In this chapter, professional standards for leaders and administrators of special education will be elevated beyond a basic discussion to include the literature base supporting both general and special education in the broader context of leadership paradigms and policy reform efforts. Historically, the knowledge traditions and practices of special education have dominated the special education administration discourse as inclusive practice and accountability continue to shape American education (Lashley & Boscardin, 2003). Special education and general education leaders will continue to be challenged to join together to solve the problems of practice in equitable and socially just ways inherent in diverse, complex, high-stakes educational environments.

Over the past two decades there has been a marked evolution in the development of professional standards and their implementation in response to the various iterations of education reform. The contributions of researchers and scholars, professional organizations, practitioners, and other stakeholders to the identification and development of professional standards contributes to their universal application beyond that of preservice training. The utilitarian application of professional standards provides a disciplinary framework for better understanding the complex field of special education leadership and administration, thus guiding and enriching the work lives of preservice, novice, and experienced educational leaders and administrators of special education.

Although standards have been used to combat low quality and extend opportunity (Porter, 1993), it is ill-advised to use them exclusively at the expense of higher levels of professional practice and accountability (Darling-Hammond, 1989). Elevating standards beyond basic intents requires understanding the limitations within the broader context of leadership paradigms. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) noted this broader context when writing, “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (p. 3).

In this chapter, readers are encouraged to think of standards as a vision and guidelines for policy that can be tailored to create socially just organizations that support equity, access, and opportunity for students with disabilities and their families. The over-riding purpose of this chapter is to explore the interrelationships among policies, professional identities, and concerns for social justice and professional standards for leaders and administrators of special education. Research linking various aspects of special education leadership standards to all those aspects of education that influence student learning helps us better understand how leadership influences instructional practices and student

3

Expanding the Leadership Framework to Support Socially Just Special Education Policy, Preparation, and Standards

Mary Lynn Boscardin and Carl Lashley
learning. Here, this research will be examined so as to better understand the premises and assumptions of special education leadership. The following questions will guide this discussion:

- How has the evolution of educational policy influenced the development of professional leadership standards?
- How does the development of professional identities interact with the professionalization of special education leadership and administration?
- What does the scholarly literature reveal about the advancement of professional standards and the needs for leaders and administrators of special education?
- How has the convergence of educational policies, professional standards, and scholarship contributed to an emerging understanding of ethical and socially just leadership within organizations?

Influences of Policy on the Development of Professional Standards

The phrase *school reform* is a common reference to any proposal for change in public school policy and/or operations. Since the proliferation of school reform reports beginning in the early 1980s, a sustained effort has been undertaken to fix, restructure, and rethink the American educational enterprise. The connection to learning in the past has been limited to trying to better understand the connection between what teachers teach and what students learn (i.e., Educate America Act, 2000; No Child Left Behind, 2001; Teachers for the 21st Century, 1986; Tomorrow’s Teachers, 1986). The first wave of top-down reform called for competency-based education, performance contracting, school-wide accountability, academic excellence, and legislated learning, an example of the latter being the federal publication entitled *What Works: Research about Teaching and Learning* (U.S. Department of Education, 1987). Barth (1990) regarded the top-down model as being too unwieldy and too complex for any one individual to address.

The second wave of educational reform marked a shift from top-down policy implementation to bottom-up initiatives that implied causal relationships between school practices and student learning (Edmonds, 1983; Lezotte, 1981). It was characterized by a grassroots approach with strong emphasis on processes. Outcomes, while important, were not central to this wave. This period of educational reform embraced the sharing of responsibilities and leadership in schools in order to infuse and develop a variety of leadership roles (Barth, 1990).

Effective Schools Educational Reforms

The term “outcome-based education” was introduced during the effective schools movement and implied a causal relationship between school practices and student learning (Edmonds, 1983; Lezotte, 1981). During this era, researchers began to question the criteria used to determine school effectiveness. The effective schools movement contributed to furthering standards-based reform efforts, shifting the focus to leadership traits and characteristics. The standards formed the basis of the criteria used to address leadership, teacher, and school traits and characteristics but were interestingly silent on student learning outcomes leaving the following question unanswered: How are efforts toward improving instruction increasing student outcomes?

Era of Standards-Based Accountability

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), and *Race to the Top* (RTT) ushered in the era of standards-based accountability. Expectations for student achievement and teacher performance reached new heights, and scientific research and public policy became potent influences on the practices of educational leaders. Although the link between
leading and learning remains uncertain, legislators assumed leaders know how to implement legislation with only informal guidance from federal agencies as they work to improve learning outcomes of the students served.

NCLB (2001) ushered in the era of accountability for student and teacher performance like no other educational reform movement. NCLB was built on four pillars: accountability, flexibility, options, and research. Major highlights of this law included an expanded role of the federal government in education reform. The measurement of adequate yearly progress (AYP) was the centerpiece of the statute. In addition, provisions were made for students with disabilities and limited English proficiency to be included in AYP reports, states were given resource flexibility to address unique schools and districts, employment of highly qualified teacher and paraprofessional requirements were introduced, and a laser focus was placed on closing the achievement gap.

The IDEA 2004, built on NCLB (2001), emphasizes increased accountability for student performance at the classroom, school, and school district levels. IDEA is the latest of five reauthorizations of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EAHCA). IDEA mandates the development and provision of individualized educational programs for students with disabilities within the context of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and least restrictive environment (LRE). The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (PCESE, 2002) released just prior to IDEA 2004 cited a lack of highly qualified teachers and heralded the NCLB legislation as the “driving force behind IDEA reauthorization” (p. 7). However, a critical question remains: Has there been better alignment between the systems of special and general education that has provided students with a greater opportunity to learn? Asked differently, have blended systems resulted in diminished opportunities for students with disabilities to receive the individually appropriate instruction they need to grow into productive adulthood (Boscardin, 2005)?

