

HIDDEN DISABILITIES: A STUDY IN THE APPLICATION OF
IDEA AND SECTION 504 IN THE HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF KINESIOLOGY
COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES

BY

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DENTON, TEXAS

MAY 2016

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the many individuals who have played a major role in my life as a person, a professional, and as a graduate student.

Major Professor, Dr. Leslie Graham, whose guidance and support was immeasurable in the completion of this dissertation. Dr. Graham provided amazing structure, expert advice, and persistent encouragement throughout the entire process. Finding time to place me as a priority in the mix of other graduate students, classes, and personal family, professors like Dr. Graham are truly a rare breed.

I would like to thank the rest of my dissertation committee: Drs. David Nichols, Lisa Silliman-French, Kelly Featherston, and the woman who started it all for me, Dr. Kimberly Miloch, for not only their insightful comments and encouragement, but also for the hard questions which incited me to widen my research from various perspectives.

Ruth V. Baker, my grandmother, who was a highly respected division factory manager, but to me, she enriched my life because she had the spirit of a scholar and the competitiveness of an athlete. Through her steadfastness, wisdom, and refusal to never be considered a victim of circumstances, my grandmother left behind a legacy of excellence, perseverance, and optimism that I hope to carry on.

Tommy M. Baker, my father, and Dr. Brenda J. Baker, my mother, who have encouraged my unique academic, athletic, and artistic interests from day one. Your

grounded faith in God in your daily walk and guidance has instilled in me the encouragement and strength that nothing is impossible with HIM on my side. Kellie Baker Sellers, M.Ed., my sister, I have always appreciated the path you have blazed before me. I am proud to call you 'big sis.'

I would be remiss to not include my father- and mother-in-law, Dr. Stephen G. Perry and Carol A. Perry, who provide me with unending encouragement and support and welcome me as their very own daughter.

I dedicate this accomplishment to my two beautiful daughters, Jordyn Nicole and Danica Belle, who have given me so many blessings and keep me smiling. You each have a unique gift to this family and to this world. Reach beyond your limits ladies and know that you can do all things.

Finally I give all my thanks to my life, my agape, my husband, Dr. Brant P. Perry. You have given me the gift of love, patience, support, and an unwavering belief in me. Through your eyes I have seen myself as a capable, intelligent woman who can do anything once I make up my mind. You embody unconditional love and uncommon strength - values I hope to one day match. I am forever yours.

ABSTRACT

KRISTEN PERRY

HIDDEN DISABILITIES: A STUDY IN THE APPLICATION OF SECTION 504 AND IDEA IN THE HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS

MAY 2016

Five percent of children in the United States have a disability in the areas of language processing, attention, impulse, and motor control while an additional 15% or more students go unidentified (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014). These disabilities often go unnoticed; they are hidden. According to Beyer, Flores, and Vargas-Tonsing (2008) most athletic coaches at the varsity level believe that athletes with disabilities have a right to participate in traditional high school sports. However, 83% stated they were inadequately prepared to coach these athletes. Although instructional interventions could be applied to all students, coaches must be aware of disabilities amongst their student-athletes (Angle, 2007) to ensure continued learning and success in their designated sports. Therefore the purpose of this study was to determine whether varsity high school athletic personnel are following state and federal laws by using individual education programs and/or Section 504 Plans for their student-athletes with disabilities. A purposive interview was used with a population of 6A assistant principals, athletic directors, and varsity head coaches. The results of this study found that although coaches believe student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities have a right to participate in interscholastic sport, they are inadequately prepared to not only coach these athletes, but were

ominously unaware that these athletes are required, by law, added support in the athletic arena as well. These results are significant because it adds to a limited body of research regarding compliance to state and federal regulations dealing with student-athletes with disabilities participating in athletics, as well as the significance that professional development has on coaches working with student-athletes.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

All school personnel must comply with state and federal regulations when addressing the rights and needs of persons with disabilities. Public Law 108-446, also known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEIA), is a law mandating that eligible children with disabilities be provided special education and related services available to them in order to address their unique educational needs. Similar to Title IX of the Education Amendment Act of 1972 (Title IX of the Education Amendments, 1972) and its intention to provide equal opportunities for both genders in educational settings and sport venues, IDEA also provides protection for athletes with disabilities participating in public school extracurricular athletics. These students have a specific condition, (e.g., autism, emotional disturbance, traumatic brain injury) which qualifies them for special services.

Two options may be available for these students who need special services, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 Plan. An IEP is designed to provide appropriate educational goals for students to reach, as well as stipulate guidelines with detailed accommodations and adaptations that a school district must follow during the student's learning process. In addition, the Americans with Disabilities Amendment Act of 2008 broadened the definition of disability by applying support for

those students not serviced through special education with the development and use of a Section 504 Plan (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, 1973).

Statement of the Problem

The United States Government Accountability Office published a report in June 2010 that indicated the majority of students with disabilities, who are involved in traditional extracurricular activities, have mild cognitive or intellectual disabilities; for example, emotional disturbance, traumatic brain injury, dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyscalculia, and other health impairments (GAO, 2010).

These disabilities could substantially limit one or more life activities; however these athletes, in many instances, could be able to meet normal athletic eligibility requirements. Clinical diagnosis in areas that limit one or more life activities is covered under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 with specific interventions noted in the student's Section 504 Plan. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act enacted in 1973 ensures services provided for students with disabilities that might otherwise not be covered under IDEA (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, 1973).

With regards to understanding the true impact of Section 504 in athletics, school district principals and teachers, along with athletic coaches, must be fully aware of the legislation outlined in this plan (French, Henderson, Lloyd, & Sherrill, 1998). Both IDEA and Section 504 legislation were intended to level the playing field for students with all types of disabilities. The purpose of this study was to determine whether varsity high school athletic personnel are following state and federal laws by using IEPs and/or Section 504 Plans for their student-athletes with disabilities. This study would determine

if coaches can identify student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities and establish if and how they are currently making accommodations for them throughout the athletic program. The focus of this investigation was on student-athletes covered through the use of either IEPs and/or Section 504 Plans. The study determined the administrator's and athletic director's role in providing support to the coaches.

Federal law permits children and youth with disabilities to participate in extracurricular services and activities when appropriate (Norlin, 2006). "Extracurricular activities" as defined by the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2013) includes both sport and athletic programs within a school district. These services are part of the Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) conception under Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and IDEA 2004.

Whether through noncompliance or ignorance of the law, school athletic personnel may not be using the guidelines provided through the IEP nor the Section 504 Plan. Therefore, student-athletes with mild cognitive disabilities are in essence asked to give up their right to accommodations and modifications in a FAPE when they step onto the athletic field. Although coaches may alter their strategies on the court, the field, or in the gymnasium, based on good coaching practices, the question remains on whether these changes are a part of the required documentation of accommodations and modifications for student-athletes with disabilities. IEP and/or Section 504 Plans should be reviewed and signed in the athletic department office. These plans and/or goals are then used to structure lessons and practices as designed by the student-athletes IEP/Section 504 Plan. A report written by the Government Accountability Office in June 2010 indicated that

participation in extracurricular sport varied by the type and degree of disability (GAO, 2010).

There is a plethora of research to show that when appropriate modifications and adaptations are provided to students with special education needs, they show academic success in the classroom and increased self-efficacy in life (Breso, Schaufeli, & Salanova, 2011). With the appropriate modifications and accommodations, this success and self-efficacy should transfer to the athletic fields. The advent of Texas House Bill 72 ‘No Pass No Play’ has assisted in setting a higher academic standard of competence for student-athletes and those with special needs while participating in extracurricular activities (NASBE, 1999). Students are athletically eligible as long as their IEP and/or Section 504 requirements are met. This law may limit student-athletes with disabilities if appropriate support services are not provided in the classroom or the athletic field.

Therefore, once on the athletic field, how is compliance of the IEP and/or Section 504 Plan enforced, and how does proper implementation of the IEP and/or Section 504 Plan translate into more effective teaching applications aimed at helping these student-athletes to be more successful? How are administrators ensuring coaches are being held responsible for these IEP and/or Section 504 Plans during their ‘athletic class’? By law, coaches must adhere to the comprehensive framework provided in the IEP and/or Section 504 Plan. Still, there is a lack of research on whether administrators actively enforce implementation in their athletic program and if student-athletes are benefiting from the IEP and/or Section 504 Plan based on coaches intentionally modifying and adapting

athletic practices so that these student-athletes with disabilities are successful within the state and federal rules and regulations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether varsity high school athletic personnel are following state and federal laws by using IEPs and/or Section 504 Plans for their student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities (disabilities that are not readily apparent to others). This research will examine principals', athletic directors', and coaches' perceptions of including special education services in the athletic program as well as the administrator's role in supervising IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance in school district athletic programs.

Research Questions

The following research questions are the backbone of this study. These questions guided the literature review and ultimately aided in evolving relationships to create the investigative hypotheses.

1. What is currently the state of the IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance in school districts' athletic programs?
2. How are administrators holding all athletic personnel responsible for adhering to the IEP and/or Section 504 Plan in their athletic programs?
3. What are coaches' perceptions regarding the implementation of IEP and/or Section 504 Plan in their programs?
4. How is the IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance enforced in the athletic arena?

- a. How is compliance manifested during practice?
- b. How is compliance manifested during games?
- c. How is documentation of compliance kept?
- d. Who is responsible for the documentation of IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance?

Significance of the Study

Accommodations can help students overcome or minimize the barriers presented by their disabilities (Luke & Schwartz, 2010). Considering the importance of adhering to state and federal laws, the findings of this study may impact the accountability of school administrators, athletic directors and coaches, as well as having direct implications on the administrative supervision of their athletic programs. The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) has addressed the question “how do we help students with physical disabilities become more involved in physical activities in school” (GAO, 2010, p. 3)? Special education laws and athletic codes set the guidelines for educators in implementing productive environments for our student-athletes with disabilities, but lack of guidance for our teachers, coaches, and administrators remains (LaFee, 2011). However, during a preliminary review of the literature, there are a limited number of studies that exist in special education compliance in athletics.

This present investigation considered two major aspects of student-athletes with disabilities in public schools. First, because special education law applies to extracurricular sports, noncompliance puts the school at legal risk. Second, how can coaching techniques, when mirroring the appropriate modifications and accommodations

required in the IEP and/or Section 504 Plan, keep school personnel in compliance with special education law and in turn maximize the performance of student-athletes who have a disability?

Assumptions

Leedy and Omrod (2010) stated, “Assumptions are so basic, without them, the research problem itself could not exist” (p. 62). This study includes the following assumptions with regards to *limitations*:

1. To assume participants will answer honestly, anonymity, and confidentiality will be controlled by the use of coded names (i.e., Principal 1, Coach B).
Transcripts and audio recordings are kept in locked cabinets to protect privacy of answers.
2. Participants might be concerned with personal or sensitive information regarding their school/district; an allowance is provided to skip and/or refuses to answer any question of concern.
3. Participants’ interview results will not be used for job evaluation purposes.
4. Participants will be selected from 6A Public Schools in Texas. It cannot be assumed that the results apply to private or parochial schools. It also cannot be assumed that the results apply to 1A, 2A, 3A, or 4A public schools in Texas; nor can it be assumed that the results apply to public schools throughout the United States.

Definition of Terms

6A Classification: 2014-2016 Reclassification as defined by UIL include Texas High Schools with an enrollment of 2100 students or more.

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): Insures that a child with a disability will receive the same educational opportunity as one without a disability.

