Special Education Services in Private Faith-Based and Nonsectarian Elementary Schools

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Cover Page Footnote

Parents often chose to send their children to a private school to receive a high-quality education. However, what if your child has a disability? Private schools do not need to provide specialized supports and services equal to their public school counterparts as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). As a result, parents of a child with an identified disability are faced with a dilemma: enroll the child in the local public school to receive mandated support and services, or enroll the child in a private school with variable support? In the proceeding sections, concerns related to support and services offered in a faith-based or non-sectarian private school, including Child Find, private school enrollment, the denomination's philosophical lens towards educating individuals with disabilities, current practices, and barriers to teaching students with disabilities will be discussed.

Literature Review

According to the Digest of Educational Statistics (2018) the highest percentage of students enrolled in faith-based schools align with Roman Catholic, Protestant (non-specific denomination), or the Jewish faith tradition. Each faith-based school addresses the increased responsibility of enrolling students with disabilities through their own lens. There is a growing base of research literature regarding faith-based schools meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities (Owen, 2003; Scanlan, 2009; Defiore, 2006; & Crowley & Wall, 2007). Regardless of faith affiliation, supporting the needs of individuals with disabilities in private faith-based schools fulfills a social justice need to embody Jesus' calling to meet the needs of individuals marginalized by society.

Parents often place their child in a private school because of the school's academic reputation and/or religious affiliation. When their child has a disability that affects their learning, the idea of a private school education becomes complicated. The Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act (IDEA, 2004) states that the Local Education Agency (LEA) is required to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to all students who qualify for special education. Private, non-sectarian (no religious affiliation) and faith-based schools are not held to the same requirements as outlined in IDEA (2004). However, when a child is enrolled in a private school setting and found eligible for special education services at an initial evaluation, the parents have the right to refuse the district's offer of FAPE from the LEA and personally enroll their child in a private school setting. Students with identified disabilities enrolled in a private, faith-based, or non-sectarian school are subject to the individual private school's philosophy and limited financial resources towards educating students with disabilities.

The LEA is required to maintain contact with students who qualify for special education as a part of Child Find requirement. Child Find, which is a component of IDEA (2004), is the continuous process of identifying individuals who may qualify for specialized services, from birth to graduation. While public schools *can* provide special education support and services to individuals who qualify and who are enrolled in a private, non-sectarian or faith-based school (Council for American Private Education, 2004), these services are often limited in scope and intensity. When parents individually place their child with a disability in a private school setting, they are making this determination in light of the significant possibility of reduced supports and services for their child. This current investigation aims to review the current level of special education support and services for students enrolled in private faith-based and non-sectarian elementary schools with identified disabilities in a large metropolitan area. For the purposes of this article, the terms *non-public school* refers to tuition-based school, *faith-based private schools are non-public schools with* a religious affiliation, and *non-sectarian* schools are non-public schools with no religious affiliation.

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Private School Enrollment

Student enrollment in private faith-based and non-sectarian schools has witnessed a slight decline over the last couple decades. Enrollment decreased in private schools from 11% to 10% during the years 1999 to 2017 (U.S Department of Education, 2019). Ewert (2013) theorized this decline was due to the unaffordability of private schools, increase in homeschooling, increase in charter school availability, and population shift towards suburban living creating a geographical distance between inner-city private schools and the home. While the overall private school enrollment has been in steady decline (Ewert, 2013), the percentage of parents placing their child with disabilities in a private school setting has slightly increased from 1.0% in 2006 to 1.4% in 2015 for all enrolled students with identified disabilities in the United States. (U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

Faith-Based Schools and Students with Disabilities

According to Ewert (2013), faith-based schools make up approximately 68% of all private schools in the United States. Faith-based schools fulfill a Christian and Jewish moral imperative (Long & Schuttloffel, 2006; Christensen et al., 2009). The goal is to reach marginalized individuals of society, ensure that all individuals, regardless of abilities, have the right to become contributing members of society through a personally meaningful education (Long & Schuttloffel, 2006; Christensen et al., 2009).

The movement to include students with disabilities (mild to moderate) in religious and academic education came to light in the late 1970s with the publication of the "Pastoral Statement on Persons with Disabilities" (USCCB, 1978). Shortly after that, local parishes began developing religious education programs for individuals with disabilities (Schipani, 2007). The inclusion of individuals with special needs in the Catholic Church began as a two-pronged

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approach. First, students with special needs were integrated into the religious education with their non-disabled peers, with all students working towards achieving the sacrament of the Eucharist and other liturgical celebrations (USCCB, 1978; O'Brien, 2004). The second prong focused on including students with disabilities within the formal parochial school educational setting with a curriculum designed to meet the needs of the individual learner. Individuals with disabilities who participated in the religious educational system initiated a theme of ownership for their success, thanks to all stakeholders involved (Primus, 2000). Inclusive religious education settings that accommodated the individual learner's needs through creative instructional strategies provided support and benefits to both individuals with and without disabilities (Kurdziel, 2007).