The changes in IDEA 2004 were significant in that they included increased qualifications for instructional personnel and the use of scientifically based approaches to instruction itself. All special educators must be licensed in special education and meet the highly qualified teacher (HQT) requirements of NCLB. IDEA 2004 moved the learner verification bar by making it no longer sufficient for students to demonstrate the ability to learn using the instructional materials presented to them. Rather, instructional strategies and methods must be grounded in scientifically based research and insure high instructional expectations. The notion that simply maintaining current performance levels, or worse, warehousing students with disabilities, was rejected. Unsurprisingly, IDEA 2004 is process and procedure centric with a focus on individualized educational programming unlike NCLB (2001) where attention is directed to group performance.

Race to the Top (RTT), a $4.35 billion initiative funded by the ED Recovery Act as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 spurred states to pursue educational innovations and reforms by leveraging resources (ARRA, 2009). This shift represented a move away from standards-based reforms related to curriculum development to a focus specifically on performance-based results for both teachers and students directly linked to learning standards. The thought was by increasing accountability through RTT and IDEA 2004 the result would be high-quality instruction and improved academic achievement of students with disabilities as demonstrated by progress measured by annual assessments. While RTT and IDEA 2004 are devoid of explicit expectations for leaders of special education, administrators became responsible de facto for certifying that all students were taught by highly qualified teachers who used scientifically based instructional practices, that students had access to and achieved in the general education curriculum, and that adequate resources were provided to support teaching and learning (Boscardin, 2004; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003).

Results Driven Accountability Movement

Special education leaders were introduced to Results Driven Accountability (RDA) on June 24, 2014 by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), 18 months
prior to the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, thereafter known as the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA). The RDA framework raises expectations for state special education programs and prompts a change in the evaluation of the effectiveness of states’ special education programs. RDA shifts evaluation from an approach focused primarily on compliance to one focused more on improving the educational results for America’s 6.5 million children and youth with disabilities. Differentiated incentives, supports, and interventions based on unique strengths, progress, challenges, and needs are leveraged to encourage states and ultimately local leaders of special education to direct resources to have the greatest positive impact on outcomes. This shifts IDEA 2004 from the civil rights domain to the instructional domain.

State leaders of special education are expected to determine if the RDA system is responsive to the needs and expectations of consumers (i.e., children and youth with disabilities and their families) as they identify challenges and needs associated with this approach. A tacit consequence is the anticipation that educational leaders possess the necessary skills to construct the mechanisms necessary to implement RDA strategies within their organizations and strategically link fiscal levers and policy development to educational initiatives and engagement of community stakeholders.

Unlike NCLB, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) shifts major responsibilities for education to the states. Many of the principles introduced during NCLB that applied to students with disabilities remain unchanged in ESSA as states are asked to (a) adopt challenging academic content standards that place students with disabilities on a path to succeed in college or career, (b) implement a set of high-quality student academic assessments that enables the participation of all in such assessments, (c) use alternate assessments based on alternate achievement standards that do not exceed 1 percent of the total number of all students in the state who are assessed in such subject, (d) encourage a more holistic view of school performance based on multiple measures, and (e) disaggregate groups to demonstrate the closing of achievement gaps among at-risk groups.

According to Boscardin (2016), the broad application of academic accountability frameworks to students with disabilities raises expectations for leaders of special education to fit their practices to an aggregated model that values groups over individuals. However, when only 1 percent of the student population with disabilities is permitted to be excluded from accountability data, the research indicates the number of special education referrals increases considerably (Lehr & Thurlow, 2003), because educators are attempting to exclude as many low performing students with disabilities as possible from taking standardized tests based on the general education curriculum that these educators project will lower aggregate test scores and trigger accountability sanctions. The challenge facing educational administrators is to create strategies for organizations that result in high achievement while providing appropriate individualized education programs for the students with disabilities they serve.

As the ESSA provisions are incorporated in improvement plans designed in collaboration with teachers, principals, parents, and other stakeholders, the ability of special education leaders, as well as other district leaders, to navigate system-wide change across schools may not complement the district vision, goals, or norms. Leaders will be expected to negotiate these differences and expand the district’s efforts to address issues of instructional equity.

Leadership Expectations

Leadership expectations include the capability to sustain and expand investments in (a) the evaluation and reward of effective educators based on student learning in high-need schools, (b) innovation and evidence building, (c) replication of high-quality charter schools, and (d) wrap-around support systems for vulnerable communities. To address the premium placed on increasing access to high-quality preschool and other prevention strategies with the potential to reduce future demand for government funding, a results-driven fiscal model is proposed that increases investments of private capital in funding public services focused on improved outcomes and results for target populations.
Private investors receive dividends only if the innovative services result in improved outcomes and governmental savings (www.doleta.gov/workforce_innovation/pdf/whatispfs.pdf). Initiatives such as Pay for Success have been suggested for private investment (www.whitehouse.gov/omb/factsheet/payingsuccess). Each of these changes will affect how leaders of special education choose what and how to lead.

Legislative reforms initiated by ESSA (2015) and IDEA (2004) are intended to increase accountability by ensuring high-quality instruction, improving learning outcomes for students with disabilities, and using assessments to monitor progress. These emphases significantly affect the duties, roles, and functions of all school administrators, including directors of special education programs. These simultaneously occurring national policy initiatives require that special education administrators be well versed in the knowledge and skills that are brought to their practice from complementary disciplines. Becoming an effective special education leader for the twenty-first century requires that administrators work collaboratively with teachers, parents, other school administrators, and policy makers to bring resources, personnel, programs, and expertise together to solve problems of practice for all students.

Because these reform efforts have for the most part either been silent on or lacking in clarity about leadership expectations, a direct connection between student success and leadership has been an unstated expectation. Leaders are expected to interpret and put into place school reform efforts in a timely manner regardless of their own preparation to do so. When schools do not achieve yearly progress goals, the contribution of leadership to positive student performance is the first to be scrutinized.