Hidden Disabilities: Disabilities that are not readily apparent to others. This may include situations such as learning disabilities, dyslexia, attention deficit disorders, and epilepsy, to name a few. In this study, Hidden Disabilities refers to those disabilities that still allow student-athletes to be involved in traditional extracurricular activities. Students with Hidden Disabilities could be serviced through an IEP or Section 504 Plan.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): Describes how a student with disabilities who requires specialized instruction learns, how the student demonstrates learning, and how the service provider will tailor his or her teaching so that the student will learn more effectively.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): A federal law that requires public schools to serve the educational needs of students with disabilities.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA): A federal law reauthorizing IDEA by making improvements on wording and scope. IDEIA includes non-English speaking students and other students with similar needs. IDEIA also allows for better connections between parents and the school by

including more informal means of resolutions outside of formal hearings or meetings.

Mild Cognitive Disabilities: Intellectual function falls below average however is not significant enough to interfere with daily activities. Examples: Dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and Auditory Processing Disorder, to name a few.

No Pass, No Play: A student who falls below a 70% in any class (excluding honors courses defined in TAC Chapter 74.30) is not eligible to participate in competition for at least 3 weeks. However, during this time a student is allowed to practice and/or rehearse.

Section 504: A student with a physical or mental impairment, which substantially limits one or more major life activities. Section 504 does not require that a child be serviced through the special education department. These students are not covered by IDEIA.

Section 504 Plan: A plan for students with disabilities who do not require specialized instruction but need accommodations to ensure academic success and access to the learning environment.

Student-Athlete: A student in a public high school that participates in extracurricular athletics.

University Interscholastic League (UIL): The governing body for athletic programs in the state of Texas.

Summary

This study is to determine whether varsity high school athletic personnel are following state and federal laws by using IEPs and/or Section 504 Plans for their student-athletes with disabilities. By examining principals', athletic directors', and coaches' perceptions of including special education services in the athletic program as well as the administrator's role in supervising IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance in school district athletic programs, this research may shed new light on student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities. With a connection to adherence to the IEP and/or Section 504 Plan instructional interventions to student success in the classroom, this study in turn examines implementation of IEP and/or Section 504 within the student-athlete's designated sport.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The importance of school personnel's knowledge of state and federal laws and their effects on student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities within extracurricular athletic programs will be explored. Amenability of these statutory mandates within the school building must stretch to supplementary curriculum such as extracurricular sport. The ability to identify possible contributing factors of academic success may prove valuable in providing a basis for academic support for most athletes (Dilley-Knoles, Burnett, & Peak, 2010). However, literature is scarce in the use of these academic support systems to enhance extracurricular performance in student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities.

Understanding the legal administrations of special education compliance is necessary to better equip both administrators and coaches through higher professional development. The need for improved partnerships between the administrator and the coach is apparent. Such connections can foster appropriate special education compliance that will increase the success for student-athletes with disabilities. More formalized approaches in developing these collaborations are a valuable component in helping student-athletes to achieve a higher level of accomplishment both in the classroom and on the athletic field. Hence, the purpose of this study is to determine whether varsity high school athletic personnel are following state and federal laws by using IEPs and/or Section 504 Plans for their student-athletes with disabilities. By examining principals', athletic directors', and coaches' perceptions of including special education services in the

athletic program, as well as the administrator's role in supervising IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance in school district athletic programs, this research may shed new light on student-athletics with Hidden Disabilities.

It is incumbent on administrators, athletic directors, and coaches to understand the rules and regulations surrounding Hidden Disabilities and special education services.

Understanding public high school athletic legal regulations and mandatory special education guidelines is just the beginning when it comes to compliance for extracurricular activities in Texas for student-athletes with disabilities. Therefore, a brief overview of selected athletic codes and special education laws pertaining to high school athletics will be presented in this chapter. Information on the following topics is presented:

1. History of University Interscholastic League in Texas
2. Texas Education Agency (TEA)
3. Texas UIL Eligibility Standards
4. No Pass No Play
5. Special Education Law in Federal Legislation
 - a. Free and Appropriate Public Education
 - b. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
 - c. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
 - d. Americans with Disabilities Act
 - e. Individualized Education Program
 - f. Categories of Disabilities in Special Education Law

- i. Auditory Processing Disorder
- ii. Dyslexia
- iii. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

6. Groundbreaking Reports

- a. Government Accountability Office
- b. Athletes with ADHD
- c. Professional Development for Coaches

History of University Interscholastic League (UIL) in Texas

The University Interscholastic League (UIL) is the governing body for athletic programs in the state of Texas. Established in 1910 and housed in Austin, the UIL was developed through the University of Texas at Austin to provide support for public school teachers in both debate and athletic classes. Since this time, it has grown into the largest inner-school organization in the world (www.uil texas.org). The UIL's operations encompass interscholastic competition within extracurricular academic, athletic, and music contests. Rules for student eligibility and privilege to participate in interschool matches can be located in the Constitution and Contest Rules published through UIL (TEA & UIL, 2011).

Within the scope of UIL, academic criteria were developed to establish guidelines for curriculum standards. University Interscholastic League places major emphasis on maintaining academic excellence to better prepare student-athletes for higher education.

Texas Education Agency (TEA)

The TEA was established in 1949 for the purpose of improving the public educational system. The sole purpose of this agency is to meet the needs of ALL students and prepare them for success in the global economy. In doing so, TEA monitors all federal and state rules and regulations that govern Texas education. This includes adopting the Texas Education Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), establishing a State Board of Education and publishing the Texas Education Code which is the state law that governs public education. The state of Texas provides TEKS as standards that students should know and be able to apply.

Texas UIL Eligibility Standards

In University Interscholastic League athletics is described as an integral part of the educational program (Constitution and Contest Rules; Section 1200d, 2014). The Texas UIL Eligibility Standards include age restrictions, attendance requirements, state education law compliance, and proof of residency to name a few (<https://www.uil texas.org/policy/eligibility>). The term student-athlete carries powerful connotations, as it describes a student proficient in classroom with abilities on the athletic playing field. With academic importance and athletic expectations increasing, high school student-athletes must balance the workload to find both participation admissibility and school success. It is the intention of UIL to keep perspective on academics over athletics in public education.

No Pass No Play

In 1984, then Texas Governor, Mark White, appointed Ross Perot to head the Select Committee on Public Education (SCOPE) Reform. The current state of finance in public education became ‘a hot topic’ during this reform movement. Contained among the changes in personnel and the development of the career ladder, House Bill 78 included new expectations regarding extra-curricular activities with No Pass No Play (Slater, 1988). A student who falls below a 70% in any class (excluding honors courses defined in TAC Chapter 74.30) is not eligible to participate in competition for at least 3 weeks. However, during this time a student is allowed to practice and/or rehearse. At the 3-week mark, if the student is passing all courses, eligibility is reinstated.

In the *Spring Branch ISD, et al., appellants, v. Chris Stamos* case (1985), the Supreme Court ruled that No Pass No Play does not violate the equal protection clause of the Texas Constitution. Based on the results of this case, student-athletes must maintain minimum levels of proficiency in the classroom to participate in extracurricular athletics. This ‘minimum level’ was found constitutional by The Texas Constitutional Standards for establishing a “comprehensive system of public education” (TX Constitution, Article 7). It should be noted that Stamos did argue that students with disabilities might be considered a suspect class and thus discriminated against. However, this argument was dismissed, as the parties listed in the original signed statement were not included in this injunction. Texas House Bill 1731 (1985) authorized an amendment to the No Pass No Play rule in which a student meeting special education requirements will be held to certain provisions by disability placement during the IEP and/or Section 504 Plan

meeting(s). No Pass No Play is printed under the Academic Eligibility Standards for Texas athletes (UIL, 2014).

Special Education Law in Federal Legislation

Students with mild cognitive disabilities are able to learn appropriate knowledge and skills in the regular educational setting but face certain intellectual challenges that can be mediated with accommodations and/or modifications (Schumm & Vaughn, 1995). The ability to learn is not solely determined by a person's Intellectual Quotient (IQ). Learning can be a challenge when students are dealing with emotional issues, attentional distractors, or even quality of home life (Katsiyannis, 2001). Just refer back to Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (Cohen & Dennick, 2009) to find that the hierarchy itself demands essentials (e.g., physiological, safety, belonging, and esteem) be addressed first before one can begin to develop, comprehend, and/or synthesize. In addition, Janney and Snell (2008) pointed out that a student's behavior is often a result of someone's failure to provide individualized and comprehensive support. These students have the potential to be successful in the various activities offered by the school, not limited to just classroom achievement.

As stated in the introduction, athletics is an area that, interestingly enough, has a large number of the participants who have some type of mild cognitive or learning disorder (GAO, 2010). Participation in extracurricular athletic allows for student-athletes to interact and form meaningful relationships with others. Fitting into a group provides a buffer from feelings of depression and alienation, and at the same time, fosters feelings of belongingness and self-worth (Branscombe & Wann, 1991). The team concept places

emphasis on the societal values and character building that student-athletes must learn to hold their position in the market of competitive sports. Active learning for real-life scenarios occurs during each practice, game, win, and loss. Athletics is a venue for in which student-athletes with ‘Hidden Disabilities’ can be successful in the rigorous involvement of the school’s athletic program.

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Public schools that receive federal funding are required to meet the educational needs of ALL students by way of a FAPE. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act combine to ensure that public schools provide specialized instruction or related services appropriate to the individual student at the district’s expense, as it does for students who are non-disabled.

Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, state, and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications (1991). In 1999, *Sutton v. United Air Lines* expanded the definition of disability by excluding those deficiencies that can be improved with medication, advised alterations, or other medical actions. The Supreme Court clarified the meaning of substantially limiting major life activity as a disability that “prevent[s] or severely restrict[s] the individuals from doing activities that are of central importance to most people’s daily lives,” (*Sutton v. United Airlines*, 1999). With regards to school age

students, the ADA requires access to “programs, facilities, and services that are provided and open to the public” (Salmen, 2011, p. 14).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

In 1990, legislation provided amendments to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) of 1975 by renaming the federal law to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA; *By Reason Thereof*, 2009). School districts are charged with providing a free and appropriate public education to students from birth through 21 who qualify for educational services including extracurricular activities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) placed further provisions for students with disabilities by providing opportunities for an educational experience with non-disabled peers to the highest extent possible. Requiring schools to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is essential to the individual student. Understanding also that a student` may only be separated if their disability would not allow for an appropriate level of education in the general classroom (Heward, 2003).

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Defined by the U.S. Department of Education, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act is a federal law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive federal finance (Smith, 2002). Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states: No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the

participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

In the case of *Southeastern Community College v. Davis* (1979), it was decided that the terms of Section 504 should not suggest that possessing a disability omits persons from participating in certain contexts; however, one must still meet legitimate physical requirements to be otherwise qualified. Many public education students have learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyscalculia, or auditory processing disorder (APD) to name a few, and a clinical diagnosis in these areas is covered under Section 504 with specific interventions noted in the student's Section 504 Plan. Interventions and adaptations will then be specific to the unique disability of the child. It should be noted that Section 504 eligibility is not affected by placement in a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Mandated by IDEA, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is designed to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities as defined by federal regulations, (Bernstein, 2014). An IEP describes how a student learns, how the student demonstrates learning, and how the service provider will tailor their teaching so that the student will learn more effectively. In the 1992 court case, *T.H. v. Montana High School Association*, extracurricular athletics was included in the plaintiff's IEP as an added incentive to succeed in school after recently being diagnosed with a learning disability. From this

court case, the privilege of competing in sport transformed into a federally protected right (*T.H. v. Montana High School Association, 1992*).

