# Increasing principal capacity to lead inclusive schools

Author: Brooke Keener

Affiliation: Western Carolina University

Introduction

School administrators are tasked with increasingly complex duties that encompass managerial and instructional leadership. School administrators are not adequately prepared to oversee programs for students with disabilities. This results in a lack of instructional leadership for students with disabilities and poorer outcomes. It is because of this lack of preparedness that principals lack self-efficacy when it comes to providing leadership for staff and students in special education.

Figure 1.

United States 2020–2021 High School Graduation Statistics SWD
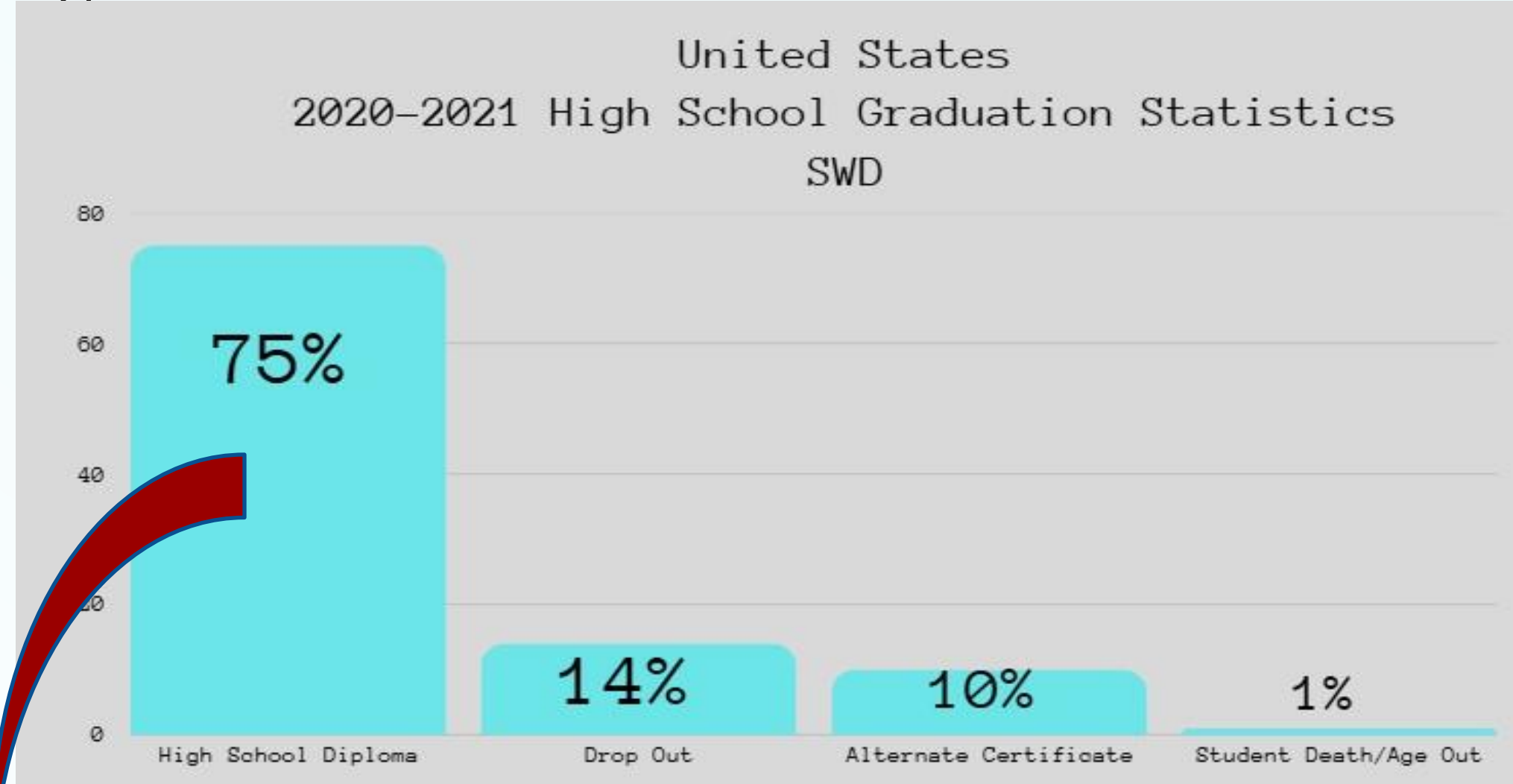
Opportunity Gap