The reality is that ESSA, the general education counterpart to IDEA, remains focused on subgroup performance and school and systems reform, while IDEA remains committed to individualized special education programs for students in need of specialized instruction. The challenge for leaders of special education will be to problem solve and advocate for vulnerable populations while complying with the basic tenets of ESSA. Leaders of special education who possess knowledge and skills in (a) organizational change, (b) instructional leadership, (c) evaluation, (d) community engagement, (e) communication, and (f) technology implementation as they implement RDA and ESSA will be better poised to affect changes within organizational structures. It is important that all leaders envision themselves as stewards for all students, bringing resources, personnel, programs, and expertise together to solve twenty-first-century leadership problems. Notably, because of the direct effect of ESSA on LEAs, school principals are already advocating that they be included in states’ ESSA planning (Superville, 2016), and leaders of special education would be well advised to participate in the planning phases, as well.

Administrators are responsible for assuring that all students are taught using evidence-based instructional practices, have access to and achieve in the general education curriculum, and are provided adequate resources to support teaching and learning (Boscardin, 2004; DiPaola & WaltherThomas, 2003). New ways to evaluate the connection between leadership behaviors and student achievement began in the mid-2000s (Boscardin, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Making the link between leadership behaviors and student achievement, as defined by Leithwood et al. and Louis et al., is difficult at best because administrator actions are not directly connected to the delivery of instruction and numerous uncontrollable variables compromise the direct effects of instruction on learning. Hitt and Tucker (2016), however, are undeterred in their efforts to find new ways to frame the connection between leadership behaviors and student achievement. As long as leadership duties and responsibilities are nested in measures of accountability, Pont, Nusche, and Moorman (2008) suggest that it is almost impossible for leaders to redirect attention away from transactional metrics, such as test scores to other equally important areas of leadership. How leaders identify and align priorities depends much on how they see themselves within their organizations and the values they embrace as they execute their duties.
Professional Identities and the Professionalization of Special Education Leadership and Administration

In the past, defining leadership has been problematic, and defining leadership for special education raises additional complex questions. Warren Bennis stated “leadership is like beauty—it is hard to define, but you know it when you see it” (as cited in Hoy & Miskel, 2001, p. 392). Leadership functions, behaviors, and values that align with educational policy and contribute to how leaders think about their professional identities may require what Murphy (2002) refers to as re-culturing through highlighting “the centrality of learning, teaching, and school improvement within the role of the school administrator” (p. 15). Although the centrality of learning, teaching, and school improvement is important at the building level, at the district level transforming and elevating all aspects of an organization becomes a central feature for leaders of special education.

Formation of Professional Identities

Darling-Hammond remarked, “high–performing principals are not just born, but can be made” (as cited in Darling-Hammond, LaPoint, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007, p. 1). The same can be said of leaders of special education. Until recently, higher education curricula shaped professional identities. Leadership preparation and field-based experiences across institutions were familiar and often even uniform. Schulman (2005) referred to such curricula as signature pedagogies. Signature pedagogies form the foundation for preparation of those aligned with particular professions, e.g., law, medicine, and engineering. According to Schulman, professional education is not education for understanding alone; rather, it is an entry point for aspiring leaders to develop accomplished and responsible practice in the service of others where competency is marked by the awarding of a license or certificate. The proliferation of alternate routes to licensure have challenged signature pedagogies.

Kern and Mayer (1970), Finkbinder (1981), and Whitworth and Hatley (1979) noted that one of the basic problems of the special education leadership position is the maze of various titles, labels, and position descriptions. Finkbinder further noted that titles are integral components to those assuming professional identities. Titles are symbolic, representing the ethos and culture that create the essence of the embodiment of a discipline or profession. Although most states use the title of director of special education or administrator of special education, variation exists among states.

Efforts were made early on to reconcile titular and professional ambiguities associated with the position of administrator of special education (Finkbinder, 1981; Kern & Mayer, 1970; Whitworth & Hatley, 1979) by offering a predictable course of study believed to contribute to strong professional identities, thereby making retention more likely. Leaders are the standard bearers, those who set expectations of what it means to be a professional. Without a model of professionalism, there is a risk of continued role ambiguity and erosion potentially challenging and diminishing professional identities. Professional academic preparation, field-based experiences (e.g., internships, practica), and inservice development contribute to the disciplinary underpinnings and the professionalization of leadership and administration for special education.

The Professionalization of Special Education Leaders

Emerging signature pedagogies for administrators of special education include behaviors, functions, and values characteristic of leadership opportunities and challenges. The development of special education leaders is a dynamic process, characterized by ongoing revision and re-conceptualization of models of professionalism. New ideas and leadership paradigms for developing more far-reaching and comprehensive ways of preparing leaders for special education continue to emerge. The sections that
follow examine the emergence of special education leadership pedagogies and competency domains that have evolved as a result of research and policy advancements.

Initial interest in the professional skills special education administrators might need to carry out the responsibilities of their positions began to emerge as early as the 1960s. At the 1962 annual meeting of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), a committee was appointed to investigate (a) the training and experience expected of state directors and supervisors, and (b) the extent to which these expectations were being met in college and university programs accepting students under Public Law 85–926 in 1958 and Public Law 86–158 in 1959, which provided fellowships for advanced preparation of local directors and supervisors of special education. P.L. 87–276 emphasized the need for adequate preparation for administrators and coordinators for programs of the deaf.

Milazzo and Blessing (1964) and Brabandt (1969) conducted investigations of the content of training of administrators of special education. Admission criteria, courses of study, internship/field experiences, and degree offerings were the primary interest of these studies. Of 174 colleges and universities returning questionnaires, 40 indicated that they offered a specific program for the training of directors and supervisors of special education (Milazzo & Blessing, 1964). Many of the respondents indicated previous teaching experience was of little importance while coursework and internships were viewed as integral to training (Milazzo & Blessing, 1964). Brabandt (1969) found none of the 98 veteran administrators of special education in his study met the standards established by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) or the requirements of doctoral programs offered by institutions of higher education. Most respondents had training as general educators or school psychologists but were not specifically trained as administrators of special education.