Categories of Disabilities in Special Education Law

Under IDEA, states are responsible for meeting the needs of children and youth ages 3-21 years of age who meet eligibility standards of having one of the 13 listed disability categories (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs', 2004). The categories listed are:

1. Autism
2. Deaf-blindness
3. Deafness
4. Emotional Disturbance
5. Hearing Impairment
6. Intellectual Disability
7. Multiple Disabilities
8. Orthopedic Impairment
9. Other Health Impairment
10. Specific Learning Disability
11. Traumatic Brain Injury
12. Visual Impairment

Further definition of each category guides states on the definition of who is eligible for FAPE. Social inclusion for those with cognitive disabilities in a community-based forum increases self-efficacy (McConkey & Collins, 2010). Negative personal perceptions are

common amongst those with distorted views and biased opinions regarding cognitive disorders (Jahoda, Dagnan, Kroese, Pert, & Trower, 2009). A deeper understanding is necessary when discussing the implications for student-athletes with high-functioning cognitive disorders. The following is a sample of some of the recent research in the subcategories of Auditory processing disorder (APD), dyslexia, and ADHD

Auditory Processing Disorder. The American-Speech-Language-Association states that auditory processing disorder (APD) is an auditory deficit that is not the result of other higher-order cognitive, language, or related disorders (Bellis, 2010). It affects the area in which the central nervous system processes sound. Audiological assessments establish the severity of injury and interruption in function (Hagelthorn, Hiemenz, Pillion, & Mahone, 2003). Auditory training and therapy is designed to cope with this disorder. Medications are available for external symptoms, but are not advised in treating the disorder alone. Hearing loss interferes with cognitive development and thus places significant limitations in those individuals (Herer, 2012).

Dyslexia. The International Dyslexia Association (2000) defined dyslexia as a language-based disability in which a person has trouble understanding words, sentences, or paragraphs; both oral and written language are affected. This impairment is carried throughout the person's life. Reading and writing strategies enmeshed in intensive phonic awareness and fluency training provides students with the necessary accommodations to proceed through grade school and beyond. Reynolds, Nicolson, and Hambly (2003) suggested exercise-based approach to remediation of dyslexia-related disorders. These researchers suggested that, "in addition to its direct effects on balance,

dexterity and eye movement control, the benefits of exercise treatment transferred significantly to cognitive skills underlying literacy, to the reading process, and to standardized national literacy attainment tests” (p. 48). It should be noted, there is no evidence that dyslexia is linked to intelligence (Gersons-Wolfensberger & Ruijsenaars, 1997).

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (2013) the American Psychiatric Association (2013) has identified the following subtypes of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):

1. Combined Type: Both inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity symptoms
2. Predominantly Inattentive Type: Inattention, but not enough (at least 6 out of 9) hyperactivity-impulsivity symptoms
3. Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Type: Hyperactivity-impulsivity, but not enough (at least 6 out of 9) inattention symptoms
4. Not Otherwise Specified: Predominate symptoms of inattention or hyperactive-impulse but do not meet specific criteria

Medication is quite often the first thought with a diagnosis of ADHD. A literature review of the American Academy of Pediatrics suggested, “medication only be used when behavioral interventions are not available or when significant room for improvement exists following effective implementation of behavioral interventions” (Rajwan, Chacko, & Moeller, p. 162). Further, moderate to high intensity physical activity programs positively impact both cognitive functions and ADHD-related behavior

(Verret, Guay, Berthiaume, Gardiner, & Beliveau, 2012). ADHD is diagnosed from repeated, patterned behaviors, not isolated instances.

Ground Breaking Reports

The following reports and pilot studies listed in this section help provide substantial reasons for the basis of this entire dissertation.

Government Accountability Office

In June 2010, a report written to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) stated that participation in extracurricular sport varied by the degree of disability. The majority of students who are involved in these kinds of extracurricular activities have mild cognitive or learning disabilities. It was also stated that these student-athletes were not being provided equal opportunity to participate in extracurricular sports, (GAO, 2010).

Athletes with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

In 2008, Beyer, Flores, and Vargas-Tonsing conducted a study concerning youth sport coaches' attitudes towards recreational athletes with ADHD. It was concluded that coaches with knowledge and experience regarding ADHD (having a child with ADHD, occupational contact, family member, friend's children, etc.) had a positive attitude in coaching these athletes. In the following year, other researchers conducted a study conducted on the accommodations and perceptions of coaches with athletes who had mild learning disabilities and reported that there was a need for more education regarding discipline, accommodation, and identification for coach's working with young athletes with ADHD (Eminović, Nikić, Stojković, & Pacić, 2009).

Professional Development for Coaches

Driven by the previously mentioned study, Beyer, Flores, and Vargas-Tonsing (2008) conducted a follow-up report in 2012; this time focusing on volunteer youth sport coaches' preparation for recreational athletes with minor disabilities. Here, the majority of coaches surveyed believed that athletes with Hidden Disabilities had a right to participate in interscholastic sport. However, 83% stated they were inadequately prepared to coach athletes with these kinds of disabilities.

Moving beyond volunteer youth coaches, a correlation to coaches in school-sponsored athletics who are prepared to coach student-athletes with disabilities has not been established but is a driving force behind this research. The goal is to increase achievement for student-athletes by placing coaches as the primary participants in the process (Little, 2012). To do this, public school coaches must understand equal opportunities and adherence to state and federal laws with regards to IEP/Section 504 Plans.

The Tripartite Efficacy Model developed by Lent and Lopez (2002) showed the relationship between coach and athlete as a three way network that shapes an athlete's self-efficacy: confidence in his or her personal ability, confidence in others' ability and confidence in others' beliefs in his or her ability. Verbal and nonverbal behaviors of coaches led athletes to deduce beliefs about their own personal sport abilities (Saville et al., 2014). The challenge is to design and implement coaching programs that foster relationship building and trust (Anderson, Feldman, & Minstrell, 2014).

Summary

Based on this literature and case law review, it is evident that public school administrators and coaches are legally bound to provide appropriate instruction that is both meaningful and applicable with regards to the student-athlete's IEP/504 Plan (Bernstein, 2014; Dilley-Knoles, Burnett, & Peak, 2010; Luke & Schwartz 2010; Norlin, 2006). It is imperative that administrators adhere to the guidelines provided in these programs/plans and that coaches follow the guiding principles developed to make the student-athlete successful during his/her school career. The Texas Education Agency is exceptional in defining and directing educators, as well as parents, through the process of Special Education Services (Texas Education Agency, 2015). Displayed as a true umbrella, Special Education services encompass a wide variety of cognitive and learning disabilities. Texas educators are required to adhere to state standards known as the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (Texas Education Agency, 2015). Furthermore, statutes are provided for our administrators and coaches to adhere to legislation, and thus it is vital that those guidelines are being used to promote athletic success for all their student-athletes with disabilities.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

A report to Congressional Requesters in 2010 by the United States GAO quoted a district official in Texas who stated, "...extracurricular athletics in his district were very competitive and that it was unlikely that many students with disabilities would make these teams (GAO, 2010, p. 21-22)." When coaches were asked in this study what modifications/adaptations were being applied to athletes with disabilities, they pointed out that good coaching involves varying practice styles but were unable to provide "...any specific accommodations for students with disabilities" (GAO, p. 21).

A gap exists between special educational laws and appropriate practice in the athletic programs. Why this gap exists in the school building and extracurricular athletics is the basis for this study. The method and process used within this chapter includes two studies. These studies are separated as, Part I: a Pilot Interview and Part II: an Interview Study. Within the research design of each part, the definition of participants, procedures, and data analysis will be discussed.

Research Design

Based on the concern raised by the GAO in June 2011 with regards to athletic compliance with federal law, a qualitative study was used. The purpose of this study was to explore interscholastic principals', athletic directors', and varsity head coaches' compliance of federal and state laws by using Individualized Education Programs (IEP)

and Section 504 Plans for their student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities (disabilities that are not readily apparent to others). This study will also determine if principals, athletic directors, and varsity head coaches can describe their current practices, understanding, administration, and adherence to federal law regarding student-athletes under the special education umbrella and regulations that accompany it.

High school coaches must be aware of disabilities amongst their student-athletes with disabilities (Angle, 2007), and this research may shed light on both awareness and compliance within the athletic program. Determining the relationship between perception and reality of understanding, administering, and adhering to state and federal laws drives this investigation.

Part I: Pilot Interview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore interscholastic principals', athletic directors', and varsity head coaches' compliance of state and federal laws by using IEP and Section 504 Plans for their student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities to describe their current practices, administration, and adherence to federal law regarding student-athletes under the special education umbrella and the regulations that accompany it. The format of a qualitative interview allowed for the study to produce explanations in what is known as Grounded Theory. Here qualitative research grounded in data allows for identification of theoretical explanations and insights into experience and phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded Theory was defined by Creswell (2005) as, the researcher "collects data, analyzes it immediately rather than waiting until all data are collected, and then bases the decision about what data to collect next"

(p. 405). A key component lies within the voice of the participants, giving participant responses a more valued role than that of the investigator (Bruce, 2007). For this entire study, Part I and Part II were looked at through several lenses for interpretations. Part I allowed for theorizing to begin with a literature review and analysis of the pilot interview data.

Participants: Interview. In this study five specific participants were selected through convenience sampling where time was not “wasted” creating an environment where the participants felt comfortable answering questions (McConnell-Henry, James, Chapman, & Francis, 2009-2010, p. 3). With this being said, the five participants were selected from the same 6A high school in Texas. An initial interview request letter was emailed to each potential participant with a reminder letter sent if a reply was not received within 48 hours. A date letter was provided once the interview was scheduled and a thank you letter was sent once the interview was complete (see Appendices A-D for Part I sample letters). The job description and number of participants were as follows:

- One principal certified through the State of Texas with a current Principal Certificate and currently holds a principal and/or associate principal’s position at this school.
- One current athletic director for a 6A Texas high school that holds a Texas Teacher’s Certificate.
- Three coaches who hold a Texas Teacher’s Certificate and are a current varsity head coach for softball, volleyball, tennis, and/or basketball at a 6A Texas High School.

A possible risk in Part I was discomfort with questions being asked. Participants were able to take breaks as needed if they became tired or upset. Participants were also allowed to stop answering questions at any time and end the interview. The risk of fatigue and loss of time was possible so participants were able to stop the interview at any time without the penalty of repercussion. Another risk in this study was loss of confidentiality. Confidentiality was protected to the extent that is allowed by law. A code name was used during the interview to protect confidentiality. Because the interviews were digitally recorded for transcription, the written interviews were stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. The Software System *Scribie* was used to transcribe the interview. Software System Scribie applies their Privacy Policy along with 256-bit encryption. Only the researcher, her advisor, and the Scribie appointed transcriptionist heard the recordings or read the written interviews. Participants did not address specific student-athletes by name or distinguishing characteristics. Consent forms were turned in to the IRB at completion of the study (see Appendix E for consent form).

A final risk in this study was coercion. The interview results were used for this study only and not for performance evaluation purposes. Participants had the right to leave or refuse to answer without penalty or repercussion. Participation was voluntary and employment was not affected by involvement in this study.

Procedures: Interview. A one-time, one hour semi-structured interview process, in which general questions regarding understanding, administering, and adhering to federal law were presented, provided allowance for additional probing while new

questions may arise. Interview questions were broad to enable a number of different themes to develop (see Appendix F for Part I interview questions). Part I – the Interview then aided in determining specific questions that were used in Part II.

The interviews were digitally recorded to allow for more accurate collection of data. Once the interviews were transcribed, edited, redundancies sorted, and themes developed then holistic portrayals of the principal's, athletic director's, and coaches' perspectives abounded.

Data analysis: Interview. The process was not to generalize findings to a larger community, rather the data allowed for understanding a specific phenomenon.

Transcription of the interviews allowed for a deep immersion into the text to increase comprehension. Reading through transcripts to become familiar with content prior to analysis provides an intimate understanding to uncover true depth and meaning to each answer given. NVivo, a qualitative data analysis (QDA) software program for Windows or Mac, aided in disaggregating data from written transcripts into relationship-rich data by determining trends, visual portraits, and themes of non-numeric data. As with Grounded Theory, data collection and analysis in Part I began to reduce down interest areas and concerns as participants were actively engaged in opened ended questions. Throughout the interview process it was imperative that constant verification (checking, confirming, and clarifying) was prevalent to establish feasibility, time commitment, and relevance in the development of the final interview in Part II.

