utilize the structures already put into place and are just trying to keep their heads above water, thus focusing on managerial tasks. They believe these behaviors are leadership, when in fact they are management. Ann, Amanda, and Lynn are not looking towards leading change (Cuban, 1988). The second research question asked: What strategies do ECSE leaders actually employ in order to lead early childhood special education programs? Based on my observations, Ann, Amanda, and Lynn are involved in minimal leading. They have numerous opportunities to be instructional leaders, but they choose to engage in administrative tasks during learning opportunities. They choose to manage nearly every time they have to make a choice. These choices could go back to the time constraints that they have, that they are just trying to complete their administrative responsibilities.

Ann, Amanda, and Lynn are in a difficult position. The organizational design of the ECSE program in Edgewood Public Schools is such that leadership is virtually

impossible. Amanda means well by connecting new ECSE teachers with experienced ones. However, she herself is so busy trying to reprioritize what she needs to get done on a given day that she has little or no time to spend in ECSE teacher's classrooms or to be actively involved in any type of curriculum dialogue with teachers. Amanda displays some of the leadership dimensions (Robinson et al., 2008). However, the activities that she is involved in such as strategic resourcing and planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008) have small effect sizes in terms of leadership impact on student achievement. Quantitative research on effective early childhood settings by Bloom (2000) further supports the leadership dimensions (Robinson et al. 2008), indicating that there are three key areas in which early childhood leaders should be competent: knowledge, which includes group dynamics, organizational theory, child development, and teaching strategies; skills, including technical, human and conceptual skills; and attitude.

Research question three was: How do ECSE teachers perceive their ECSE leaders' leadership behaviors? I asked ECSE teachers their perception of ECSE leaders because they are the ones who deal with daily issues that involve these ECSE leaders. Amanda has the most experience in ECSE and is described by ECSE teachers as demonstrating the most leadership behaviors. Ann and Lynn are reported to have the least amount of experience in ECSE which related back to ECSE teachers' perceptions about their leadership. One piece of information that comes up in all of the interviews is the experience of the ECSE leaders. These ECSE leaders may have been "promoted to their

positions because of exemplary performance as teachers, not because they have expertise in program leadership," (Bloom, 1994, p.115).

The interviews of ECSE teachers address the core leadership practices and leadership dimensions discussed in the conceptual framework. Unfortunately, the ECSE leaders are perceived by teachers not to display a significant amount of leadership based on the conceptual framework, preoccupying themselves with managerial tasks instead.

There are four major issues that were presented throughout the interviews of the ECSE teachers, and supported by observations of the leaders: the need for professional development, licensure programs for these leaders, the organizational design of ECSE programs, and the size of these programs within Edgewood Public Schools.

The most important insight from this research is the amount of administrative responsibility that these ECSE leaders have, which can and have been misconstrued as leadership. Both the school system and the ECSE leaders themselves do not seem to recognize that they may be handcuffed by the system in which they are working. The ECSE leaders hired into these positions are usually recruited as former teachers and they tend to react to situations rather than anticipate them. These ECSE leaders need to understand that there are constant changes in ECSE and they need to work with the ECSE teachers to make appropriate modifications to the program.

The ECSE teachers and leaders seem to have relationship building issues, which could be one of the reasons that they may be hesitant to change. For this reason, these ECSE leaders need to form trust and positive relationships, as well as focus on professional development in ECSE. These opportunities for teachers in ECSE have been

an ongoing topic of research (Bloom, 1997). However, the need for professional development opportunities for ECSE leaders' has been largely ignored. Many school administrators attend preparation courses on a regular basis to enhance their leadership skills. There are even certification programs designed for people interested in school leadership. Unfortunately, there are not specific programs designed to do the same for people interested in ECSE leadership.

The uniqueness of ECSE programs is that they are their own separate entities, yet are confined by the rules of the school district. This is where ECSE leadership becomes challenged. There are some built in problems caused by the organizational design, specifically ECSE leaders' relationships with principals. Since ECSE programs are housed in public schools, principals are involved in day to day decision making about the program. This has real implications in terms of who really makes programming decisions. It was apparent from the interviews, observations, and document analysis that ECSE leaders are limited in their enforcement of some issues, such as inclusion and completing ECSE teacher evaluations. They must defer to the school building principals on these matters. This dynamic can cause friction among the ECSE leaders, teachers, and school principals when leadership decisions need to be made and is not clear who to go to for leadership.