Even though educating students with disabilities is a principal conviction of the Christian church (Long & Schuttloffel, 2006), an individual school's capacity to meet the variety of needs is largely inconsistent across faith-based schools. The majority (87%) of Catholic Dioceses surveyed in the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Department of Education (USCCB, 2002) study indicated a lack of capacity to meet the social and educational needs of seven percent of enrolled students with identified disabilities. The majority of those students enrolled qualify for special education through a variety of eligible disabilities, including speech and language impairment or a specific learning disability. Furthermore, a small percentage of students also qualify with mild intellectual disability, autism, emotional/behavioral disturbance, hearing and vision impairments, or traumatic brain injury.

The overall Child Find process varies between public and faith-based schools, and the inconsistency in identifying potential students with disabilities in faith-based schools could lead to misidentification or delay of potential funding of needed services (Eigenbrood, 2010).

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According to the USCCB (2002) study, students who attended a Catholic parochial school often received evaluative services from a private party rather than through their home school. Students who qualify for special education support and services through the local public school district identification process are offered FAPE at the student's home district. If parents refuse the home district's FAPE offer and decide to maintain enrollment in a faith-based school, they will often receive limited support. The district's support often consists of collaboration with the faith-based school classroom teacher and or direct services provided at the student's home school (speech). As a result of attending a private faith-based school, qualifying students with disabilities receive reduced services as compared to possible services in a public school district. Due to limited support from the local public school district, private, faith-based schools often developed their own intervention and support services to meet the needs of their students (USCCB, 2002).

As a result of faith-based schools not being held to the same requirements as public schools under IDEA (2004), typical support and services provided by the local public LEA to nonpublic schools are primarily consultative in nature. Typically, faith-based school educators observe their students with disabilities and ask for recommendations from related service professionals. These consultative services can range from one communication per month to one communication per year, depending on the needs of the student. Due to the limited amount of information consultants can provide, the degree of support for a student with disabilities seems to be limited. Any additional support becomes the financial responsibility of the family of the student.

Individuals with Disabilities in Private School Settings

Durow (2007) surveyed 19 Midwestern Catholic dioceses and their approach to including individuals with disabilities in their schools. Eight of sixteen schools that responded indicated a

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mission towards the inclusion of students with disabilities. Fourteen elementary schools provided some level of educational services to students with a variety of identified disabilities, including learning disabilities, ADHD, autism, visual, hearing, and speech impairments, intellectual disabilities, and traumatic brain injury. An initial step towards accepting individuals with disabilities into a school site is the physical learning space. Dudek (2000) found that schools seem to create a culture of inclusion by arranging the physical make up of the classroom furniture, thus producing a "culture of acceptance" for individuals with disabilities. Provisions to address the various learning needs incorporate the use of classroom teaching adjustments; the use of special materials; services from local public schools; hiring certified special education teachers; the use of instructional assistants; and the support of learning consultants. While the presence of needed supports and services were present in the majority of schools surveyed, various impediments existed in preventing implementation of an educational program for students with disabilities which included critical barrier disabilities, and improving the overall faculty confidence in meeting the needs of all students (Durow, 2007).

Scanlan (2009) proposed the development of a Learning Consultant Model (LCM) overseeing the educational support and services across regional Catholic schools. Utilizing this model could include the use of a liaison collaborating with local public schools to ensure support as delineated in IDEA (2004). Since private schools do not need to follow the same teacher preparation requirements as their public school counterparts, the use of a LCM liaison could ensure that the service delivery model within faith-based schools meets the needs of the enrolled students with disabilities.

Eigenbrood (2005) investigated the presence of special education support and services in rural faith-based private schools. He found that while some faith-based institutions provided

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"special education" type services, there was a marked distinction between the qualitative levels of these provided services and the variance of disabilities within the local public schools. While faith-based schools typically provided services for students in a "resource room" environment with identified and unidentified students with disabilities, public schools provided a continuum of special education services for only students identified through the traditional assessment process. The use of conventional assessments to identify individuals with disabilities rarely took place in faith-based schools. Additionally, most teachers in faith-based schools who provided specialized instruction did not possess the required state licensure required for teaching special education, nor had any specific training in special education intervention techniques. Eigenbrood (2005) recommended future research should focus on other areas within the United States to see if similar results could be found, thus inspiring this current study.