Of the 12 states represented by the participants in Brabandt’s (1969) study, only 2 had certification requirements for administrators of special education, 4 had certification requirements for supervisors of special education, and 1 required the CEC standards for administrators of special education be met. All 12 states required a general administrative credential. Interestingly, 41 years later Boscardin, Weir, and Kusek (2010) found growth but not as much as one might expect. Of the 50 states, 27 states have separate special education administrative credentialing, 5 states offer endorsements, 12 require certificates, 7 require licenses, and 3 states require a hybrid license that combines general education administrator licenses with administrator of special education endorsements.

Some studies introduced the idea that prior teaching (Brabant, 1969; Milazzo & Blessing, 1964; Prillaman & Richardson, 1985; Stile, Abernathy, & Pettibone, 1985; Stile & Pettibone, 1980; Valesky & Hirth, 1992), courses of study (Brabant, 1969; Milazzo & Blessing, 1964), and internships/practica (Brabant, 1969; Finkbinder, 1981; Marro & Kohl, 1972; Milazzo & Blessing, 1964; Prillaman & Richardson, 1985; Stile et al., 1985; Stile & Pettibone, 1980; Valesky & Hirth, 1992) might be important to developing effective administrators of special education. Additionally, admissions requirements included a master’s degree in special education and certification as a teacher in some area of special education.

As investigations into the academic content of special education administration advanced, closer attention was given to core administrative courses and field experiences (Finkbinder, 1981; Kern & Mayer, 1970). Milazzo and Blessing (1964, p. 133), using the input of university faculty, identified the following content:

(a) knowledge of federal, state, and local functions and responsibilities in special education;
(b) supervisory and/or administrative experience; (c) an understanding of preservice and inservice educational activity; (d) community public relations experiences related to special education; and (e) involvement in direct services to one or more types of exceptional children.
Additionally, Milazzo and Blessing (1964) recommended school law, school finance, and electives.

Educational foundations and educational administration, electives in psychology, guidance, research methods, and practicum experiences were identified as early core courses (Kern & Mayer, 1970). Brabant (1969) and Prillaman and Richardson (1985) suggested the need for: (a) a post-master’s degree in administration, which would include appropriate coursework in educational administration; (b) two or more years of teaching in special education; (c) an internship in special education administration; (d) cognate or support coursework in such related areas as personnel management, sociology, psychology, and organizational theory; and (e) research experience.

Recommendations made by researchers for training administrators of special education aligned with graduate curricula of the time: (a) a common core that covers the broad aspects of exceptionality, such as child growth, development, and psychology of the exceptional child (Kern & Mayer, 1970; Marro & Kohl, 1972; Milazzo & Blessing, 1964; Prillaman & Richardson, 1985), effective special education placement (Marro & Kohl, 1972); (b) curriculum and methods in an area of exceptionality (Milazzo & Blessing, 1964); (c) remediation of learning difficulties (Milazzo & Blessing, 1964); (d) internships in settings with normal children and in an area of exceptionality (Milazzo & Blessing, 1964); (e) advanced statistics and research design (Kern & Mayer, 1970; Milazzo & Blessing, 1964); (f) advanced seminars in special education (Milazzo & Blessing, 1964); (g) research and publications (Kern & Mayer, 1970; Milazzo & Blessing, 1964); and (h) electives (Milazzo & Blessing, 1964).

More advanced training recommendations included knowledge of: (a) general education administration (Kern & Mayer, 1970; Marro & Kohl, 1972; Milazzo & Blessing, 1964); (b) general education and supervision Marro & Kohl, 1972; Milazzo & Blessing, 1964); (c) school law (Milazzo & Blessing, 1964); (d) school finance (Milazzo & Blessing, 1964); (e) administration and supervision in special education (Milazzo & Blessing, 1964); (f) personnel management (Prillaman & Richardson, 1985); (g) organizational theory (Prillaman & Richardson, 1985); and (h) field work in special education (Milazzo & Blessing, 1964), in addition to a focused internship in administration and/or supervision of special education (Kern & Mayer, 1970; Milazzo & Blessing, 1964; Prillaman & Richardson, 1985).

Contemporary courses of study highlight special education policy and law, disability and social policy, special education organization and management, and program planning, implementation, and evaluation (Boscardin & Messing, 2016). Because of emphasis on accountability and stakeholder involvement, making sense of large data sets has been added to curricula (Boscardin & Messing, 2016). Curricular mainstays remain: school law, school finance with a focus on resources and equity, personnel management, politics in education, foundations of educational leadership that covers the multiple approaches to leadership, and practica/internships in special education leadership at the local, state, and federal levels.

Researchers early on identified the need for extending training through professional development and continuing education programs for inservice administrators of special education (Forgione & Collins, 1975; Kern & Mayer, 1970; Prillaman & Richardson, 1985; Stile et al., 1985; Stile & Pettibone, 1980; Valesky & Hirth, 1992). Affiliation with local, state, and national professional organizations related to special education was also an important aspect to being an administrator of special education (Milazzo & Blessing, 1964). Continuing education, a recent addition to credentialing requirements for administrators of special education since the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001), was used to build and maintain professional leadership knowledge and skill capacity.

**Professional Leadership Standards**

To bridge the policy-to-practice divide, professional standards offer a uniform set of knowledge and skills that provide leaders with the behaviors, functions, and skills necessary to fulfill leadership responsibilities. It is expected that these behaviors, functions, and values located in national standards emanating from professional educator organizations with input from federal education agencies,
university researchers, and allied stakeholders will be embedded in all aspects of professional preparation, state licensure standards, and professional development.

Professional standards offer benchmarks from which to ascertain whether candidates possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions to fulfill the demands of the position. This is particularly important as candidates have more and more options available to them for obtaining licensure/certification. In the past, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC), and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) generated professional preparation standards. At this writing, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) is the primary arbiter of standards in all educator preparation.