Part II: Interview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to provide a more in depth exploration of public school principals', athletic directors', and varsity head coaches' compliance of federal and state laws by using IEP and Section 504 Plans for their student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities. This study was also used to describe the current practices of principals', athletic directors', and coaches' adherence to state and federal law regarding student-athletes under the special education umbrella and the regulations that accompany it. Although new sets of participants and revised questions were used, the same format of a qualitative interview used in the Part 1: Pilot Interview. The results from the Pilot Study lead to varying levels of understanding to the degree in which participants truly comprehend, not only process and procedures regarding student-athletes with disabilities, but where to find service and guidance in this process.

As mentioned before in Part I, Grounded Theory was used as basis for theoretical data analysis for this entire research. Part II examined data with a more labor-intensive lens, allowing for the theoretical framework from Part I to provide a more strategic road map for data analysis in Part II.

Participants: Interview. The purpose of this study was to examine a total of 25 participants; five participants from five 6A schools in Texas. Convenience sampling was used once again as these schools were selected from the same Region/District as the Pilot Study School in Part I. The use of convenience sampling in Part II was in part to create external validity in an organized research by not generalizing beyond large 6A schools (Costanza, Blacksmith, & Coats, 2015). Just as in Part I, an initial interview request

letter was emailed to each potential participant with a reminder letter sent if a reply was not received within 48 hours. For those participants that agreed to be interviewed, a date letter was provided once the interview was scheduled and a thank you letter was sent once the interview was complete (see Appendices G-J for Part II sample letters).

Participants from each school included:

- One principal certified through the State of Texas with a current Principal Certificate and currently holds a principal and/or associate principal position at this school.
- One current athletic director for a 6A Texas high school that holds a Texas Teacher's Certificate.
- Three coaches who hold a Texas Teacher's Certificate and are a current varsity head coach for softball, volleyball, tennis, and/or basketball at a 6A Texas high school.

The researcher asked questions about compliance of state and federal laws by using Section 504 and/or IEP's for their student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities to describe the participants' current practices, administration, and adherence to state and federal law regarding student-athletes under the special education umbrella and the regulations that accompany it. A risk in this study was possible discomfort with the questions being asked. The risk of loss of time and fatigue was also a possibility. However, participants were allowed to stop answering questions at any time, take breaks as needed, and end the interview on their own free will.

Another risk in this study was loss of confidentiality. Confidentiality was protected to the extent that was allowed by law. Consent forms were turned in to the IRB at completion of the study (see Appendix K for consent form). The interview was held at a private location agreed upon by both the participant and the researcher. A code name was used during the interview. The interview recordings, stored on a flash drive, along with the transcribed manuscript of the interview, were stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. Only the researcher, her advisor, and transcriptionist (provided by Scribie as in Part I), heard the tapes or read the written interview. A final risk in this study was coercion. The interview results were used for this dissertation only, not for performance evaluation purposes. Participants had the right to leave or refuse to answer if they so choose without penalty or repercussion.

Procedures: Interview. A one-time, one hour semi-structured interview process, in which specific questions were presented, in anticipation of initiating richer responses from participants during the interview. The interview questions focused on the outcome of the face-to-face interviews in Part I to help determine what questions needed to be explored, as well as, what questions needed to be modified and/or re-defined (see Appendix L for interview questions).

Data Analysis: Interview. Once the interviews were transcribed, edited, redundancies sorted, and themes developed, then holistic portrayals of principals', athletic directors', and coaches' perspectives arose. Because a transcriptionist was used, data immersion was imperative for the researcher to become familiar with the content prior to analysis. NVivo, a qualitative data analysis (QDA) software program for

Windows and/or Mac, aided in disaggregating documents from written transcripts into relationship rich data by determining trends, visual portraits, and themes.

With the collection of research data, the use of Grounded Theory in Part II conceptualized social patterns amongst administrators and coaches throughout the process. Identifying and correcting errors before they were built in to the developing model and before they weaken the data analysis, aided in reliability and validity during this process (Creswell, 1998; Kvale, 1989). Finally, internal consistency was established by formulating interview questions based on the results of the data collected in the Part I Interview. Special recognition was noted that reliability tends to be lower when only several items were measured (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). However by determining relationships amongst the answers by each participant, connections were still significant, (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). Limitations do arise though involving the extent in which the given data reflects actual personal beliefs (Gregoire, 1989).

Hypotheses.

1. Coaches perceive a significant difference in student-athlete performance when Section 504 Plans/IEPs are effectively used versus when they are not.
2. There is a relationship with administrators effective advising of student-athletes Section 504 Plans/IEPs with regards to the coaching staff's professional training.
3. There is no correlation to those coaches who implement student-athlete's Section 504 Plans/IEPs with professional training in special education services and those who do not receive the additional training.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to explore public school principals', athletic directors', and varsity head coaches' compliance of state and federal laws with regards to using IEPs and Section 504 Plans for their student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities to describe their current practices, administration, and adherence to state and federal law regarding student-athletes under the special education umbrella and the regulations that accompany it. Broad explanations and insights in Part I provided a narrowed scope to develop more specific interview questions to be used in Part II.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Overview

Reported in this chapter are the findings from two studies involving interviews with school employees to determine whether varsity high school athletic personnel followed state and federal laws by using individual education programs and/or 504 Plans for their student-athletes with disabilities. This researcher examined principals', athletic directors', and coaches' perceptions of including special education services in the athletic program, as well as, the administrator's (i.e., principals and athletic directors) role in supervising IEP/504 Plan compliance in school district's athletic programs.

Part I: Pilot Interview

This pilot study was used to determine reliability and validity of conducting the same type of interview on a much larger scale. It was used to provide information regarding the strength and weakness of the proposed study, as well as, provides insight on the interview questions (see Appendix E for Part I: Interview Questions) as a viable way to elicit quality information from each participant; a principal, an athletic director, and three coaches. Once the interviews were transcribed, edited, redundancies sorted, and themes developed then holistic portrayals of the principal's, athletic director's, and three coaches' perceptions emerged. NVivo, a qualitative data analysis (QDA) software program, aided in disaggregating data from written transcripts into relationship rich data by determining trends, visual portraits, and themes. Open-coding provided a good

starting point during this data collection where one major concept was illuminated throughout the interview process.

The results of this pilot study revealed that this topic was relevant, original, valuable, and needed to be addressed. It was apparent as the transcripts were disaggregated into word phrases and concepts; the common repeated theme was “I don’t know.” Within this theme, two areas of concern were highlighted.

First, there was not a clear definition of what equal opportunities meant for students with Hidden Disabilities. The question asked, if “equal opportunities for students with Hidden Disabilities in regards to extracurricular athletics had ever been clearly defined?” The three coaches’ responses were as follows:

- “**I don’t know** if it’s ever been written down on paper, but we are told to look at the athlete as an athlete and not what’s on paper that he can and can’t do based on a hidden disability or anything.”
- “To be honest, **I don’t know** that it’s ever been truly defined to me.”
- “**I don’t know** if we discussed it.”

Second, there was a lack of training to support coaches in the area of reading and implementing IEP’s and Section 504 Plans. The interview question asked was, “if recommendations (trainings) are provided (needed) to ensure that your student-athletes are being provided – to the full extent of the law-appropriate modifications to make them successful on the playing field?” The three coaches’ responses were as follows:

- “None that I am aware of.”
- “I don’t know the answer to that.”

- “The only time the conversation concerning 504 or anything along those lines has been purely academic, never athletic.”

It is important to add that both the principal and athletic director stated that trainings provided at the beginning of the year by the special education department was provided to all staff members, where ‘equal opportunities’ was defined and contact numbers/emails for special education staff was provided. They both felt the professional development provided to their entire school staff (i.e., classroom teachers and coaches) was sufficient. They both expressed that all staff members have the opportunity to contact the special education department should questions arise.

A visual representation gives greater distinction to words that appear more often in the data. This visualization of the data from Part I depicted in a “word cloud” emphasizes the findings of uncertainty and in distinction surrounding student-athletes with disabilities.



Figure 1: Part I: Visual representation of results

Part II: Interview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to provide a more in depth exploration of interscholastic principals', athletic directors', and varsity head coaches' compliance of federal and state laws by using IEP's and Section 504 Plans for their student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities to describe their current practices, administration, and adherence to state and federal law regarding student-athletes under the special education umbrella and the regulations that accompany it. The same format of a qualitative interview used in the Part I - Pilot Interview led to varying levels of understanding to the degree athletic personnel truly comprehended not only the process and the procedures regarding student-athletes with disabilities, but where to find service and guidance in this process. Based on the data collected from the initial qualitative pilot interview process, a prolific collection of data and more significant results were anticipated by expanding the initial interview to become the basis for this part of the study was developed. Generating more in-depth questions to allow for further exploration to answer and clarify why these participants did not quite understand, know or recognize the importance/impact of mild cognitive disorders among their student-athletes led the final Interview Study.

A one-time, one hour semi-structured interview process, in which specific questions were presented, initiated richer responses from participants during the interview. The interview was audio recorded and then transcribed. Once the interviews were transcribed, edited, redundancies sorted, themes developed, then holistic portrayals of principals', athletic directors', and coaches' perspectives abounded. The researcher used NVivo, which aided in disaggregating the written documents into relationship rich

data by determining trends, visual portraits, and themes. This coding allowed for theoretical or future policy implications to surface during the data analysis and final review of Part II.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is currently the state of IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance in school districts' athletic programs?
2. How are administrators holding all athletic personnel responsible for adhering to the IEP and/or Section 504 Plan in their programs?
3. What are coaches' perceptions regarding the implementation of IEP and/or Section 504 Plans in their programs?
4. How is IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance enforced on the athletic field?
 - a. How is compliance manifested during practice?
 - b. How is compliance manifested during games?
 - c. How is documentation of compliance kept?
 - d. Who is responsible for the documentation of IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance?

Using these research questions as the premise for this study, this part of the chapter was divided into two sections. In the first section, there was a comprehensive analysis of the response rate and participation rate as they related to job descriptions and titles. The second section provided a summary of the text analysis conducted on the open-ended interview question responses.

Participants and background information. A total of 25 interviews were requested from five different 6A schools in the North Dallas Area. Participants from each school were:

- One principal certified through the State of Texas with a current Principal Certificate and currently held a principal and/or associate principal's position at this school.
- One current athletic director for a 6A Texas high school that held a Texas Teacher's Certificate.
- Three coaches that held a Texas Teacher's Certificate and were a varsity head coach for girls' volleyball, boys' basketball, or girls' basketball at a 6A Texas high school.

Of the 25 requests, a total of 17 were returned and entered into the study. This represented an overall participation rate of 68%. All five principals responded and completed the interview as requested. Of the five athletic directors', one out of the five declined stating that it would be too hard to do as he or she were still in the playoffs. Of the 15 varsity coaches, seven coaches did not respond at all, whether to confirm or decline the opportunity to the interview. A summary of the overall participation rate, as well as the breakdown percentage of each category of educator is provided (see Table 1). It is important to note that of all 17 participants, only 2 coaches held a degree in Special Education.

Table 1

Survey Responses and Participation Rate

	Interview Requests	Interviews Conducted	Interviews Declined	Participation Rate
Principal	5	5	0	100%
Athletic Director	5	4	1	80%
Varsity Coach	15	8	7	53%
Total	25	17	8	68%

Of the 17 Interviewees, 94% had over 12 years of educational experience. Only one educator (a varsity coach) had less than 10 years of experience, 8 years and 6 months to be exact. Summarized in Table 2 is the educational experience, as well as a breakdown of each category.