Barriers to Supports in Faith-Based Schools

Providing students with disabilities the needed support and services in private schools faces several impediments. These barriers to educational interventions include funding and school culture. Federal funding to support faith-based schools' efforts to meet the social and educational needs of children with a disability falls considerably short when compared to their public school counterparts (Eignbrood, 2005). Funding for special education in public schools is mandated through IDEA (2004), while the provisions for private, religious schools are minimal. Even though IDEA (2004) requires proportionate federal funding for children with disabilities in public and private schools, including religious schools, less than one percent of Catholic schools receive services under the IDEA federal mandate (USCCB, 2002). These services traditionally support students with speech and language disabilities or learning impairments. Special education services in Catholic schools range from direct to consultative, through resource

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room/pull out or within inclusion classroom accommodations and the support of additional instructional assistants (USCCB, 2002).

Teacher's Attitude Towards Inclusion

A teacher's attitude towards a student fully included in their classroom mediates the success of that placement (Larrivee & Cook, 1979). Research indicates general education teachers tend to express negative attitudes regarding inclusion (Campbell, et. al., 2003; Van Reusen, et. al., 2001) the common thread among these same educators was a lack of knowledge and skills on how to provide the appropriate education for students with disabilities in the general education setting. However, general education teachers who have received special education training and experience reported higher levels of positive attitudes towards inclusion (Van Reusen, et. al., 2001). Establishing a culture of inclusion at a faith-based school stems from both the philosophical lens the school has towards individuals with disabilities, the efforts of all stakeholders, and the leadership of the school site (Cookson, 2010; Moreau, 2006).

Parents enroll their children in private schools for a variety of reasons: continued religious education, concentration on specific academic or artistic domains, all to provide their son/daughter a better education than the local home school district. Parents of children with an identified disability have a secondary concern: does the school of interest offer enough support and services to meet the needs of their child? While private schools are not required to provide specialized services to students with disabilities, the movement to meet the needs of a varying level of students within some non-sectarian and faith-based schools has been on the rise in recent years.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to identify any differences between private, non-sectarian and faith-

based elementary schools in the types and levels of specialized services they provide to students who qualify for specialized supports and services. This work also aspired to expand on the work of Eigenbrood (2005). As stated earlier, Eigendbrood's (2005) seminal research investigated special education supports in faith-based private and public schools in a rural area. The current study did not use public schools as a comparison group, as all public schools need to provide some level of special education services based on student enrollment characteristics. This study focused on comparing the types of special education services offered by non-sectarian and faith-based private schools within six large counties located in southern California. A secondary purpose of the study focused on any differences among faith-based schools and their level of support for students with identified disabilities.

This descriptive study attempted to answer several questions:

1. What types of special education support and services are provided in private elementary schools in a large metropolitan area?

2. Is there a difference between faith-based schools and private, non-sectarian schools in types of special education services provided?

3. Is there a difference between different religious affiliations and the type and degree to which they provide special education services?

4. Are there qualitative differences between private, faith-based and private, non-sectarian schools that do offer and do not offer special education services?

Methods

Private schools (faith-based and non-sectarian) need to consider their own aggregate resources and their ability to meet the needs of a child with a disability. What types of students with disabilities can the school effectively educate with their own means? Teaching students

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with disabilities is an individualized process that initiates with assessing the student's academic and social levels and creating a plan tailored to meet such needs. Private schools are not required to offer specialized services to students with disabilities. The following sections describe the overall study design, how the participating schools were selected, and how the data was collected and analyzed. The current investigation examined the quantitative and qualitative differences captured between non-sectarian and faith-based elementary schools within six large counties located in southern California using an online instrument (Survey Monkey).

Instrument

The current survey instrument (see Appendix A) included a focus on specific instructional interventions, resources, and school structure that are traditionally used with individuals with mild/moderate disabilities (Specific Learning Disability (SLD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism, Mild Intellectual Disability (ID), and Other Health Impaired (OHI). Two independent reviewers provided feedback on the survey instrument. The final survey included edits to clarify item constructs. Survey focus areas investigated the school's religious affiliation, enrollment, the presence of individuals with disabilities and an Individual Education Program (IEP), the presence of structured teacher supports and services, including small group settings, and the presence of other academic intervention supports.

The final survey was test piloted through a traditional mail format to a selected number of faith-based elementary schools (n=50). The pilot schools were selected based on enrollment (minimum of 100 students) and grade levels taught (K-8). The administrator of each school was contacted by phone and notified of the incoming survey. The survey was sent by mail with a completed self-addressed, stamped, return envelope. A small percentage of surveys were returned (n=13). Each school was contacted to verify their receipt of the survey. Inquiries were

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made to their receptiveness to an online version of the study. A significant number of schools contacted indicated a desire to complete this survey through an online format. The low response rate prompted the utilization of an online survey format to reduce costs and increase the study participation rate.