Economic Administration Leadership Standards

To thoroughly understand the universality of leadership standards, we reach beyond the United States and begin with an examination of general education leadership standards from around the globe. In this section, the following leadership standards are presented: the Australian Professional Standard for Principals and the Leadership Profiles (2011), the United Kingdom’s National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers (UK Department of Education, 2015), the U.S. Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015), and the National Education Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2011) created the Australian Professional Standard for Principals (known as the Standard) and the Leadership Profiles. This integrated model combines the complexity of the principal’s role and shared visions with three leadership requirements, vision and values, knowledge and understanding, and personal qualities, social and interpersonal skills within five areas of professional practice, leading teaching and learning, developing self and others, leading improvement, innovation and change, leading the management of the school, and engaging and working with the community. The driving force behind the Standard is the belief that, “The most effective leaders see learning as central to their professional lives” (p. 3). The overarching goal of the Standard is to produce high-quality learning, teaching, and schooling that results in successful learners, confident individuals, and active informed citizens.

The validated companion, the Australian Leadership Profiles, details each of the leadership requirements and professional practices and empowers leaders to develop and support teaching so as to maximize student learning. The Profiles consist of four standard foci: operational, relational, strategic, and systemic forms of leadership that follow a proficiency continuum, much like that of the developmental continuum supported by the research on perceived approaches to leadership (Garand, Boscardin, & Wells, in preparation; Mosley, Boscardin, & Wells, 2014; Provost, Boscardin, & Wells, 2010; Schulze & Boscardin, 2018; Tudryn, Boscardin, & Wells, 2016).

The UK Department of Education’s National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers (2015) developed the following four Excellence as Standard domains for UK headteachers: (a) qualities and knowledge, (b) pupils and staff, (c) systems and process, and (d) the self-improving school system. Each domain consists of six key characteristics that are applied to headteachers (e.g., administrative leaders, usually principals). How the characteristics within each domain are applied, in part, depends on the context of particular schools.

The Australian and UK standards have much in common with the U.S. Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015) and the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards that embody a research-to-practice understanding of the relationship of educational leadership to student learning.
CCSSO) unanimously voted to adopt on November 2, 2015 the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL, 2015). In 2016, the NPBEA officially acquired the PSEL, solidifying its role in the education community as the leading voice for and steward of effective principal practice.

Much can be learned from the PSEL even though they are intended for building-level leaders versus district-level leaders. The PSEL articulate the knowledge and skills expected of school building leaders and simultaneously emphasize improved learning, achievement, development, and well-being of each student—an important change in language to special educators, whose focus is on the individual student. Growing out of a theory of school improvement, values of leadership are embedded within three related clusters thought to propel each student to academic and personal success: (a) curriculum, instruction and assessment, and community of care and support for students; (b) professional capacity of school personnel, professional community for teachers and staff, meaningful engagement of families and community, and operations and management; and (c) mission, vision and core values, ethics and professional norms, and equity and cultural responsiveness. Leadership, behavioral or attitudinal dispositions or convictions, complete the knowledge and skill paradigm for building-level leaders. The PSEL (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015) dispositions, demonstrated through both verbal and non-verbal behaviors, include being growth-oriented, collaborative, innovative, analytical, ethical, perseverant, reflective, and equity-minded. While it is essential that educational organizations be led by those who possess beliefs and attitudes supportive of those they lead, the goals for novice leaders include acquiring appropriate dispositions and achieving basic mastery of leadership competencies. The Council of Chief State School Officers and the CEEDAR Center issued PSEL 2015 and Promoting Principal Leadership for the Success of Students with Disabilities (2017) that offers additional guidance to building-level principals regarding the educational success of students with disabilities.

Following the adoption of the PSEL, a committee was convened in December 2015 to develop the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards that align to the PSEL standards at two levels—the district level and the building level. Replacing the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards, the NELP standards are intended to guide preparation program design, accreditation review, and state program approval. The NELP standards provide greater specificity around performance expectations for novice building-level and district-level leaders. The NELP standards define high-quality educational leadership preparation and specify expected preservice and novice leader knowledge and skill acquisition. Like the ELCC standards that preceded them, two sets of NELP standards were developed specifically for the principalship (building leadership) and the superintendency (district leadership) to be used to review educational leadership programs through the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) advanced program review process.

The NELP standards for building-level leadership includes eight standards: mission, vision, and core values, ethics and professional norms, equity and cultural leadership, instructional leadership, community and external leadership, operations and management, human resource leadership, and internship and clinical practice. For the draft district-level standards, standards 1–5 and 8 remain unchanged but standards 6 and 7 reflect the broader mission of the role of the superintendency. The two new district-level standards include management of people, data, and processes and policy, governance, and advocacy. The distinctive feature of these two sets of standards is that the internship and clinical experiences are included as a standard rather than a stand-alone expectation.

Unfortunately, disability is only mentioned once in the PSEL under standard 3e and once in each of the NELP sets under element 3.3. While addressing issues of bias, marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations is critical, equally important to success are organizational and system supports that elevate outcomes for students with disabilities and their families. Again, PSEL 2015 and Promoting Principal Leadership for the Success of Students with Disabilities (CCSSO, 2017) provides guidance for principals as they act as special education leaders at the school level.
**The Evolution of Special Education Administration Competencies**

Special education leadership knowledge-based competencies began to emerge in concert with discrete course work and field-based requirements in the mid-1960s. Like the educational reform policy expectations discussed earlier in this chapter, there appears to be a tacit assumption that the completion of a certain set of pre-specified requirements indicates that the candidate has acquired the capacity to practice in the field. None of the studies equated the acquisition of competencies with learning outcomes and the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for qualified leaders of special education. The development of evidenced-based leadership practices provides a foundation that can be used to support improved instructional practices by teachers and educational achievement of students (Boscardin, 2004, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004). Underscored is the importance of pairing experiences with research-based knowledge that fortifies skill acquisition with advances in the field. The integration of multiple experiences buttressed by course work eases the transition of leaders of special education from the preservice phase to the induction phase.