Table 2

Participant Educational Experience

	0-10 Years	11-20 Years	21-30 Years	31-40 Years
Principal	0	2	1	2
Athletic Director	0	0	3	1
Varsity Coach	1	4	1	2
Total	1	6	5	5
Total Percent	6%	35%	29%	29%

Of the 17 participants, 29% reported having a Hidden Disability themselves or knew a family member that had one. Summarized in Table 3 is the result of the question, “Do you or a family member have a hidden disability?”

Table 3

Do You or a Family Member Have a Hidden Disability?

	Yes	No
Principal	3	2
Athletic Director	1	3
Varsity Coach	1	7
Total	5	12
Total Percent	29%	71%

Interview response analysis. The interview questions were organized into two main sections guided by the research questions listed on page 5 of this study. The two sections are: (a) the definition and application of equal opportunity for student-athletes, and (b) the understanding and adherence to the IEP and/or Section 504 Plans in extracurricular athletics. The questions were transcribed and conclusions were made based on the word processing application NVivo results.

Equal opportunity. It was uncertain whether a clear definition of equal opportunities had been presented to the coaching staff as the repeated phrase to the question asking if there were specific laws or education codes to ensure equal opportunity in extracurricular athletics, coaches common answers were “no,” “I can’t say,” and “not specifically.” However with principals and athletic directors the emergent phrase was “I think so.” In these responses, not one interviewee was able to state specifically how or what equal opportunities looked like in extracurricular athletics except that any student could try-out for a team. Collectively, principals felt they could ask to find support through their district administration office in regards to extracurricular athletics. Athletic directors and coaches felt they could ask to find direction on equity questions through their principal’s administration office. Each of the three groups of interviewees was unsure as to the value and extent that support was currently provided. Principals were clear that the State Department of Education provides laws and regulation updates through yearly inquiries; however, they relied heavily on the special education department within their school district to provide training to staff on Special Education and 504 Program at a yearly in-service typically held in August and directed towards the

entire staff as a whole. Athletic directors collectively expressed that there was support ‘if and when’ guidance was requested. On the contrary, the emergent theme for coaches, with regards to support from the athletic office, was “none.”

An overall inquiry was performed that included the complete responses to all questions regarding Equal Opportunity and Equal Opportunity Guidance. The top three words were at 16, 14, and 14, out of 17 possible, respectively were “think”, “don’t”, and “know”. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Equal Opportunity and Equal Opportunity Guidance Word Count

Word	Count
think	16
don't	14
know	14
not	11
no	9
team	9

Answers in this category were vague. The confidence in expressing information about equal opportunities for all student-athletes was lacking. The word “think” was used in reference to not truly being certain of the answer.

Understanding and Adherence to IEP and/or Section 504 Plans. In understanding and adhering to the legal compliance with regards to IEP’s/Section 504

Plans, it was important to note that seven out of eight coaches interviewed stated that they had participated in either an IEP or Section 504 Plan meetings. With that being said, three out of four athletic directors stated that attending these meetings was and could be valuable. The lone athletic director that did not explicitly state that attending a meeting was valuable did state that, “reading a paper was just as informative.” This same athletic director noted that meetings are time-consuming and “I have to manage my time wisely and I have to prioritize.”

When asked if an athletic piece was included in the IEP/Section 504 Plan, an overwhelming response from all three groups of interviewees was between the phrases “I don’t know” and “I think.” With the inquiry performed for all participants, the top four word break downs were as follows: “think,” “really,” “don’t,” and “know.” The results are listed for the athletic piece count in Table 5.

Table 5

Athletic Piece Word Count

Word	Count
think	16
really	14
don't	14
know	14

When asked if a specific piece directed towards extracurricular athletics should be included, an overall response of yes was given for all the interviewees. It was noted by

the majority of interviewees though, that it would be difficult to add an athletic piece as most of the meetings were directed towards the classroom/academics.

The final question performed in NVivo's query involved the usage of goals defined in the IEP/Section 504 Plans during practice. It was important to note specific responses as this question truly leads to further investigation for future implications. Principals were asked what evidence was there that IEP/Section 504 Plans were being used during practice by coaches. The specific responses from each principal are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Principal: Evidence of IEP and/or Section 504 Plans in Practice

Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There's not, unless, like I said, there is documentation and a specific plan is written for some kind of a physical disability.• What we do is every 3 weeks, is we ask our teachers and coaches to enter information on a Google Doc about the students they have in their care. And so every 3 weeks, they report out on those students that are in Special Education. We don't do that as frequently with 504 students. We typically wait to have a 504 meeting before that information is gathered. And so, that's how we do that.• I really don't know how to answer that. I don't have an answer for that.• That I couldn't tell you.• I don't know. They should be carrying them out. I don't know. I'd say most of the time, they're written for the classroom setting, not necessarily for a fine arts or athletic setting. And so, sometimes I'm just thinking that the disability typically doesn't affect or hinder their performance in those extra-curricular activities, so there's no accommodations written that are directly associated with those extracurricular activities.

Athletic directors were asked what evidence there was that IEP/Section 504 Plans were being used during practice by coaches. The specific athletic director responses are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Athletic Director: Evidence of IEP and/or Section 504 Plans in Practice

Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I couldn't honestly say if they are or not • Well, the thing is, there has to be documentation for everything you do when you're dealing with 504 and IEP and ARDs, • It's the way they coach 'em, the way that their individual, stuff like that • Yeah. It's probably overrated but, that's just my opinion

Coaches were asked if they were using IEP/Section 504 Plans during practice. The specific responses are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Coach: Evidence of IEP and/or Section 504 Plans in Practice

7 references coded
Quotes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probably not as much as I should • Not in the practices • Yes and no. For some of them, it's real apparent • In practice, no, I do not change. I don't focus on their IEPs or anything when it comes to the practice. • There's nothing really that I do in my practice that would hinder their learning or make it more difficult for them. • I use whatever I need to use to help a student improve and get better, and adjust to what we're trying to do. • IEPs do not help from an athletic standpoint

From the responses, IEP/Section 504 Plans were not being used during the athletic practices. This revelation provided further details on whether coaches were receiving appropriate trainings and/or professional development to ensure that student-athletes were being provided to the full extent of the law, appropriate modifications to make them successful on the playing field.

Principals referred back to special education department training programs held at the beginning of the year through staff development. Athletic directors were a little

Summary

The author of this dissertation has had considerable experience with Hidden Disabilities. She was the female coordinator and head women's varsity basketball coach at a 6A school in Texas. In these jobs she has encountered student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities that range from ADHD, dyslexia, and deafness. She was also the mother of two children who both have Hidden Disabilities. Her oldest daughter, a golfer for the Texas Junior Golf Tour, was diagnosed with dyslexia at age 8 and her youngest, a Keeper for a Select 2005 Soccer team, is epileptic and covered under Special Education for Other Health Impairments (OHI). With the extensive exposure to Hidden Disabilities this could have caused some subjectivity with the gathering and analyzing of the data for this dissertation, which could have had a positive and/or negative effect.

The overall 68% participation rate provided a sufficient breadth of responses to satisfactorily develop answers for the research questions. After organizing, synthesizing, and analyzing word text and responses through the software program Nvivo, the responses were continuously forming into repetitive themes of "I don't know" and "I think" to the point where it was appropriate to report results as saturation of data was achieved. Through Grounded Theory, the collection of data reached a 'theoretical saturation' whereby no new insights seem to emerge (Bryman, 2001).

With regards to the definition and application of equal opportunity for student-athletes two research questions were posed:

1. What is currently the state of IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance in school district's athletic programs?

2. How are administrators holding all athletic personnel responsible for adhering to the IEP and/or Section 504 Plan in their programs?

It was apparent that compliance of IEP and/or Section 504 Plans in school districts' athletic programs was not acknowledged. Based on the results clear definitions for equal opportunities, which would include compliance for student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities, served through IEP and/or Section 504 Plan's was not readily available nor understood. With this being said, it would be unmanageable for administrators to hold athletic personnel responsible as they "thought" that sufficient trainings and support was being provided by other people and/or groups beside themselves (i.e., special education department).

The understanding and adherence to IEP and/or Section 504 Plans in extracurricular athletics were addressed in the final two research questions:

3. What are coaches' perceptions regarding the implementation of IEP and/or Section 504 Plans in their programs?
4. How is IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance enforced on the athletic field?
 - a. How is compliance manifested during practice?
 - b. How is compliance manifested during games?
 - c. How is documentation of compliance kept?
 - d. Who is responsible for the documentation of IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance?

As all three groups of interviewees reported that IEP and/or Section 504 Plans would be useful for student-athletes in extracurricular sports, it was uncertain as to how it

would look and take form. With that being said, the use of these plans in practice was unclear and often non-existent.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine whether varsity high school athletic personnel were following state and federal laws by using IEPs and/or Section 504 Plans for their student-athletes with disabilities. The researcher examined principals', athletic directors', and coaches' perceptions of including special education services in the athletic program, as well as, the principal's and athletic director's role in supervising IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance in school district athletic programs. Grounded Theory was the framework for this qualitative research grounded in data allows for identification of theoretical explanations and insights into experience and phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is currently the state of IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance in school districts' athletic programs?
2. How are administrators holding all athletic personnel responsible for adhering to the IEP and/or Section 504 Plan in their programs?
3. What are coaches' perceptions regarding the implementation of IEP and/or Section 504 Plans in their programs?
4. How is IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance enforced on the athletic field

- a. How is compliance manifested during practice?
- b. How is compliance manifested during games
- c. How is documentation of compliance kept?
- d. Who is responsible for the documentation of IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance?

Discussion of the Research Method

This qualitative study was divided into two Parts. Part I involved a one-time, semi-structured interview with a target population of one principal, one athletic director, and three varsity head coaches from the same 6A public high school in Texas. NVivo, a qualitative data analysis QDA software program for Mac, aided in disaggregating data from written transcripts into relationship data by determining trends and visual portraits, of non-numeric data. Part II involved a one-time semi-structured interview. Although the target population included 25 participants, 17 responded. The 17 consisted of: 5 principals, 4 athletic directors, and 8 varsity head coaches from five separate 6A public high schools in Texas. The QDA software program, NVivo, was again used to determine general tendencies and dispositions to dive deeper into understanding Hidden Disabilities in extracurricular athletics.

Summary of the Results

The Interview questions were organized into two main sections guided by the research questions. The two sections are the: (a) definition and application of equal opportunity for student-athletes, and (b) understanding and adherence to the IEP and/or Section 504 Plans in extracurricular athletics.

Definition and application of equal opportunity. Equal opportunity for student-athletes needs to truly be comprehended by principals, athletic directors and coaches so that compliance occurs. With regards to the definition and application of equal opportunity for student-athletes two questions were posed:

1. What is currently the state of IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance in school district's athletic programs?
2. How are principals holding all athletic personnel responsible for adhering to the IEP and/or Section 504 Plan in their programs?

In June 2010, The Government Accountability Office (GAO) shared that student athletes having mild cognitive or learning disabilities were not being provided equal opportunity to participate in extracurricular sports, (GAO, 2010). In this study it was apparent that compliance of IEP and/or Section 504 Plans in school district's athletic programs was not acknowledged. Clear definitions for equal opportunities, which would include compliance for student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities, served through IEP and/or Section 504 Plans was not readily available nor understood.

The majority of participants expressed that the definition of equal opportunities for these student-athletes was only discussed in terms of providing the opportunity to try-out. As one coach stated, "It's stressed that everybody should have an equal tryout kind of thing." The United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights stated that competitive extra-curricular athletics is not a required participation. It simply states that the criterion for participation is not discriminatory (OCR, 2013). Equal access does not just mean that compliance was obtained once a student was given the opportunity to try-

out. Equal access was not discussed in terms of providing supplemental aids nor modified instruction. Yet, participation was justified in placing students in ‘honorary roles’ based on their raw ability to function in the athletic environment without the use of IEP and/or Section 504 Plans. This in turn does not appropriately level the playing field for many students with Hidden Disabilities.