Note. Information retrieved from the *National Center for Education Statistics.*

"an estimated **85** to **90%** of SWD can meet the same graduation standards as all other students, as long as they receive specially designed instruction and the appropriate access, supports and accommodations required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act" (National Center for Educational Outcomes, 2016).

Theory of Improvement

The theory of improvement holds that by providing principals with professional development and coaching that explicitly addresses special education content and process knowledge, there will be a positive impact on principal self-efficacy in leading inclusive schools.
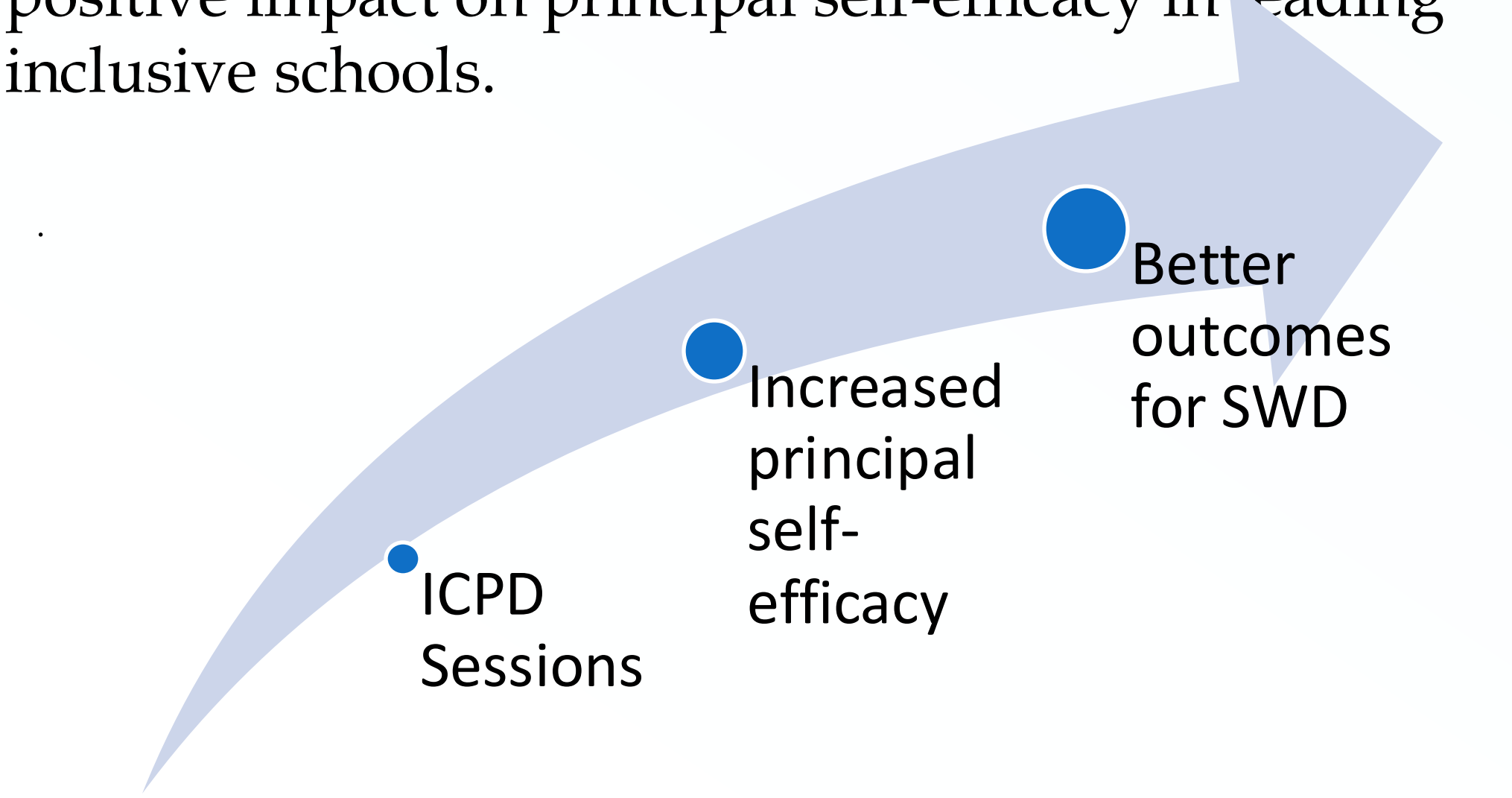
Methodology