The Council for Administrators of Special Education (CASE), the voice for leaders and administrators of special education, joining with CEC and CAEP offer leadership standards for special education administration that guide creation of visions, accountability mechanisms, flexibility, and options supported by disciplinary research (CEC, 2015). According to the CEC Redbook, the seven major domains, common across all of the specialty sets for professional personnel, include: (a) assessment; (b) curricular content knowledge; (c) program, services, and outcomes; (d) research and inquiry; (e) leadership and policy; (f) professional and ethical practice; and (g) collaboration. The specialty set for administrators of special education consists of 7 domains in addition to 41 knowledge and skill statements specific to special education leadership. Each statement is based on empirical research, disciplined inquiry, informed theory, and the wisdom of practice (Boscardin, McCarthy, & Delgado, 2009; CEC, 2015). The theory/conceptual literature emphasize theories or philosophical reasoning derived from position papers, policy analyses, and descriptive reviews. The research literature is predicated on methodologies that address questions of cause and effect and that researchers have independently replicated and found to be effective. The practice literature is derived from professional wisdom, promising practices, and model and lighthouse programs. The number of references associated with each of the domains as of 2012 appears in Table 3.1. Like the PSEL, the goal for novice leaders is to continue to build to mastery of the standards throughout their careers.

Although the theory/conceptual literature had the highest number of overall citations, the research literature did not differ significantly in the number of references. The practice literature consisted of

| Table 3.1 Frequency of References by Standard for Administrators of Special Education |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Standard                          | Literature/Theory-Based Evidence | Research-Based Evidence | Practice-Based Evidence | Totals |
| Assessment/Evaluation             | 26                              | 36                 | 12                 | 74                |
| Curricular Content Knowledge      | 14                              | 33                 | 8                  | 55                |
| Programs, Services, and Outcomes  | 45                              | 69                 | 39                 | 153               |
| Research and Inquiry              | 11                              | 13                 | 7                  | 31                |
| Leadership and Policy             | 203                             | 115                | 84                 | 402               |
| Professional and Ethical Practice | 71                              | 52                 | 44                 | 167               |
| Collaboration                     | 29                              | 24                 | 17                 | 70                |
| Totals                            | 399                             | 342                | 211                | 952               |
The fewest citations. Leadership and policy had significantly more citations than the remaining six standards. Programs, services, and outcomes and professional and ethical practice had the next highest number of citations. Interestingly but unsurprisingly, research and inquiry had the fewest citations. Research and practice-based citations dominated the program, services, and outcomes and professional and ethical practice aside from leadership and policy. Overall the practice references were associated with the least number of citations. In many ways, this suggests a strong theory and research orientation in the field.

A Comparative Review of Educational Leadership Standards

A comparative analysis of domains as defined by behaviors, functions, and dispositions is undertaken in this section. Some of these domains among the various accrediting organizations are well aligned while others are organized differently. The PSEL, NELP, and CASE leadership standards set a framework for excellence that accredited preparation programs use to ensure that candidates are prepared to meet the complex demands of educational leadership and administration. According to the PSEL introduction, student learning, upon which all the standards are based, is central to the new standards in that,

They stress the importance of both academic rigor as well as the support and care required for students to excel … The Standards reflect a positive approach to leaders that is optimistic, and emphasizes development and strengths, and focuses on human potential.

(CCSSOC, 2017, p. 3)

Boscardin (2016) illustrated how the domains of the various sets of leadership standards align with the CEC administrator of special education standards (see Table 3.2). The elements within the Australian Leading Teaching and Learning domain reveal an amalgamation of the CEC Assessment/Evaluation and Curricular Content Knowledge domains. While the elements within the UK Self-Improving School Systems domain traverse the CEC Research and Inquiry, Leadership and Policy, and Collaboration domains, only the CEC (2015) standards dedicate a specific domain to Research and Inquiry.

Moving Beyond the Standards: Contemporary Considerations for Special Education Leadership and Administration

Through an analysis of principal leadership standards performed by Weinstein, Muñoz, and Marfán for the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (Centre of Study for Policies and Practices in Education, 2013), two primary types of leadership standards—functional and behavioral—emerged across the sets of leadership standards, confirming earlier observations. Functional standard domains represent the ability or skills necessary to establish a mission, generate organizational conditions, create harmony within the school, develop self and others, and manage pedagogy, while behavioral standard domains represent leadership processes, approaches, and dispositions such as flexible management for change, communication, values, and linking theory to practice.

The earlier literature (Finkbinder, 1981; Kern & Mayer, 1970; Marro & Kohl, 1972; Milazzo & Blessing, 1964; Prillaman & Richardson, 1985; Stile et al., 1985; Stile & Pettibone, 1980; Valesky and Hirth, 1992; Whitworth & Hatley, 1979) and more recent reviews and investigations (Boscardin, 2016; Boscardin et al., 2009; Crockett, Becker, & Quinn, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2004; O’Brien, 2006; Waters et al., 2003) in concert with the various sets of standards reveal a broader context for
| Table 3.2 Side-By-Side Comparison of International and National Educational Leadership Standards |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Assessment/Evaluation | Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Community of Care and Support for Students | Instructional Leadership | Instructional Leadership | Leading Teaching and Learning |
| Curricular Knowledge Content | Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Community of Care and Support for Students | Instructional Leadership | Instructional Leadership | Leading Teaching and Learning Qualities and Knowledge |
| Leadership and Policy | Ethics and Professional Norms Equity and Cultural Responsiveness | Ethics and Professional Norms Leadership | Ethics and Professional Norms Leadership Management of People, Data, and Processes | Developing Self and Others Pupils and Staff |
| Professional and Ethical Practice | Community of Care and Support for Students Professional Community for Teachers and Staff Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community | Community and External Leadership | Community and External Leadership | Personal Qualities Social, and Interpersonal Skills Engaging and Working with the Community |
| Collaboration | | | | The Self-Improving School System |
envisioning special education leadership. The standards and literature base combine to challenge notions about how to best situate the leadership dimensions of special education at the domain level.