Research Question 2 looked at the principal’s and athletic director’s responsibility to hold athletic personnel responsible to adhering to IEP and/or Section 504 Plans. In 2012, a follow up survey to the Beyer et al. study (2008) reported that 83% of recreational coaches stated they were inadequately prepared to coach athletes with these kinds of disabilities. It would be difficult for administrators to hold athletic personnel responsible as they “thought” that sufficient trainings and support was being provided by other people and/or groups beside themselves. The word “think” was used in reference to not truly being certain of the answer. It felt as if responses were made in accordance of what the participants were supposed to know, and hence the response of “I think” was expressed based on what they seemed to understand rather than solid concrete knowledge of the answer. It was hazy as to the extent and value support was provided. Common areas of support emerged from the respondents. Support in areas from administrative level, campus level, department level, to formal trainings and professional development and informal peer support. However, the degree to which support was provided or needed was unclear to the participants.

Coaches and athletic directors felt it was the responsibility of the principal’s administration office to provide sufficient professional development in regards to

appropriately understanding laws and regulations surrounding the Special Education field and the appropriate way to implement IEP and/or Section 504 Plans in extracurricular athletics. Principals on the other hand, collectively laid the responsibility of training their staff on current practice and compliance of IEP and/or Section 504 Plans in the hands of the school district's special education department.

Understanding and adherence to IEP and/or Section 504 plans. The understanding and adherence to IEP and/or Section 504 Plans in extracurricular athletics is addressed in the final two research questions:

3. What are coaches' perceptions regarding the implementation of IEP and/or Section 504 Plans in their programs?
4. How is IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance enforced on the athletic field?
 - a. How is compliance manifested during practice?
 - b. How is compliance manifested during games?
 - c. How is documentation of compliance kept?
 - d. Who is responsible for the documentation of IEP and/or Section 504 Plan compliance?

As all three groups of interviewees reported that IEP and/or Section 504 Plans would be useful for student-athletes in extracurricular sports, it was uncertain as to how it would be outlined and takes form. The use of accommodations in practice was unclear and often non-existent. One coach specifically stated, "I do not change. I don't focus on their IEP's when it comes to practice." This blatant disregard to reviewing and applying IEP and/or Section 504 Plans prepared specifically to the unique needs of a student-

athlete not only seems negligent with respect to knowledge of federal legislation, but rather stubborn to not altering his or her coaching style based on student-athlete's level of learning. An athletic director stated that his or her coaches on campus used the IEP and/or Section 504 Plans, but in his opinion it was "overrated." Principals were unable to verify the use of IEP and/or Section 504 Plans during an athletic practice aside from signatures required on Special Education documents.

A repeated concern was IEP and/or Section 504 Plans were often written with the classroom setting in mind. Specifically related services, supplementary aids, and other supports to meet the unique needs of the student-athlete were specifically pointed toward the academic setting. One coach specifically stated "people that would be making the decisions and giving the input (in an IEP and/or Section 504 meeting) probably don't understand how we're dealing with these kids and the environment that they're in. It's very different than the classroom." This was a very powerful statement. Coaches that could potentially benefit the most from this process were not advocating for themselves or their student-athletes, rather they were pointing fingers in other directions and instead possibly making excuses as to why compliance was not being met with regards to following an IEP and/or Section 504 Plan during athletics. Unfortunately the direction the fingers were being pointed was at the school district administration, which also placed the responsibility onto someone else . . . the special education department.

This brings about an interesting question with regards to a possible disconnect between administration, coaches (athletics), and the special education department. One possible explanation could be the size of the school with regards to student enrollment.

UIL 2014-2016 Reclassification and Realignment Packet provided enrollment numbers for each of the five 6A schools used in this study. Enrollment numbers were listed at 3,235, 3,236, 5,300, 5,531, and 5,987 students (UIL, 2014). The school listed with the enrollment at 5,987 students was also listed as the largest school in the state of Texas. This sizeable school houses nine administrators, over 50 coaches, and a special education department with six coordinators. This massive amount of people calls for intricate lines of communication and a large amount of professional autonomy towards staff to conduct themselves as responsible licensed educators. This increased autonomy may have allowed for gaps of knowledge and information as it was funneled throughout the channels of each department. Organizational drawbacks and disconnect could then transfer into inadequate support for student-athletes. It is imperative for the special education department to keep current on persisting and emerging issues under Section 504. These issues include general compliance, consequences of Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA, 2011), as well as new litigation (Zirkel, 2012). With this being said, the same issues in regards to eligibility and differential entitlement must be communicated to principals, athletic directors and in particular coaches of student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities.

Interpretation of the Findings

The following three research hypotheses guided this portion of the study:

1. Coaches perceive a significant difference in student-athlete performance when Section 504 Plans/IEPs are effectively used versus when they are not.

2. There is a relationship with administrators effective advising of student-athletes' Section 504 Plans/IEPs with regards to the coaching staff's professional training.
3. There is a connection to those coaches who implement student-athletes' Section 504 Plans/IEPs with professional training in special education services and those who do not receive the additional training.

It was determined only through what the coaches stated they had experienced that there was not a significant difference in student-athlete performance when IEPs and/or Section 504 Plans are effectively used versus when they are not. There was not enough evidence that coaches were using the IEPs effectively, or even at all.

A significant relationship was not determined between principals effective advising of student-athletes IEPs and/or Section 504 Plans with regards to coaching staff's professional training. It was noted that the majority of principals placed the responsibility of training on the special education department and deferred all questions to special education and/or Section 504 chairpersons.

There was not a significant connection between professional training and coaches who effectively implement student-athlete IEP and/or Section 504 Plans. Overall, coaches' one-time training was not sufficient in defining effective ways to support student-athletes with IEP and/or Section 504 Plans. However, those coaches who worked specifically as special education teachers, who were certified in special education, had a better base knowledge than those who did not.

Recommendations for Future Studies

The results of this study are significant to extracurricular athletics in public education because they add to a limited body of research regarding compliance to state and federal regulations dealing with student-athletes with disabilities participating in athletics, as well as the significance that professional development has on coaches working with student-athletes. In 2008, Beyer, Flores, and Vargas-Tonsing piloted a groundbreaking study that concluded, coaches with knowledge and experience regarding ADHD (meaning they have a child with ADHD, occupational contact, family member, friend's children, etc.) had a positive attitude in coaching athletes with ADHD. The following year, a follow up study was conducted on the accommodations and perceptions of coaches with athletes who have mild learning disabilities. Based on the results, it was reported that there is a need for more education regarding discipline, accommodation, and identification of athletes with Hidden Disabilities for coaches working with these young athletes (Eminović, et al., 2009).

Since then a connection to coaches in school-sponsored athletics has not been established but was a driving force behind the present research project. The goal was to increase student-athlete achievement and place coaches as the primary participants in the process (Little, 2012). This present research study supported the initial 2008 Beyer, et al.'s findings in that adequate training was necessary for coaches to appropriately work with student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities.

The Office for Civil Rights develops, implements, and enforces federal laws such as the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendment Act

of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (OCR, 2013). It is imperative for principals, athletic directors, and coaches to understand that these laws far exceed the idea that providing “try-outs” for an athletic team is enough. It seems, a stricter analyze of specifically the IDEA/Section 504 process is needed to ensure that information related to athletics is specifically provided to principals, athletic directors, and coaches to implement in both athletic practices and competitions.

A respect in understanding student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities is a huge factor in further research. Based on the results of this investigation, coaching staffs as a whole do not understand nor appreciate their responsibility that IEPs/Section 504 Plans have in respect to our current student-athletes, particularly those with Hidden Disabilities. Answers were often rudimentary and frequently politically inappropriate, such as correct terminology. For example, a principal referred to a “disability kid” while another stated “We’ve got students with real disabilities like Down Syndrome and severe Autism.” Bringing to light student-athletes with mild cognitive disorders and the importance that altering delivery of information to that student may have a huge impact on their athletic performance. A possible study to include special education directors might glean further information on the interplay between athletics and the special education department. From there a possible connection between individual athletic performance and team performance could be further reviewed.

Summary

Flores's et al. (2012) study was supported in this research; although coaches do believe athletes with Hidden Disabilities have a right to participate in interscholastic sport, they were inadequately prepared to not only coach these athletes, but were ominously unaware that these athletes were required, by law, added support in the athletic arena.

Great teachers make adjustments and modifications for their individual students in the classroom because they have formed a meaningful relationship with their students. Several studies have also shown that instruction that is tailored according to students' level of performance was the most efficient instruction (Connor et al., 2009). The assumption could be that great coaches do the same. Unfortunately it was necessary that state and federal regulations step in to ensure that all teachers (great, mediocre, or needing improvement) provide the appropriate modification and adaptations for their students with and without disabilities whether they are in the classroom or on the athletic field. In summary, whether through noncompliance or unfamiliarity of the law, school athletic personnel have no excuse to not use the guidelines provided in the IEP or the Section 504 Plan. Student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities deserve to the full extent of the law all necessary supplements to make themselves (and their team) successful. With great personal efficacy, it is hoped that student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities can carry on this success.

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APPENDIX A

Part I

Interview Request Letter

Interview Request Letter

Dear Administrator/Athletic Director/Coach,

My name is Kristen Perry; I am a Sport Management graduate student in the Department of Kinesiology at Texas Woman's University located in Denton, TX. I am asking for your participation in a research pilot study, Hidden Disabilities. The purpose of this pilot study is to determine student athletes with Hidden Disabilities are being accommodated during extracurricular athletics.

I would like to schedule a 1-hour interview with you to discuss issues regarding your current practices, administration, and adherence to federal and state laws, specifically Section 504 and IEP's during extracurricular sports.

The current pilot study has been reviewed and approved by the Institution Review Board at Texas Woman's University and is being supervised by a committee made up of faculty from the Kinesiology Department. Because sensitive school records regarding student athlete disabilities will be discussed, all names and school districts will be changed to protect all participants. Please know that the interview will be audiotaped to allow for reliable transcription of the interview. The data will then be analyzed to determine repeated or emergent themes throughout the meeting. At the end of this research, written documentation will be shredded, electronic data gathered on the encrypted drive will be erased and audio files will be deleted.

I feel that with your help, this pilot study will open the doors to new research and carry great implications to the way in which we regard our student athletes with mild cognitive disabilities.

Sincerely,

Kristen Perry
Principal Investigator
Texas Woman's University
Kperry3@twu.edu

APPENDIX B

Part I

Interview Reminder Letter

Interview Reminder Letter

Dear Administrator/Athletic Director/Coach,

My name is Kristen Perry; I am a Sport Management graduate student in the Department of Kinesiology at Texas Woman's University located in Denton, TX. I am asking for your participation in a research pilot study, Hidden Disabilities. The purpose of this pilot study is to determine student athletes with Hidden Disabilities are being accommodated during extracurricular athletics.

Again, I would like to schedule a 1-hour interview with you to discuss issues regarding your current practices, administration, and adherence to federal and state laws, specifically Section 504 and IEP's during extracurricular sports.

The current pilot study has been reviewed and approved by the Institution Review Board at Texas Woman's University and is being supervised by a committee made up of faculty from the Kinesiology Department. Because sensitive school records regarding student athlete disabilities will be discussed, all names and school districts will be changed to protect all participants. Please know that the interview will be audiotaped to allow for reliable transcription of the interview. The data will then be analyzed to determine repeated or emergent themes throughout the meeting. At the end of this research, written documentation will be shredded, electronic data gathered on the encrypted drive will be erased and audio files will be deleted.

I feel that with your help, this pilot study will open the doors to new research and carry great implications to the way in which we regard our student athletes with mild cognitive disabilities.