Participants

An online database (www.privateschoolreview.com) that included private schools in the Southern California area was utilized to select the schools for the survey. Several levels of criteria were implemented to narrow the list of potential schools for the study. First, a list of all schools with an enrollment of at least 100 students offering classes from grades kindergarten through eighth-grade was compiled. Then, each school was investigated for a valid website with an identified site administrator as a contact person with a direct email address. If the school had a general email for all incoming inquiries, they were not selected to participate in the survey. Surveys sent through Survey Monkey are email address specific and cannot be forwarded to another individual. Each school was reviewed to determine: 1) if they had a religious affiliation under the following denominations: Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Islam, and 2) if a school site administrator could be identified with a corresponding email. The target words for the search of faith-based elementary schools included, but not limited to, St., Saint, Lutheran, Protestant, Christian, Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, Synagogue, Assemblies, and other religious-affiliated names.

The online database (www.privateschoolreview.com) of registered private schools located in the Southern California area identified the initial pool of potential schools for the study faith-based (N=2086) and non-sectarian affiliation private elementary schools (N=35). Implementing an enrollment threshold of 100 students, the field of potential schools diminished

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faith-based schools (*N*=534) but not non-sectarian affiliated schools (*N*=35) out of all possible

schools (*N*=569). A final review was completed to assure no school participated in both the

online survey and the original paper survey reducing number of participants to 198.

Data Collection

The data collection for this study was completed using an online format (Survey

Monkey). During the window of data collection, eight waves of inquiry were conducted. The

initial survey was sent to 198 private schools. Eight schools opted out upon receipt of the online

survey. Seven recipients of the survey were bounced back, indicating a non-working email

address. No measures were made to find correct emails to account for those seven. Out of the

183 participants that received the survey, 57 responded (30% response rate). Out of the 57

participants who responded, twenty- four (43%) partially completed it and thirty-two individuals

(57%) fully completed the survey. Seven requests were sent to participants who did not respond

to the initial or subsequent survey requests. Another request was made to participants who

provided only partial information to complete their survey.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the participants were used to calculate the differences between

faith-based and non-sectarian private schools concerning the number of students with disabilities

enrolled and the types of support and services offered. Descriptive statistics and the use of t-tests

were utilized to determine in-group differences. For data analysis, the four schools that

responded "Other" under religious affiliations will be grouped with the schools that indicated

"Protestant". Those schools that indicated "Other" provided a non-Catholic Christian affiliation

description of Episcopal, Lutheran, Calvary Chapel, and non-denominational, thus allowing their

data to be combined with other Protestant schools data. In order to answer the first research

question, *what types of special education supports and services are being provided in private elementary schools in Southern California*, the aggregate data from all participants were utilized. Descriptive statistics were used to answer research questions two through four:

RQ #2: Is there a difference between faith-based schools and private, non-sectarian affiliated schools in terms of the types of special education services?

RQ #3: Is there a difference between religious affiliations and the type and degree to which they provide special education services?

RQ #4: Is there a difference between school enrollment and types and the degree to which schools provide special education services?

To answer RQ #4, an analysis of the qualitative statements made by the participants on their decision (for or against) on offering special education support and services was conducted to uncover any underlying themes. Additionally, the researchers anticipated that the findings would generate further research in the area of academic effectiveness of faith-based private schools providing services for students with disabilities.

Results

A significant amount of time and effort was needed to complete this survey. The result of this survey provided insight into the differences between faith-based and non-faith based elementary private schools in the Southern California area. The majority of the schools completing the survey had enrollments ranged from 100-500 students (see Table 1). The number of students with disabilities enrolled in a private elementary school varied greatly [range: 0-48, mean (x) of 8, and standard deviation (SD) of 10.99]. The results of the study were organized into five different sections corresponding to the initially proposed research questions: (A) types

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of specialized services, (B) teacher certification, (C) Instructional Activities, and (D)

Instructional Settings.

Table 1
Cross-tabulation: Type of private school and enrollment population

Enrollment	Catholic	Protestant	Judaism	Other	No Affiliation	Total
100-200	4	3	1	3	3	14
201-300	11	2	0	0	3	16
301-400	3	3	1	1	2	10
401-500	3	7	0	0	0	10
501-600	1	1	0	0	0	2
601+	3	1	0	0	1	5
Total	25	17	2	4	9	57

Qualitative Responses

Participants were given the opportunity to provide qualitative data in regards to their

ability, or lack thereof, to provide specialized support and services to students enrolled in their

private schools. Twenty-two schools, [Catholic ($n=13$), Protestant ($n=5$), Other ($n=1$), and no

religious affiliation ($n=3$)], (66%) provided an affirmative response indicating that they provide

specialized supports and services. Conversely, thirteen (34%), [Catholic ($n=3$), Protestant ($n=7$),

Other ($n=1$), No religious affiliation ($n=2$)], provided reasons why their school does not provide

specialized supports to their students in who qualify, or even have students with disabilities.