These ECSE leaders are in charge of many schools in a very large school district, which means that there has to be order and consistency across Edgewood Public Schools. The ECSE program is spread out among Edgewood Public Schools, with fifty one ECSE classrooms and three ECSE leaders to supervise them. It is not feasible for these leaders

to even begin to focus on developing people or the organization (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) because it is impossible for them to get their arms around their responsibilities. The ECSE teachers seem to recognize the magnitude of their leaders' jobs. However, they are still looking for support and do not feel that there is leadership in the ECSE program. In order for these leaders to lead the program more effectively, they need to be in charge of a smaller number of sites. Each leader is supervising a minimum of sixteen sites and cannot possibly get to all of them, even if she wanted to.

These three ECSE leaders have a daunting task in terms of leading the ECSE program within Edgewood Public Schools. The next section discusses some recommendations to support these leaders and their roles.

Recommendations

Based on interviews, observations, and document analysis there are several recommendations that may better assist these ECSE leaders in fulfilling their positions of being true leaders. Some of these recommendations are based on findings from school-aged leadership.

My conceptual framework emphasizes the importance of a program vision. These leaders need to define and implement a clear and consistent vision for these ECSE teachers as well as engage in periodic assessment of the vision being carried out within the program. This process will guide ECSE teachers to envision future goals for the ECSE program. In order to make ECSE teachers active participants in the vision, these leaders can provide group discussions to brainstorm ideas and allow teachers to write them down. ECSE leaders can further support the implementation of the vision by

monitoring it and by asking teachers to report on it. These teachers are looking for support and shared decision making (Carter, 2000). Engaging ECSE teachers in creating a vision for the program, is a good start to collaboration and communication between the leaders and the teachers.

Professional development was a reoccurring topic in this study as well. Ann, Amanda, and Lynn could take advantage of professional development to start to fill in the gaps in their expertise. They need to provide an appropriate model of learning and intellectual stimulation (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003) to their staff, through personal communication and collaboration. They also need to be an active participant in teacher learning and development. Different professional development opportunities within Edgewood Public Schools will be beneficial for Ann, Amanda, and Lynn. Ann and Lynn will benefit the most from information on typical early childhood development, since they do not have any experience in this field. These ECSE leaders need to know early childhood general and special education curricula in order to provide appropriate accommodations and modifications for individual students. By being knowledgeable in the specialty area of ECSE, these leaders will be more equipped with involving other disciplines and related services when making appropriate decisions for the ECSE population being served.

They can be more actively involved in formal and informal learning such as staff meetings discussing specific student needs at staff meetings, and physically getting into ECSE classrooms. By doing so, they can establish positive relationships with the ECSE teachers that they supervise and help them adequately troubleshoot and problem solve

student learning issues as they arise. They can also support ECSE teachers' request for their own professional development. The ECSE teachers may feel more comfortable if Ann, Amanda, and Lynn are active participants in the professional development opportunities, rather than managing the logistics of them. They could then share ideas with them as colleagues rather than looking at them as supervisors. If Ann, Amanda, and Lynn have time to spend on teacher learning, they could further develop their relationships with the ECSE teachers and become true leaders in their field.

Ann and Lynn need to be involved in professional training opportunities offered through Edgewood Public Schools and outside of the school system in order to further their knowledge in ECSE. They, along with Amanda, need to spend time in classrooms observing and providing feedback to teachers as appropriate. Only when Ann and Lynn understand early childhood development, can they provide adequate support to the ECSE teachers whom they supervise.

These professional development opportunities and the knowledge gained from them will allow these leaders to lead by example. ECSE leaders will be seen as displaying leadership dimensions as described by Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) by keeping current with Edgewood Public Schools and federal mandates. Additionally, by participating in professional development, these ECSE leaders will have opportunities to keep up with cutting edge research. They can use meaningful and appropriate professional development for continuous improvement for themselves and for the ECSE program.