Improvement science was used as the methodology to systematically approach this improvement effort (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020) using both qualitative and quantitative data to assess the initiative.

Improvement Initiative

Integrated Coaching & Professional Development (ICPD)

ICPD Topic	Learning Outcome (Participants will…)
ECATS Literacy	be able to identify and locate student eligibility and service information.
Dangerous Myths	be able to identify common misconceptions about SWD and ways to combat.
Specially Designed Instruction	be able to define SDI and identify evidence based practices for SDI.
Core	identify practices for monitoring fidelity or core implementation and identify resources for differentiation.
Scheduling	identify best practices for scheduling SWD and practices for scheduling teachers/meetings.
Purposeful Planning	identify areas for improvement within their schools and resources needed.

Study Participants
Principal/Assistant Principals

Study Format
Principal participants engaged in a micro-professional development delivered in a synchronous PLC environment with their peers for six sessions:
-Google Meet
-Time Bound (45 minutes)

Quantitative Measurements

Baseline Measure
Prior to engaging in the ICPD series principal participants took the *Principal Sense of Efficacy Scale (PSES)* created by Megan Tschannen-Moran. This 18 question likert scale survey served as a baseline quantitative measurement of principal self-efficacy in the following domains:
-**instructional leadership**
-**management**
-**moral leadership**

Driver Measure
In sessions 1, 3 and 5 principal participants were given an **abbreviated PSES.** These surveys were 6 questions, taken from the full PSES survey with 2 questions from each of the three domains. Changes from principal baseline ratings were analyzed via descriptive statistics. This measure served to indicate how the initiative is working.

Outcome Measure
Principals were administered the *PSES* at the end of the ICPD series and changes were analyzed via descriptive statistics. This measure served to measure if there was an improvement in principal self-efficacy.

Qualitative Measurements

Process Measure
At the end of each ICPD session, principal participants engaged in journal writings. These journals contained open ended prompts. Journal prompts were used as part of the continuous improvement cycle to personalize instruction and were analyzed via descriptive and in-vivo coding. The journals served to measure if processes were being implemented with fidelity.

Balancing Measure
At the end of the ICPD initiative, principal participants engaged in a focus group that was analyzed via in-vivo coding to measure if there were any unintended consequences.

Results

Results

Principal participants showed an increase in overall self-efficacy and in all three domains measured by the **PSES.**

Domain	Results
Instructional Leadership	+1.33
Managerial Leadership	+1.25
Moral Leadership	+0.92

Focus Group

"It was very helpful to have an open forum."
"…opened up a bank of knowledge."
"...more relatable and comfortable."
"…they're everybody's students."

Implications

This study yielded important implications to inform work in practice and policy.
Practice
-Incorporate coaching into principal support
-Leverage banks of internal knowledge through PLC
-Continue equity work to support a collective mind-shift and combat deficit ideologies
Policy
-Principal standard revision to explicitly address SWD
-Postsecondary revisions to administrator prep

Acknowledgements

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