Study participants that reporting the presence of specialized supports and services for students

with disabilities focused on themes of religion, access, and resources. The themes were generated

through combining like concepts presented in the qualitative responses (see Table 2).

Table 2
Private School Voices: Reasons for providing support services or not

Theme	Example Quote	Frequency, n (%)
Provide supports	"Parent's have a right to choose a Catholic educational system for their children. In turn it is our responsibility to provide for the needs	22 (66%)

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	of all students to help them to be successful in their learning."	
Lack of specialized Supports	"We are not equipped or staffed to offer many specialized supports."	13 (34%)

Discussion

Schools participating in the survey provided varied rationale or focus concerning the education of students with disabilities. Most faith-based schools expressed both the structural support and mission to educate all students when compared to their non-sectarian peers. A significant contributing factor lies within the Christian teachings of accepting all children as unique individuals with God-given talents to be nurtured and developed by establishing an inclusive education through cultural paradigm shifts, secured resources, and unique instructional methods (Owen, 2003; Van Dyk, 2010). Parents of individuals with disabilities who attend faith-based elementary schools have a choice to make: stay enrolled in the school with the religious curriculum emphasis paired with some level of support, or attend their local public school and receive the support and services the student requires..

Types of Services

According to IDEA (2004) individuals placed by parents in a private setting are afforded special education services such as occupational therapy (OT) and speech and language therapy (SLP). In comparing the types of private elementary schools in the study, it is clear that faith-based schools utilized special education support and services more often than non-sectarian affiliated schools. Each private school participant was asked to indicate whether students on their campus received special education services from a local school district with a frequency of *rarely, sometimes,* or *never*. The frequency of special education services of speech and language therapy and occupational therapy in either type of private elementary school (faith-based versus

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non-sectarian) was significantly low. However, the presence of occupational therapy was much higher in faith-based schools compared to non-sectarian schools: Catholic schools (n=5), Protestant schools (n=4), and non-sectarian private school (n=1), Assessing the frequency of speech and language services provided similar results Catholic (n=7), Protestant (n=3, and non-sectarian (n=1,).

Teacher Certification

Private elementary schools are not subject to the same teacher certifications as public schools. They do not need to comply with the mandate of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (U.S. Department of Education, 2009), which requires public schools to hire highly qualified teachers for each subject domain. However, this does not preclude private elementary schools from hiring well-qualified individuals. The results of the survey indicated the presence of teachers at both faith-based and non-sectarian elementary schools (see table 3) who hold a Preliminary and/or Level 2/Clear special education credential. Catholic elementary schools reported a greater proportion of teachers with special education credentials when compared to Protestant and non-sectarian elementary schools.. Interestingly, schools with no religious affiliation reported a greater number of current teachers who held a special education credential than schools with a protestant affiliation. There is a different presence of trained special education teachers at private schools to work with students with various disabilities. One of the key factors that have been foundational to the presence is anchored in a schools ethos, "It is important to use that we serve all of God's kids, so we have small group learning, gift[ed] ed, and special ed." Other's indicated, "To benefit students and to provide for their success and retention." While other schools expressed a lack of financial resources, trained personnel, and curriculum rigor as factors to why there is not a presence or need for a teacher trained to work with individuals with

disabilities. Qualitative responses as to why a school does not offer supports and services embodied those realities, "We do not have the teachers or money." While other schools indicated, "Our academic program is challenging" and "Lack of classroom space and finance."

Table 3
Cross-tabulation: Type of private school and number of teachers with special education credential

Affiliation Credential	Number Of Teachers at School Site with special education credential									
	None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight	Nine+
Protestant (n=16)										
Intern	13	1	1							
Preliminary	13	2								
Level 2/ Clear	13	1								
Catholic (n=25)										
Intern	20	1		1	1			1		
Preliminary	11	6	3	1						2
Level 2/ Clear	14	6	3		1					
No Affiliation (n=9)										
Intern	5	2	1							
Preliminary	4	1			1					1
Level 2/ Clear	3	1	2			1		1		

Instructional Activities

The schools included in the study were asked to indicate their use of instructional support and curriculum materials often associated with students with disabilities to create classrooms designed to meet their individual academic, social, and structural needs. The respondents were to indicate whether their school *regularly, sometimes,* or *never* utilized a Visual Schedule, Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), Lunch Bunch Social Activities, Edmark Reading curriculum, or a One to One instructional assistant to support their students (see table 4). All respondents could provide examples of alternative special supports and services other than the list provided. No schools provided any additional information. The overall rate of occurrence for the listed specialized supports was relatively low.