One way to develop cohesiveness within the organization is to create learning communities for ECSE. This allows these leaders to ensure that all disciplines: occupational therapists, physical therapist, speech and language pathologists, psychologists, and social workers are included and support these ECSE learning communities. By working collaboratively with other disciplines, these ECSE leaders may become more accessible and available for true leadership to occur in ECSE. ECSE leaders can employ the National Staff Development Council (2001) standards as a guide for professional development. These standards include context, process, and contextual standards. The context standards consist of staff development that focuses on learning communities; leadership through the guidance of continuous instructional improvement; and resources to support learning and collaboration. The process standards focus on data-driven progress monitoring; evaluation; research-based decision making; design learning strategies to meet intended goals; individualized learning and changes; and collaboration. The content standards create supportive learning environments; hold equal and high expectations for students' academic achievement; encourage quality teaching through the use of various types of classroom assessments; and include family involvement. These standards incorporate the core leadership practices and leadership dimensions described in the conceptual framework.

When providing professional development opportunities, ECSE leaders should consider both large and small group meetings. The large group setting can allow for follow up activities from various professional development opportunities. Small group meetings can be more interactive consisting of make and take it sessions; examination,

critique, and sharing of materials; role-playing; demonstrations of techniques; and book discussions. ECSE leaders need to be cognizant of the fact that they need to meet the different and individualized needs of the participants based on their knowledge and skill levels. ECSE teachers should be involved in the planning of these opportunities and learning alongside teachers (Robinson, et al., 2008).

When different meetings are conducted, ECSE leaders need to make sure that they are interactive, giving teachers the opportunity to express their views, while the leaders monitor the appropriateness of comments and keep track of time so teaches stay on task. An important piece of leadership is to evaluate and support the ECSE teachers, which is lacking. ECSE leaders can create a positive learning environment that uses humor and ultimately earns them respect.

Another means of gaining knowledge in ECSE is through local universities. They can collaborate with Edgewood Public Schools to provide ECSE leadership certification programs similar to those for school leadership. This would be an excellent start for leadership in ECSE. There is ample research on school leadership, which can be used as a starting point for teaching ECSE leaders the leadership behaviors they need to make ECSE programs successful.

Based on the ECSE teachers' interviews, Edgewood Public Schools needs to look into changing their job description to require ECSE leaders to have experience specifically in ECSE prior to applying for the position. When the school system has criteria in place to hire ECSE teachers with masters' degrees and certification in ECSE, then there should be the same expectations for ECSE curriculum specialists, so that they

understand the basics of the ECSE program. ECSE leaders need a background in ECSE to better communicate with stakeholders including parents, agencies, and programs in the community that provide special education services. This criterion will also aid in building positive relationships among the ECSE leaders and teachers. When ECSE teachers know that their leaders have experience in ECSE they are more likely to value their opinions and see them as professionals with whom they can participate in teacher learning, rather than bosses who just tell them what to do.

Distributed leadership, as described in my conceptual framework, is not occurring because the ECSE leaders are forced into an existing organizational design. Edgewood Public Schools needs to look into hiring more help or changing the organizational design where the role of these ECSE leaders complements those of the principals. ECSE leaders should be distributing leadership to ECSE teachers, but they seem incapable of doing so because they don't understand what leadership is in the first place. The issue of classrooms to leaders' ratio, will continue to be a problem until budget constraints are lifted and more funds are made available to the ECSE program to hire more help at the leadership level.

Just as the visibility of ECSE leaders in ECSE programs is important, so is visibility of ECSE leaders with principals. ECSE leaders can be active participants in the principals' meetings in Edgewood Public Schools. By doing so, principals and ECSE leaders can discuss important programming issues and create relationships to work together for positive outcomes of ECSE programs within schools. This will be a good opportunity for Ann, Amanda, and Lynn to go into school buildings and strengthen their

own relationships with the teachers and principals by having informal discussions with staff. When principals understand the nature of ECSE programs better, they will be able to provide appropriate support to the ECSE teachers in their school buildings.