Using the literature sources and standards cited in this chapter and the earlier work of Boscardin (2011), it is possible to identify and further expand domain areas for the leadership and administration of special education. The result is nine domain areas that include: (a) leadership, policy, and school reform; (b) economic and resource management; (c) context for leadership; (d) instructional leadership; (e) evaluation of educational programs and program outcomes; (f) research and inquiry; (g) professional development and human resources; (h) collaborative leadership; and (i) technology (see Table 3.3).

The nine domains noted in Table 3.3 each capture different, yet important interdependent aspects of leadership. The leadership and policy foci capture the substantive and procedural aspects of leading. The foci of instructional leadership are on the important pedagogical components of leadership that advance student learning and instruction. The foci of collaborative leadership are on the interpersonal, relational, and community-building complexities of leadership. Economic resource management and leadership represent an area of leading where the foci are on matters of equity, adequacy, efficiency, and access in relationship to providing instruction and promoting achievement, all of which are

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership, Policy, and School Reform</td>
<td>Inspiring others, applying the laws and policies, managing organizational systems and processes, and engaging in meaningful strategic planning</td>
<td>Boscardin et al. (2009), Crockett et al. (2009), O’Brien (2006), Waters et al. (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic and Resource Management</td>
<td>Creating fiscal equity, linking budgets to educational goals, managing systems and processes</td>
<td>Boscardin et al. (2009), Crockett et al. (2009), O’Brien (2006), Waters et al. (2003)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Development and Human Resources</td>
<td>Professional values and ethics, commitment to ongoing personal and professional leadership development, intellectual stimulation, rewards, affirmation</td>
<td>Boscardin et al. (2009), Crockett et al. (2009), Leithwood et al. (2004), O’Brien (2006), Waters et al. (2003)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative Leadership</td>
<td>Interpersonal, relationships, community building, communication</td>
<td>Boscardin et al. (2009), Crockett et al. (2009), Leithwood et al. (2004), O’Brien (2006), Waters et al. (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Data warehousing, data sharing</td>
<td>Crockett et al. (2009)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
assessed through the evaluation of educational programs measured through program outcomes. With professional development serving as a catalyst for growing the organization, affirming values and ethical behaviors that contribute to personal and professional development and intellectual stimulation are critical and rely on research and inquiry capabilities. The domain not represented in the standards and literature, except for Crockett et al. (2009), is technology and information systems.

This leadership framework for leading and administering special education, while still emerging, demonstrates that there is an evolving body of knowledge that supports the disciplinary work of administrators of special education. Next steps would entail identifying how the discrete knowledge and skills associated with these special education leadership domains contribute to improved instruction and higher levels of achievement for students with disabilities (Boscardin, 2004; Leithwood et al., 2004).

More contemporary studies of special education leadership have shifted attention to behaviors and functions of special education leadership using relational measures. Tudryn et al. (2016) investigated the prioritization of 49 distributed leadership statements by 15 administrators of special education and 15 special education teacher leaders to better understand the complex and multi-faceted demands of special education leadership. Findings indicated that similar sorts of these leadership statements were not based on participant role assignments but experience. The planned distributors displayed the need for careful planning to accomplish the distributed leadership tasks and were generally younger, more educated with less experience at their current position, and working in larger school districts with higher rates of poverty. Embedded distributors infused leadership into the culture of the organization and instinctively performed and were predominantly more experienced, less educated, older, females working in smaller and more affluent school districts.

Schulze and Boscardin (2018) investigated the prioritization of 47 statements reflective of transformational, instructional, transactional/laissez-faire, and distributed leadership by 15 public school principals with and 15 public school principals without special education backgrounds. Findings indicated prior special education experience was not a predictor of subsequent leadership perceptions; rather experience and expertise were significant influences. Transactional-instruction leaders were focused on the day-to-day tasks related to the centrality of learning, teaching, and school improvement (Murphy, 2002), and were composed of younger, less educated, less experienced principals in lower-performing schools who valued instructional and transactional leadership. Transformational-collaborative leaders stressed influence through (a) inspiration and motivation (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood, 2001; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000); (b) identifying common goals (Friend & Cook, 2010; Welch & Sheridan, 1995); (c) joint work or interdependence (Gray, 1995; Little, 1990; Welch & Sheridan, 1995); (d) parity (Cole & Knowles, 1993; Friend & Cook, 2010; Welch & Sheridan, 1995); and (e) voluntary participation and were older, more educated, more experienced, and more ethically diverse principals who worked in higher-performing schools who valued transformational-collaborative leadership.

Garand et al. (in preparation) investigated leadership perceptions of 30 leaders of special education: 10 administrators of special education, 10 principals, and 10 assistant principals. Participant completed forced rankings of 50 instructional, distributed, and collaborative leadership statements. Results highlighted the importance of multi-actor leadership attributes in order to meet contemporary education demands. Further, this study proposed a revision of leadership domains currently considered to be most important for leaders of special education that include: development of inclusive learning environments, collaboration and distribution of leadership, development of teachers capable of providing high-quality instruction to all students, program development and organization, evaluation of educational programs and program outcomes, and law and policy.

The findings from Tudryn et al. (2016), Schulze and Boscardin (2018), and Garand et al. (in preparation) support research that identifies novice administrators as having a greater tendency
to be bureaucratic and preferring top-down leadership approach (Schmidt, Kosmoski, & Pollack, 1998a, 1998b) and that veteran executives are more open to learning and demonstrate more inclination to work with others than younger executives (Klein, Astrachan, & Kossek, 1996). Career development for leadership shows a path for growth in expertise and changes in leadership over the course of their careers (Garand et al., in preparation; Schulz & Boscardin, 2018; Tudryn et al., 2016). Many leaders start their careers focused on specific instructional leadership in lower-performing schools and then transition to more transformational, collaborative higher-performing schools. Professional identities of novice leaders continue to develop after initial induction through the dissemination of formal and informal support, guidance, knowledge, strategies, and direction throughout careers (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2012). Rather than relying on perceptions, longitudinal research would help us understand how leadership of special education evolves, how expertise is executed over time, and how stakeholders are engaged to positively affect systems level change.