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Private schools utilizing a written visual schedule on a *regular* to *sometimes* basis to support students with identified disabilities had a high rate of occurrence: Catholic (*n*=10), Protestant (*n*=4), and non-sectarian (*n*=3). The use of 1:1 instructional assistants had the second highest rate of occurrence, Catholic (*n*=11), Protestant (*n*=4), and non-sectarian private schools (*n*=2). Each school indicated utilizing 1:1 aides on a *regular* to *sometimes* basis. A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the frequency means of specialized supports in faith-based and non-sectarian schools. A significant difference [t (4)=. 038, p = 0.01] exists between the presences of specialized supports and services between faith-based and non-faith based schools.

The use of Visual Schedules, PECS, Lunch Bunch, and Edmark Reading programs were infrequently identified as support and services in both faith-based and non-sectarian private elementary schools. Catholic (*n*=6), Protestant (*n*=2), and non-sectarian (*n*=1) affiliated private elementary schools indicated the use of a visual schedule from a *regular* to *sometimes* frequency basis. The frequency of PECS utilized in private faith-based and non-faith based elementary schools was minimal (n=5: Catholic and Protestant combined). These schools indicated the use of PECS on a *regular* to *sometimes* use basis. Non-sectarian schools (n=1) indicated the lowest rate of using of PECS on a *sometimes* basis. Five of the faith-based schools (Catholic, *n*=2; Protestant, *n*=3) reported using both "Lunch Bunch" type activities and the use of the Edmark curriculum (Catholic, *n*=4; Protestant, *n*=1) combined. A paired samples t-test was conducted to compare the total difference of all aggregate specialized supports and services between Catholic and Protestant affiliated faith-based schools. The results indicated that a significant difference exists between Catholic and Protestant affiliated faith-based schools and the number of existing specialized support and services [t (5)=0.07, p=0.01].

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Table 4
Cross-tabulation: Type of private school and identified supports

Affiliation Frequency	PECS	Edmark	Visual Schedule	Written Schedule	Lunch Bunch	One-on-One
Protestant (n= 12)						
Regularly	1	0	1	2	1	1
Sometimes	0	1	1	2	2	3
Never	11	11	10	8	9	8
Catholic (n= 15)						
Regularly	3	1	2	4	0	3
Sometimes	1	3	4	6	2	8
Never	11	11	9	5	11	4
No Affiliation (n=4)						
Regularly	0	0	0	2	0	1
Sometimes	1	0	1	1	0	1
Never	3	4	2	1	4	2

Specialized Instruction

According to IDEA (2004) individuals with disabilities need to receive specialized services as identified in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). An elementary school setting has varied levels of placements and services to meet the demands within a student's IEP. The three main levels of support include students receiving specialized support and services in a collaborative basis in the general education setting, in a small group setting outside the general education setting for a limited period of time (Resource Specialist), and up to the whole day (Special Day Class). An additional level of support is the presence of an Instructional Assistant included in the learning environment.

Several questions in the online survey attempted to determine if the schools provided small group instruction by a credentialed teacher outside the general education setting for varying periods of time. The results indicated that some of the schools surveyed did provide differentiated instruction to small groups of students in various sized groupings and at different lengths of time per group. Out of the schools that responded to the survey item (*N*=38), majority

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of the Catholic (*n=11*) elementary schools (65%) answered that they utilized a credentialed teacher who provided intervention instruction to a small group of students in a separate setting from the general education classroom. In comparison, only 46% of Protestant faith-based elementary schools (*n=6*) indicated the use of an intervention-type teacher. Interestingly, non-sectarian schools (*n=4*) reported the highest usage of an intervention teacher (67%) in a small group setting. The range of students within the groups ranged from one to nine for both faith-based and non-sectarian affiliation schools with the mode being a single student receiving intervention instruction. Each school indicated a different amount of groups seen each day. Faith-based elementary schools indicated that the number of small groups ranged from two to ten groups per day with the mode being eight groups per day. Non-sectarian affiliated schools had a range of two to eight small groups per day. Due to the limited number of non-sectarian affiliated schools that responded, no mode was calculated. Time spent with each small group ranged from 5-90 minutes with the mode of 30-45 minutes per group. There was no difference between faith-based and non-faith based schools in time spent with each group. The results indicated that of the faith-based schools, Catholic affiliated schools (*n=13*) provide instructional assistants at a higher rate than schools of Protestant faith (*n=3*). Additionally, non-sectarian affiliated schools (*n=5*) provided the use of instructional assistants far more frequently than schools of Protestant faith. Overall, Catholic elementary schools offered the highest rate of instructional assistants.