Sincerely,

Kristen Perry
Principal Investigator
Texas Woman's University
Kperry3@twu.edu

APPENDIX C

Part I

Interview Date Letter

Interview Date Letter

Dear Administrator/Athletic Director/Coach,

I want to confirm a 1-hour interview set for (Day, Month, Time) to discuss issues regarding compliance with Section 504/IEPs in extracurricular sports.

As a reminder, because of sensitive topics, all names and school districts will be changed to protect all participants. Please know that the interview will be audiotaped to allow for reliability of transcription of the interview. Because of confidentiality all names will remain anonymous and at the end of this research, written documentation will be shredded, electronic data gathered on the encrypted drive will be erased and audio files will be deleted.

I feel that with your help, this study will open the doors to new research and carry great implications to the way in which we regard our athletes with mild cognitive disabilities.

Sincerely,

Kristen Perry
Principal Investigator
Texas Woman's University
Kperry3@twu.edu

APPENDIX D

Part I

Interview Thank You Letter

Interview Thank You Letter

Dear Administrator/Athletic Director/Coach,

I would like to earnestly thank you for your participation in my pilot study, Hidden Disabilities. I feel that with your interview, this pilot study will open the doors to new research and carry great implications to the way in which we regard our student athletes with Section 504 Plans or IEPs in extracurricular sports.

Thank you,

Kristen Perry
Principal Investigator
Texas Woman's University
Kperry3@twu.edu

APPENDIX E

Part I

Consent Form

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: Hidden Disabilities

Investigator: Kristen Perry, M.Ed. kperry3@twu.edu 972/xxx-xxxx
Advisor: Leslie Graham, Ph.D. lgraham3@twu.edu 940/xxx-xxxx

Explanation and Purpose of the Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study for Kristen Perry's dissertation. The purpose of this study is to explore interscholastic principals, athletic directors and varsity head coaches' compliance of federal and state laws by utilizing Section 504 and individualized education plans (IEP) for their student-athletes with mild cognitive disabilities to describe their current practices, administration and adherence to federal law regarding student athletes under the special education umbrella and the regulations that accompany it. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are an Administrator, Athletic Director and/or Varsity Head Coach at a 6A school in Texas.

Description of Procedures

As a participant in this study you will be asked to spend one hour of your time in a face-to-face interview with the researcher. The researcher will ask you questions about issues regarding compliance with Section 504 and/or IEPs in High School extracurricular sports for student-athletes will be discussed. You and the researcher will decide together on a private location where and when the interview will happen. You and the researcher will decide on a code name for you to use during the interview. The interview will be audio recorded and then written down so that the researcher can be accurate when studying what you have said. In order to be a participant in this study, you must:

-Principals who are certified through the State of Texas with a current Principal Certificate and currently hold a principal and/or associate principal's position in a 6A Texas high school.

-Athletic Director who holds a Texas Teacher's Certificate and is a current athletic director for a 6A Texas high school.

-Coaches who hold a Texas Teacher's Certificate and are currently a varsity head coach for softball, volleyball, tennis and/or basketball at a 6A Texas High School.

Initials
Page 1 of 3

Potential Risks

The researcher will ask you questions about compliance of federal and state laws by utilizing Section 504 and individualized education plans (IEP) for their student-athletes with mild cognitive disabilities to describe their current practices, administration and adherence to federal law regarding student athletes under the special education umbrella and the regulations that accompany it. A possible risk in this study is discomfort with these questions you are asked. If you become tired or upset you may take breaks as needed.

You may also stop answering questions at any time and end the interview. The risk of fatigue and loss of time is also possible. Participants are able to stop the interview at any time without the penalty of repercussion. Participants will agree on a time that works best for their schedule

Another risk in this study is loss of confidentiality. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. The interview will be held at a private location that you and the researcher have agreed upon. A code name, not your real name, will be used during the interview. No one but the researcher will know your real name. The tapes and the written interview will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. The Software System *Scribie* will be used to transcribe the interview. Software System *Scribie* applies their Privacy Policy along with 256-bit encryption. Participants will not address specific student athletes by name or distinguishing characteristics. All discussions will be kept anonymously. All data will be destroyed 5 years from the date of collection. Consent forms will be turned in to the IRB at completion of the study. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law.

A final risk in this study is Coercion. The interview results will be used for a dissertation only, not for evaluation purposes. Participants will have the right to leave or refuse to answer if they so choose without penalty or repercussion. Participation is voluntary and employment will not be affected should you choose not to participate.

The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. Your school let the researchers know at once if there is a problem and they will help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

Initials
Page 2 of 3

Participation and Benefits

Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Remuneration will not be provided in any form. If you would like to know the results of this study we will email them to you.*

Questions Regarding the Study

You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep. If you have any questions about the research study you should ask the researchers; their phone numbers and email addresses are at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at IRB@twu.edu.

Signature of Participant

Date

*If you would like to know the results of this study tell us where you want them to be sent:

Email: _____

or

Address:

APPENDIX F

Part I

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Principal, Athletic Director & Coaches

Because sensitive school records regarding student athlete disabilities will be discussed, all names and school districts will be changed to protect all participants. I request that student-athletes not be referred to by name or any other distinguishing characteristics. Please know that the interview will be audiotaped to allow for more accurate ways to transcribe for common repeated or emergent themes throughout the meeting.

Definitions:

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA):

Provides students with disabilities opportunities for an educational experience with non-disabled peers to the highest extent possible.

Section 504: A student with a physical or mental impairment, which substantially limits one or more major life activities. Section 504 does not require that a child be serviced through Special Education.

Individual Education Program (IEP): Describes how a student learns, how the student demonstrates learning, and how the service provider will tailor their teaching so that the student will learn more effectively.

Hidden Disability: Disabilities that are not readily apparent to others. This includes disabilities such as learning disabilities and epilepsy to name a few. This excludes physical impairments and/or low functioning disabilities.

The following interview results will be used for a dissertation only, not for evaluation purposes.

1. Background information

What certificates do you hold?

How many years have you been in Education/Administration/Coaching?

How many years have you held this current position?

Do you or a family member have a disability?

2. Discuss how your school provides opportunities in extracurricular athletics to students with disabilities?

3. Discuss the percent of student athletes who participate in traditional extracurricular athletics with Hidden Disabilities compared to the number of those without Hidden Disabilities.

4. For Administrators - Does the State of Texas clearly define “equal opportunities” for student with Hidden Disabilities in regards to extracurricular athletics? In what ways is guidance provided?

For Athletic Directors - Does your Administrators clearly define “equal opportunities” for student with Hidden Disabilities in regards to extracurricular athletics? In what ways is guidance provided?

For Coaches - Does your Athletic Director clearly define “equal opportunities” for student with Hidden Disabilities in regards to extracurricular athletics? In what ways is guidance provided?

5. Are you and/or your coaches participating in Section 504 or IPE meetings? Would your attendance at these be valuable to you? Explain why or why not.

6. For Coaches -Are you using the Section 504/IEP set for students with mild cognitive disorders in your practices? Explain how.

For Administrators and Athletic Directors - What evidence is there that IEP’s/Section 504 Plans are being used during your Coaches practices?

7. Do you find it a challenge to serve student athletes with Hidden Disabilities in an Administrator, Athletic Director, and/or Coaches capacity? Why or why not?

8. What trainings are provided to ensure that your student athletes are being provided to the full extent of the law appropriate modifications to make them successful on the playing field? If no training is provided would you like training?

9. For administrators - How does the State of Texas add support as mandated by IEP’s/Section 504 Plans in extracurricular sports?

For Athletic Directors and Coaches - How does your administrative staff add support as mandated by Section 504/IEPs in extracurricular sports?

For Administrators and Coaches - How does your athletic director give support as mandated by 504/IEPs in extracurricular sports?

10. Discuss a past experience you have had with a student athlete with a Hidden Disability on your team (please refrain from using names or distinguishing characteristics).

11. Are there any further comments that you would like to make at this time?

APPENDIX G

Part II

Interview Request Letter

Interview Request Letter

Dear Principal of Student Activities/Athletic Director/Coach,

My name is Kristen Perry, I am a Sport Management graduate student in the Department of Kinesiology at Texas Woman's University located in Denton, TX. I am asking for your participation in a dissertation study, Hidden Disabilities: A Study in the Application of Section 504 and IDEA in High School Athletics. The purpose of this study is to determine if student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities are being accommodated during extracurricular athletics.

I would like to schedule a one hour interview with you to discuss issues regarding your current practices, administration, and adherence to federal and state laws, specifically Section 504 and IEP's during extracurricular sports.

The current study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Texas Woman's University and is being supervised by a committee made up of faculty from the Kinesiology Department. All names and school districts will be changed to protect all participants. Know that the interview will be audiotaped to allow for reliable transcription. The data will then be analyzed to determine repeated or emergent themes throughout the meeting. At the end of this research, written documentation will be shredded, electronic data gathered on the encrypted drive will be erased, and audio files will be deleted.

I feel that with your help, this study will open the doors to new research and carry great implications to the way in which we regard our student-athletes with mild cognitive disabilities.

Sincerely,

Kristen Perry

Kristen Perry
Principal Investigator
Texas Woman's University
Kperry3@twu.edu

APPENDIX H

Part II

Interview Reminder Letter

Interview Reminder Letter

Dear Principal of Student Activities/Athletic Director/Coach,

My name is Kristen Perry, I am a Sport Management graduate student in the Department of Kinesiology at Texas Woman's University located in Denton, TX. I am asking for your participation in a dissertation study, Hidden Disabilities: A Study in the Application of Section 504 and IDEA in High School Athletics. The purpose of this study is to determine if student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities are being accommodated during extracurricular athletics.

Again, I would like to schedule a one hour interview with you to discuss issues regarding your current practices, administration, and adherence to federal and state laws, specifically Section 504 and IEP's during extracurricular sports.

The current study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Texas Woman's University and is being supervised by a committee made up of faculty from the Kinesiology Department. All names and school districts will be changed to protect all participants. Know that the interview will be audiotaped to allow for reliable transcription. The data will then be analyzed to determine repeated or emergent themes throughout the meeting. At the end of this research, written documentation will be shredded, electronic data gathered on the encrypted drive will be erased, and audio files will be deleted.

I feel that with your help, this pilot study will open the doors to new research and carry great implications to the way in which we regard our student athletes with mild cognitive disabilities.

Sincerely,

Kristen Perry

Kristen Perry
Principal Investigator
Texas Woman's University
Kperry3@twu.edu

APPENDIX I

Part II

Interview Date Letter

Interview Date Letter

Dear Principal of Student Activities/Athletic Director/Coach,

I want to confirm a one-hour interview set for (day, month, time) to discuss issues regarding compliance with Section 504/IEPs in extracurricular sports.

As a reminder, because of sensitive topics, all names and school districts will be changed to protect all participants. Please know that the interview will be audiotaped to allow for reliability of transcription. Because of confidentiality all names will remain anonymous and at the end of this research, written documentation will be shredded, electronic data gathered on the encrypted drive will be erased, and audio files will be deleted.

I feel that with your help, this study will open the doors to new research and carry great implications to the way in which we regard our student-athletes with mild cognitive disabilities.

Sincerely,

Kristen Perry

Kristen Perry
Principal Investigator
Texas Woman's University
Kperry3@twu.edu

APPENDIX J

Part II

Interview Thank You Letter

Interview Thank You Letter

Dear Principal of Student Activities/Athletic Director/Coach,

I would like to earnestly thank you for your participation in my dissertation study, Hidden Disabilities: A Study in the Application of Section 504 and IDEA in High School Athletics. I feel that with your interview, this study will open the doors to new research and carry great implications to the way in which we regard our student-athletes with Section 504 Plans or IEPs in extracurricular sports.