As teaching, learning, and assessment systems that support the education of all students become more complex, all school leaders will be integral to designing, evaluating, and analyzing programs intended to support students with disabilities and their families. Leaders will be asked to create new, more effective solutions and to work in innovative, collaborative ways to assure student achievement and success. By expanding the leadership framework that merges the various sub-disciplines of educational leadership, it is possible to create a shared leadership language that clearly articulates a vision and mission for educating students with disabilities.

Moving Toward Ethical and Socially Just Leadership Within Organizations

We argue that special education leadership is by its nature social justice leadership, and the standards that govern preparation, practice, and evaluation should include social justice as a vital agenda for special education leaders. In recent years in the field of education administration, there has been considerable interest in social justice as an organizing principle in educational leadership (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Capper, Theoharris, & Sebastian, 2006; Furman, 2012; Murphy, 2002; Theoharris, 2007). According to Theoharris (2007, p. 223),

Social justice leadership occurs when leaders make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision. This definition centers on addressing and eliminating marginalization in schools. Thus, inclusive schooling practices for students with disabilities, English language learners (ELLs), and other students traditionally segregated in schools are also necessitated by this definition.

Theoharris’ (2007) perspective then requires that educational leadership personnel and the programs that prepare them attend to a vision of including historically marginalized students in efforts to improve schools as well as foster accountability and responsiveness to the needs of all students, including those with disabilities, in education reform. Enacting social justice in schools requires attention to marginalization, equity, diversity, inclusiveness, and differentiation, since those students who have most often been left behind are most seriously affected by school personnel and policies that extend the current status of schools. To combat segregation, inadequate and unequal funding, distribution of quality teachers, separation of students, and one-size-fits-all instruction and assessment, school leaders must become sensitized, recognize unfairness, and act in ways that dissemble institutional arrangements and attitudes that impede educational opportunity and success for all students.
Capper et al. (2006) offer a framework for preparing leaders for social justice in which they position “what school leaders must believe, know, and do to lead socially just schools” (p. 212)—knowledge, skills, and dispositions (critical consciousness)—on a horizontal axis. On a vertical axis, they position the social justice-oriented curriculum, pedagogy, and assessments leadership preparation students engage during their studies. Thereafter, they discuss each of the nine points of intersection and how they can lead students to understand and enact social justice leadership. Capper et al. (2006) note that such a program must provide for “emotional safety for risk taking” (p. 220).

Theoharris (2007) put forth a theory of social justice that focuses on resistance as a factor in social justice advocacy. He found that the principals in his study exercised leadership that resulted in improved student achievement, improved teaching and learning environment, focused staff capacity, and a stronger school culture—all factors in “good leadership” (p. 251). Theoharris argues that “good leadership” cannot exist unless it includes advocacy for social justice and equity. He also found that the principles enacted and faced resistance as well as acting proactively when threats to their social justice agenda arose. In summary, Theoharris (2007) posits that leaders committed to social justice advocacy and preparing students to act when resistance arises are important components in leadership preparation.

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) developed a framework for ethical leadership and decision-making grounded in three traditional ethical paradigms: the ethic of justice, the ethic of care, and the ethic of critique. Deliberating about justice involves determining whether persons have received their due, given the rights and laws in place. Justice is concerned with balancing individual rights and community stability. The ethic of care focuses on whether outcomes of empowerment, collaboration, and concern about long-term consequences in communities and relations where care, concern, and connection are valued. The ethic of critique raises questions of power as it intersects with race, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and disability, and other marginalized groups. Synthesizing these three perspectives yields an ethic of the profession, which ultimately results in a decision-making framework that focuses on the best interests of students in educational decision-making. Hence, the ethic of the profession is concerned with equitable opportunity to access resources, outcomes, and values necessary for success and sense of belonging.

Using ideas expressed by Capper et al. (2006), Theoharris (2007), and Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011), we can construct a framework for social justice leadership to inform the preparation and practice of special education leadership personnel. Capper et al. (2006) offer three intersection points to develop sets of knowledge, skills, and dispositions (critical consciousness) that comprise the curriculum of a leadership program that prepares administrators to enact special education as social justice advocacy. The six intersections at pedagogy and assessment would be the province of programs. Shapiro and Stefkovich’s (2011) ethical deliberation framework provides four lenses that help pre-service leaders examine dilemmas of practice when learning the language of critical discourse-practice and developing the critical consciousness necessary to be successful social justice leaders. Capper et al. (2006) developed an approach to teaching and learning that promotes “emotional safety for risk taking” (p. 220). Preservice leaders given an opportunity to craft skills that include a deep commitment to social justice and equity lead to what Theoharris (2007) refers to as “good leadership.” Unfortunately, “good leadership” does not mean automatic acceptance. Resistance is figured into the equation as a factor socially just leaders will encounter.

Summary

The standards-based accountability reform movement has captured our imaginations about the possibilities for linking educational leadership standards to leading, teaching, and learning for the purpose of creating socially just environments that serve all students well. Evidence regarding
what leaders of special education do to make a difference in the lives of students with disabilities and their families is even more important as pressures on resources mount, forcing re-evaluation of priorities. Standards, not singular in their purpose and function, serve as the catalyst for identifying priorities in the workplace and identifying the knowledge and skills needed by administrators of special education programs to lead socially just organizations throughout their careers.

While the development of national standards communicates the importance of leadership in special education, one would also hope that the professional standards communicate that special education leadership makes a difference which raises the question, “a difference of what?” If special education leaders are intent on remedying the inequities in resources, outcomes, and opportunities for students with disabilities that remain in place despite nearly 40 years of federal legislation, then attention to the principles and dispositions of social justice can contribute to those efforts. One constant remains as the roles of leaders and the organizations in which they lead evolve; professional standards will continue to contribute to the development of the field of special education administration and leadership.

References