Faith-based and non-sectarian schools have flexibility in addressing the varying needs of individuals with specific learning difficulties requiring additional supports and services. While private schools do not need to follow the tenets of IDEA (2004), the current study's results found that a portion of the schools surveyed hired faculty specially trained to work with individuals with disabilities. These results support the work of Doyle (2004) who indicated Catholic schools

utilize a variety of educational settings to meet the needs of their enrolled students with disabilities, including full inclusion, Special Day Class, and Resource Specialist pull out services.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate what types of specialized services are offered in both faith-based and non-sectarian affiliated private elementary schools in the Southern California area. Prior research has mainly focused on case-study designs identifying how individual schools have met the specific needs of current students with disabilities (Ryan, 2001; Howells, 2000). However, prior research has not focused on capturing a holistic viewpoint concerning the support and services that exist in faith-based private elementary schools in a large metropolitan area. Some types of specialized support and services present in the faith-based elementary schools surveyed (1:1 instructional aide, resource-type support, and visual supports) mirror what is available to students in local public schools.

The results of the survey indicated that the faith-based elementary schools, on the whole, provided significantly greater support and services to individuals with disabilities when compared to non-sectarian schools. Additionally, Catholic faith-based schools provided, on average, significantly greater support and services (except for Lunch-Bunch activities) when compared to both non-sectarian and Protestant faith-based schools. This significant difference could be a result of the global educational structure and oversight that accompanies Catholic parochial schools. In comparison, most Protestant faith-based schools are a product of a local community church and not necessarily affiliated with an overarching administrative organization (i.e. the Catholic Church). Associations such as the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) can provide support in networking and professional development; however

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they have no authoritative power to enforce the presence of specialized support and services similar to the Catholic Church's influence over parochial schools.

The results of this study build upon the findings of Eigenbrood's (2005) study where he investigated the existence of specialized support and services in both public and private faith-based schools. While the current investigation did not compare private versus public offering of specialized services, the results obtained regarding the presence of specialized support and services in faith-based schools are similar to Eigenbrood (2005).

Limitations

The current study has several limitations. First of all the initial wave of inquiry was sent out in the springtime, a time administrators typically spend preparing their faculty and students for the yearly state assessments. Furthermore, the experience and knowledge base of the individuals who responded to the survey was not collected. The survey was sent directly to the site administrator who should have had the information needed to answer all of the questions, knowledge about students with disabilities, staffing, and budget related to special education. As a result, there is a possibility of the wrong individual receiving and completing the survey. The survey language did not always match the language used in the private school setting (i.e., the term Individual Education Program or IEP may not be part of all private school's lexicon when referring to a student with disabilities educational program). As the use of Internet-based surveys (i.e. Survey Monkey) has become more prevalent, schools may be overloaded with inquiries, consequently affecting the current study's low response rate. Lastly, the number of surveys returned may not be an accurate representation of the actual occurrence of special education services in both private and faith-based schools.

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Implications and Future Directions

The research literature on the presence of specialized support and services in faith-based schools is growing. However, the literature focuses on interpreting IDEA, case studies, or (as in the case of this article) a geographical perspective identifying which types of faith-based schools provide these needed services. One of the study participants indicated that,

> The school's philosophy is not to accept students with diagnosed
>
> disabilities. I am the new head of School as of July 1, 2011...and I hope to
>
> change that.

Changing a school's culture involves multiple stakeholders and a continual focus. However, there is a paucity of research regarding models on how to provide specialized support and services to individuals with disabilities for faith-based elementary schools. Cookson (2010) found that principals of faith-based private schools who lead the development of special education programs at their schools did so initially from the Christian principle of being a servant leader for all of God's children. These principals align the school's philosophy with educating all students, buy-in from all stakeholders, and hiring certified special education teachers. Future research should investigate how individual private schools in different states are providing specialized services to provide a framework, and model as they continue to change their school culture to support all students. An additional vein of study should also focus on the collaboration between faith-based schools and the local public schools on how to share resources provided through IDEA (2004) for the students with identified disabilities enrolled in the private religious school. Eigenbrood (2004) indicated, while public schools take the lead on how to distribute resources for students with disabilities placed in private schools, collaboration between both parties could lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness towards student benefit.

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Regardless of the vein, future research takes, a continual focus on meeting Jesus' charge of

reaching those marginalized by society needs to be the lens that initiates all such endeavors

(Russo, et. al., 2011).

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Appendix A

Special Education Services in Private Faith-Based and
Nonsectarian Elementary Schools