Due to the nature of the ECSE program, there is also a strong emphasis on working with parents and guiding them, which is another central role in early childhood leadership (Rodd, 1999). Keeping in mind these community aspects, Kagan and Hallmark (2001) suggest different forms of leadership that can take place in the early years:

- community leadership – which connects the community through informing and constructing links among families, services, resources and the public and private sectors;
- pedagogical leadership – forming a bridge between research and practice through disseminating new information and shaping agendas;
- administrative leadership – which includes financial and personnel management;
- advocacy leadership – creating a long-term vision of the future of early childhood education; and
- conceptual leadership – which conceptualizes early childhood leadership within the broader framework of social movements and change.

They further suggest that these different styles of leadership may require more training in these areas. Kagan and Hallmark's () discussion of the styles of leadership is consistent with the conceptual framework for this study because of the recognition of the varying qualities, behaviors, and training that early childhood special education leaders ought to bring to their position. These include the vision of the ECSE program, collaboration

among different disciplines, and staying on top of cutting edge research and using it for practical purposes in the classroom.

Summary

These ECSE leaders have a unique job that requires inspiration, encouragement, and assistance to ECSE teachers. However, due to the overwhelming demands of the managerial aspects of their jobs, they are unable to provide support to staff while requiring improvement. Early childhood special education is a growing field, with more and more young children being found for special education services. This makes leadership in ECSE very timely and an area that requires real attention. This study is a good start for further conversations with school administrators as to how to improve ECSE leadership in public schools. By doing so, ECSE programs in public schools may be seen as a part of the school as opposed to being an add- on service that is perceived as having little or no value.

APPENDIX A

George Mason University
PhD. In Education Program
Leadership in Early Childhood Special Education
Samita Berry Arora

Interview Questions for ECSE leaders

1. Background information about participants

2. What do you try to accomplish in your work as an ECSE Curriculum Specialist?

3. What is your vision for the ECSE program?

- Why is this vision important?
- What evidence is there that the vision is being acted upon?
- Are these goals yours or are they derived from the school district?

4. Apart from "putting out fires," what are your goals as a leader in this program?

- What are some examples of your goals being achieved?
- Do you foresee any roadblocks?

5. What kinds of program successes can you describe?

- In what ways are students not meeting program goals?
- Why is that happening?

6. How would you describe your leadership behaviors?

- Tell me a story that illustrates your leadership behaviors.

7. How do you try to foster good teaching?

APPENDIX B

George Mason University
PhD. In Education Program
Leadership in Early Childhood Special Education
Samita Berry Arora

Interview Questions for ECSE teachers

1. Background information about participants

2. What is your understanding about the vision of the ECSE program?

3. What do you think are the goals of the ECSE program set forth by the ECSE leaders?

- What are some examples of these goals being achieved?
- Can you describe the processes that help move you toward the goal(s)?

4. What kinds of program successes can you describe?

- In what ways are students not meeting program goals?
- Why is that happening?

5. How would you describe the leadership behaviors in the ECSE program?

- What do you remember seeing?

- What did you find effective?
- Why did you find it effective?

APPENDIX C

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Samita Berry Arora

Observation Protocol

Category	Includes	What to look for
Verbal behavior and interactions	Who speaks to whom; for how long; who initiates interactions; tone of voice	Dynamics of interactions
Physical behavior and gestures	What people do, who does what, who interacts with whom, who is not interacting; non-verbal communication	How people use their bodies and voices to communicate different emotions; what individuals' behaviors indicate about their feelings toward one another, or their profession

Personal space	How close people stand to one another	What individuals' preferences concerning personal space suggest about their relationships
Presenters/Participants of meetings	People who enter, leave, and spend time at the observation meeting	Where people enter and exit; how long they stay; who they are (ethnicity, age, gender); whether they are alone or accompanied by others; number of people at meeting

People who stand out	Identification of people who receive a lot of attention from others	The characteristics of these individuals; what differentiates them from others; whether people consult them or they approach other people; whether they seem to be strangers or well known by others present

Adapted from: Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, and Namey (2005)

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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