Thank you,

Kristen Perry

Kristen Perry
Principal Investigator
Texas Woman's University
Kperry3@twu.edu

APPENDIX K

Part II

Consent Form

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: Hidden Disabilities: A Study in the Application of Section 504 and IDEA in High School Athletics.

Investigator: Kristen Perry.....kperry3@twu.edu 972/xxx-xxxx
Advisor: Leslie Graham.....lgraham3@twu.edu 940/xxx-xxxx

Explanation and Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to explore interscholastic principals of student activities, athletic directors, and varsity head coaches' compliance of federal and state laws by utilizing Section 504 and Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for their student-athletes with mild cognitive disabilities. The idea is to describe their current practices, administration and adherence to federal law regarding student-athletes under the special education umbrella and the regulations that accompany it. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a principal of student activities, athletic director or varsity head coach at a 6A high school in Texas.

Description of Procedures

As a participant in this study you will be asked to spend one hour of your time in a face-to-face interview with the researcher. The researcher will ask you questions about issues regarding compliance with Section 504 and/or IEPs in High School extracurricular sports for student-athletes. You and the researcher will decide together on a private location where and when the interview will happen. You and the researcher will decide on a code name for you to use during the interview. The interview will be audio recorded and then written down so that the researcher can be accurate when studying what you have said. In order to be a participant in this study, you must be a:

-Principal who is certified through the State of Texas with a current Principal Certificate and currently holds a principal and/or associate principal position in a 6A Texas high school.

-Athletic Director who holds a Texas Teacher's Certificate and a current athletic director and head football coach for a 6A Texas high school.

-Coach who holds a Texas Teacher's Certificate and a current varsity head coach for, volleyball, girl's basketball, and boy's basketball at a 6A Texas High School.

Initials
Page 1 of 2

Potential Risks

The researcher will ask you questions about compliance of federal and state laws by utilizing Section 504 and/or IEP's for your student-athletes with mild cognitive disabilities to describe your current practices, administration and adherence to federal law regarding student athletes under the special education umbrella and the regulations that accompany it. A possible risk in this study is discomfort with these questions you are asked. If you become tired or upset you may take breaks as needed. The risk of loss of time and fatigue is also a possibility. However, you may stop answering questions at any time and end the interview.

Another risk in this study is loss of confidentiality. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. The interview will be held at a private location that you and the researcher have agreed upon. A code name, not your real name, will be used during the interview. No one but the researcher will know your real name. The tapes and the written interview will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. Only the researcher, her advisor, and transcriptionist will hear the tapes or read the written interview. The tapes and the written interview will be shredded within 5 years after the study is finished. The results of the study will be reported in scientific magazines or journals but your name or any other identifying information will not be included.

A final risk in this study is Coercion. The interview results will be used for a dissertation only, not for evaluation purposes. Participants will have the right to leave or refuse to answer if they so choose without penalty or repercussion.

Participation and Benefits

Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Remuneration will not be provided in any form. An abstract of this study will be emailed to you.*

Questions Regarding the Study

You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep. If you have any questions about the research study you should ask the researchers; their phone numbers and email addresses are at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at IRB@twu.edu.

Signature of Participant

Date

*An abstract of this study will be emailed to you. What email would you like it sent to?
Email: _____

APPENDIX L

Part II

Interview Questions

Interview Questions Principals, Athletic Directors & Coaches

Because sensitive school records regarding student-athlete disabilities will be discussed, all names and school districts will be changed to protect all participants. I request that student-athletes not be referred to by name or any other distinguishing characteristics. Please know that the interview will be audiotaped to allow for more accurate ways to transcribe for common repeated or emergent themes throughout the meeting.

Definitions:

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA): Provides students with disabilities opportunities for an educational experience with least resistance possible.

Section 504: A student with a physical or mental impairment, which substantially limits one or more major life activities. Section 504 does not require that a child be serviced through the special education department. These students are not covered by IDEIA.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): Describes how a student learns, how the student demonstrates learning, and how the service provider will tailor their teaching so that the student can learn more effectively.

Hidden Disability: Disabilities that are not readily apparent to others. This may include situations such as learning disabilities, dyslexia, attention deficit disorders and epilepsy to name a few. In this study, Hidden Disabilities refers to those disabilities that still allow student-athletes to be involved in traditional extracurricular activities.

1. Background information

- a) What certificates do you currently hold?
- b) How many years have you been in education total?
- c) How many years have you been coaching total?
- d) Have you served in administration? If yes, in what capacity?
- e) How many years have you been in administration total?
- f) How many years have you held your current position?
- g) Do you or a family member have a disability?
- h) How if at all does this impact your interactions with student-athletes in similar situations?

2. Approximately how many student-athletes with a hidden disability do you serve in traditional athletics?

- a) Of these student-athletes, according to your understanding of Hidden Disabilities, what types of disabilities do these student-athletes specifically have?
- b) If you do not have any athletes with Hidden Disabilities, what characteristics, or behaviors do you see in others that might?
- c) Is there a mechanism in your school to understand if your student-athletes do have a Hidden Disability? If so what is that mechanism?
- d) What kind of contact do you have with your campus coordinator for the special education department?
- e) What kind of documentation are you provided from this coordinator?
- f) What kind of contact do you have with your campus coordinator for Section 504 Plans?
- g) What kind of documentation are you provided from this coordinator?
- h) What kind of contact do you have with your Campus Management Intervention Team (CMIT) coordinator?
- i) What kind of documentation are you provided from this coordinator?
- j) Are there any other coordinator and/or programs to help you identify these student-athletes?

3. Discuss how your school provides opportunities in extracurricular athletics to student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities?

- a) Do you see other opportunities in which these student-athletes can be included in your particular arena? If so, what?

4. Define “equal opportunity”

- a) Administrators
 - i. What is the concept of “equal opportunities” for student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities in regards to extracurricular athletics, as you understand it?
 - ii. What particular laws or education code are you familiar with associated to “equal opportunities?”
 - iii. In what ways are you given professional development in order to understand these rights?
 - iv. In your opinion who’s responsibility is it to support you in your role in enforcing “equal opportunity” for all students?
- b) Athletic Directors
 - i. Does your administrator(s) clearly define “equal opportunities” for student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities in regards to extracurricular athletics?
 - ii. If so, how is it defined?

- iii. In what ways is guidance provided?
 - iv. Where is this definition found?
- c) Coaches
 - i. Does your athletic director clearly define “equal opportunities” for student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities in regards to extracurricular athletics?
 - ii. If so how is it defined?
 - iii. In what ways is guidance provided?
- 5. Are you and/or your coaches participating in the IEP or 504 meetings?
 - a) How would these meetings be valuable? Explain.
 - b) At what frequency?
 - c) In what ways are they valuable for you and/or your coaches?
 - d) With your new knowledge what would you like to see for your student-athletes for the future?
 - e) If you are not included, why do you think you are not included?
 - f) Do you take the opportunity to volunteer in these meetings?
 - g) Given what you know, what might you do to become more involved in these meetings?
 - h) How might you be able to have impact in these meetings?
- 6. 504/IEP/COMIT
 - a) Coaches
 - i. Are you using the 504/IEP/COMIT goals for student-athletes with mild cognitive disorders in your practices?
 - ii. At what frequency?
 - iii. How valuable are they for you and/or your staff?
 - iv. How valuable are they for the student-athlete?
 - b) Administrators and Athletic Directors
 - i. What evidence is there that these plans are being used during practices?
 - ii. Given what you know, how important is it that these plans are being used?
 - iii. How apparent should the evidence be during practices?
- 7. How much of a challenge is it to serve student-athletes with Hidden Disabilities in an administrator’s, athletic director’s and/or coach’s capacity?
 - a) Why?
 - b) What are those specific challenges?
 - c) Why not?
 - d) What challenges might coaches face?

8. What, if any, recommendations (training) are provided (needed) to ensure that your student athletes are being provided - to the full extent of the law - appropriate modifications to make them successful on the playing field?

- a) What professional development opportunities are you aware of that help define legislation?
- b) Who might be responsible in providing these kinds of trainings?
- c) Understanding what you know now, how do you feel the law extends to extracurricular athletics?
- d) Should it?
- e) What might these trainings focus on?

9. What support is there for 504/IDEA

- a) Administrators
 - i. How does the State of Texas add support as mandated by 504/IDEA in extracurricular activities?
 - ii. What particular laws or education code aid in support of 504/IDEA in extracurricular athletics?
 - iii. What online resources are available for such support?
- b) Athletic Directors and Coaches
- c) Administrators and Coaches
 - i. How does your athletic staff add support as mandated by 504/IDEA in extracurricular activities?
 - ii. Is it the responsibility of the administrative staff to provide support?
 - iii. How much support is necessary?
 - iv. What might this support look like?

10. Discuss a recent scenario in which you had success finding an impact position on a team for a student-athlete with a Hidden Disability (please refrain from using names or distinguishing characteristic).

11. Given our conversation, what would a goal for you be in understanding that these student-athletes exist and their performance could be maximized through their IEP/504 programs?

- a) What one goal would you like to execute to ensure these needs are met?
- b) What could you do personally to see that these student-athletes are successful in your athletics program?

12. Are there any further comments that you would like to make at this time?

APPENDIX M

Part I

International Review Board Approval



Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619
940-898-3378
email: IRB@twu.edu
<http://www.twu.edu/irb.html>

DATE: July 2, 2015

TO: Ms. Kristen Perry
Kinesiology

FROM: Institutional Review Board - Denton

Re: *Approval for Hidden Disabilities - Pilot Study (Protocol #: 18173)*

The above referenced study has been reviewed and approved by the Denton Institutional Review Board (IRB) on 6/30/2015 using an expedited review procedure. This approval is valid for one year and expires on 6/29/2016. The IRB will send an email notification 45 days prior to the expiration date with instructions to extend or close the study. It is your responsibility to request an extension for the study if it is not yet complete, to close the protocol file when the study is complete, and to make certain that the study is not conducted beyond the expiration date.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt prior to any data collection at that agency. A copy of the approved consent form with the IRB approval stamp is enclosed. Please use the consent form with the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. A copy of the signed consent forms must be submitted with the request to close the study file at the completion of the study.

Any modifications to this study must be submitted for review to the IRB using the Modification Request Form. Additionally, the IRB must be notified immediately of any adverse events or unanticipated problems. All forms are located on the IRB website. If you have any questions, please contact the TWU IRB.

cc. Dr. David Nichols, Kinesiology
Dr. Leslie Graham, Kinesiology
Graduate School

APPENDIX N

Part II

Institutional Review Board Approval



Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619
940-898-3378
email: IRB@twu.edu
<http://www.twu.edu/irb.html>

DATE: October 27, 2015

TO: Ms. Kristen Perry
Kinesiology

FROM: Institutional Review Board (IRB) - Denton

Re: *Approval for Hidden Disabilities: A Study in the Application of Section 504 and IDEA in High School Athletics (Protocol #: 18603)*

The above referenced study has been reviewed and approved by the Denton IRB (operating under FWA00000178) on 10/27/2015 using an expedited review procedure. This approval is valid for one year and expires on 10/26/2016. The IRB will send an email notification 45 days prior to the expiration date with instructions to extend or close the study. It is your responsibility to request an extension for the study if it is not yet complete, to close the protocol file when the study is complete, and to make certain that the study is not conducted beyond the expiration date.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt prior to any data collection at that agency. A copy of the approved consent form with the IRB approval stamp is enclosed. Please use the consent form with the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. A copy of the signed consent forms must be submitted with the request to close the study file at the completion of the study.

Any modifications to this study must be submitted for review to the IRB using the Modification Request Form. Additionally, the IRB must be notified immediately of any adverse events or unanticipated problems. All forms are located on the IRB website. If you have any questions, please contact the TWU IRB.

cc. Dr. David Nichols, Kinesiology
Dr. Leslie Graham, Kinesiology
Graduate School