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Survey Instrument

1) Does your private school have a religious affiliation such as Catholic, Protestant Christian, Judaism, Islam, or other religion?
   a. Catholic
   b. Protestant Christian
   c. Judaism
   d. Islam
   e. Other religion
2) How many students are enrolled in your school?
   a. 100-200
   b. 201-300
   c. 301-400
   d. 401-500
   e. 501-600
   f. 601 or more students
3) How many teachers at your school site possess a special education credential (Intern, Preliminary, Level 2/ Clear Credential)
   a. [Response range: 0-10]
4) How many students enrolled in your school have an Individual Education Program (IEP)? (Sample answer: 12 students)
5) If you have students with an Individual Education Program (IEP), then please indicate the number of students with the corresponding primary eligibility for special education services (i.e. Autism: 3 students; Specific Learning Disability; 10 students). (Open ended quantitative response for each category)
   a. Autism Specific Learning Disability
   b. Mental Retardation
   c. Attention Deficit Disorder
   d. Speech and Language Impairment
   e. Other Health Impaired
   f. Deafness
   g. Deaf-Blindness
   h. Emotional Disturbance
   i. Hearing Impairment
   j. Orthopedic Impairment
   k. Traumatic Brain Injury
6) How many students with an IEP are at each grade level?
   a. Kindergarten
   b. First
   c. Second
   d. Third
   e. Fourth
   f. Fifth
   g. Sixth
   h. Seventh
   i. Eighth

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7) How many of your students with an IEP are male or female?
   a. Male
   b. Female
8) Do you have Instructional Assistants (Classroom Aides) that work with small groups of students within the classroom setting?
   a. Yes
   b. No
9) How many classroom instructional assistants work at your school for half the day only?
   a. [Open ended response]
10) How many instructional assistants work at your school for 85-100% of the school day while students are present (not including breaks and lunch)?
    a. [Open ended response]
11) Do you have a credential teacher working with a small group of students in a separate environment from their regular classroom who have been pulled out for a period of intervention instruction? (Not for an elective course).
    a. Yes
    b. No
12) If you have a teacher who works with small groups of students, how many different small groups do they work with?
    a. [Open ended response]
13) If you have a teacher who works with small groups of students, what is the least amount of students per group at one time?
    a. [Response range: 0-10]
14) If you have a teacher who works with small groups of students, what is the largest number of students per group at one time?
    a. [Response range: 0-10 or N/A]
15) If you do have a teacher (not an instructional assistant) who works with small groups of students outside their regular classroom, how often does this teacher work with small groups of students?
    a. One time per month
    b. Two times per month
    c. Three times per month
    d. One time per week
    e. Two times per week
    f. Three times per week
    g. Four times per week
    h. Five times per week
    i. Multiple times per day (i.e. two 30 minute sessions in a day)
16) On average, how many minutes do these students receive specialized academic instruction outside the general classroom setting? Please provide the information for each group you have. If you only have one group, then please let us know how many minutes (on average) you see them per session.
    a. Groups (1-6)
    b. Time range in minutes: (5-15) (15-20) (20-30) (30-45) (45-60) (60-90)

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17) For the following items, please indicate whether this occurs regularly (R), sometimes (S), or never (N) by choosing the appropriate letter: R, S, N.
    a. Students on my campus receive occupational therapy (OT) from a local school district at my school
    b. Students on my campus receive speech and language (SLP) services from a local school district at my school
    c. Students on my campus travel to a local public school to receive special education services
    d. My school uses psycho-educational assessments to determine if a student may qualify for special education services
    e. How many times have you had a students with disabilities included in your school?
    f. Are you involved in the IEP meeting that discussed and planned the placement of a student, with an identified disability, into your school?
    g. If you have hade a student with an identified disability, do you receive a copy of the IEP?
    h. If a student is attending your school with an IEP, the classroom teacher receives a copy of the IEP goals and classroom accommodations/ modifications?
    i. How often does your local school district provide staff developments for your teachers to increase their knowledge and skills in their ability to meet the needs of your students with exceptional needs?
    j. How often does your SELPA provide staff developments for your teachers to increase their knowledge and skills in their ability to meet the needs of your students with exceptional needs?

18) How often do your teachers utilize the following actions/materials? Please indicate whether this occurs regularly (R), sometimes (S), or never (N) by choosing the appropriate letter: R, S, N.
    a. Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
    b. Edmark Reading Materials
    c. Visual Schedules for a specific student
    d. Individualized written schedule for a specific student
    e. Lunch Bunch social activities
    f. One-on-one instructional assistants

19) Private schools are not under the obligation of IDEA (2004) or NCLB to provide special education supports and services to students who have been identified with a disability that affects their ability to be successful in the classroom without a specific program designed to meet their individual needs. Please take a few moments and consider why your school provides supports and services to individuals with disabilities, or please take some time to indicate why your school does not offer specialized supports and services to individuals with disabilities. Thank you for your earnest responses.
    a. Our School offers specialized supports for the following reasons.
    b. Our school does not offer specialized supports for the following reasons.

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20) What additional information do you feel your staff needs (knowledge and skills) to be a more effective staff educating students with disabilities? [Response- Very interested; Interested; Slightly interested; Not interested at all]
   a. Information about students with disabilities and how to meet their educational and social needs
   b. Information about effective instructional practices for individuals with disabilities
   c. Information about collaboration and consultation with parents
   d. Information about effective inclusion practices of students with disabilities.

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