CHARACTERISTICS NECESSARY FOR TEACHER SUCCESS IN A CLASSROOM
FOR STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL DISABILITIES

by
Cheryl Arlene Bowers
Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Liberty University
2018
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the characteristics necessary for teacher success in a classroom for students with emotional disabilities (ED) through the perceptions of teachers of students with ED, administrators, and behavior specialists in South District. Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory guided this study as it explains the mutual influence among cognitive, environment, and behavior factors for teachers. A rich description of the perceived characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom was created thereby answering the central question of the study: What characteristics does a person need to be a successful teacher in an ED classroom? Participants of the study included 12 teachers of students with emotional disabilities, five assistant principals, and two behavior specialists. A review of the literature reveled that there is a gap in current literature that describes the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for successful teachers of students with ED. Data consisted of interviews, a survey (for descriptive purposes), a questionnaire, and relevant documentation (such as classroom level systems and procedures). Results of the study provide information on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for a teacher to gain success in an ED classroom. Theoretical, empirical, and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: Students with emotional disability, special education teachers, teachers of students with emotional behavioral disorders, teacher perceptions, administrator perceptions, teacher dispositions, emotional disturbances, special education
Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation research to my family and friends who have provided me with their support throughout this journey. The journey to complete my dissertation lasted a year more than originally planned due to health problems and even when I was ready to “throw in the towel,” the support I received to continue my dissertation journey was immense. My eternal gratitude and love to all of the following family and friends for helping me achieve my lifetime goal of earning my doctorate. It is to them, that I dedicate my research.

To my wonderful husband, Frank, who witnessed my tears and struggles throughout the dissertation process and never stopped believing in me. It is his love, patience, and support that kept me going even when I felt like giving up. He is my rock and my soulmate. Without him I would not be the person I am today.

To my three adult children (Michael, Cassie, and Christina) who have stood by me through many academic endeavors. I earned a bachelor’s degree when they were young and a master’s degree when they were teenagers, which took time away from them, yet they never complained. Now they are adults watching me go through the dissertation process and just seeing the pride they have in me pushed me to write the best dissertation I could. I find myself smiling when they tell me I will be “Dr. Mom.” They are the perfect children and I am extremely blessed to have them. I am also blessed to have my children’s spouses (Alyssa, Randy, and Billy) and all of my wonderful grandchildren.

To my parents, Thomas and Flora Foster, who are so proud of me for going this far with my education. My mother tells everyone she meets that her daughter is a teacher and will soon be a Dr. They can make me feel like a young child coming home with a good report card when
they brag about my doctorate coursework. The act of making my parents proud is one that has never left me, and their pride and support was truly appreciated.

I also dedicate my dissertation to four very dear friends. Lois Della Pesca, a friend and fellow teacher, was always willing to proofread my dissertation even when things were busy at work. When I was down and feeling overwhelmed she always had a way to pick up my spirits. Friends and colleagues, Julia Knight and Kimberly Andreoni, were always there for help and support. And to my friend Charles Conant, who listens when I am stressed and always has a way to help me get back on track. He is one of the most caring people I know, and I am extremely blessed to have him in my life.
Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank God for instilling in me the ambition and drive to achieve this life-long goal. Throughout this process, God has stood beside me and been there for me when I was struggling to continue with my dissertation. The Bible verse that spoke to me as I wrote my dissertation was James 1:12, “Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.” With God on my side I was able to achieve the personal goal of earning my doctorate.

Second, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Rebecca Bowman, my committee chair for never giving up on me and standing by me even though the process took longer than anticipated. She has provided me with inspiration when I needed it the most and endless of hours of reading and rereading my dissertation. Her suggestions and edits were greatly appreciated, and I was blessed to have such a patient, caring individual as my chair.

I also acknowledge Dr. James Swezey, my research consultant, for his time and encouragement through my first chapters and then as my research neared completion. His positivism when he spoke to me about my paper will always be appreciated. Dr. Barbara White, committee member, also provided me with feedback that was encouraging and useful.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge a dear friend and committee member, Dr. Charles Conant. Charles and I have been friends for many years and he is one of the kindest and most spiritual individuals I have had the honor to call my friend. He stepped in to help me with my dissertation in the middle of the process as another committee member was unable to continue to fulfill this duty. I am honored to have had him on my committee for my dissertation.
Table of Contents

ABSTRACT ...........................................................................................................................................3

Dedication ..........................................................................................................................................4

Acknowledgements ..........................................................................................................................6

List of Tables .....................................................................................................................................13

List of Figures ...................................................................................................................................14

List of Abbreviations .......................................................................................................................15

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................16

Overview ..........................................................................................................................................16

Background .......................................................................................................................................17

Situation to Self .................................................................................................................................21

Problem Statement ...........................................................................................................................23

Purpose Statement .............................................................................................................................24

Significance of the Study ....................................................................................................................25

Research Questions ..........................................................................................................................26

Central Question ..............................................................................................................................26

Subquestions ....................................................................................................................................27

Research Plan ....................................................................................................................................28

Delimitations and Limitations ..........................................................................................................30

Definitions .........................................................................................................................................31

Summary ............................................................................................................................................32

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW ......................................................................................33
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Cognitive Theory</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandura and Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Literature</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Disturbance</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical: Early Work on Personal Attributes/Competencies of ED Teachers</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical: The Shift to Research on Specific Competencies for ED Teachers</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teacher Preparation and Continuing Development</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Efficacy</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of Teachers of Students with ED</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Organizations</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U. S. Public Laws and Statistics</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE: METHODS</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Question</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subquestions</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview.........................................................................................83

Participants...................................................................................84

Arlene.........................................................................................86

Cindy.........................................................................................87

Emily.........................................................................................87

Gert.........................................................................................89

Bret.........................................................................................90

Irene.........................................................................................90

Katia.........................................................................................91
Results...........................................................................................................105

Evidence-Based Practices.................................................................106

Interviews..............................................................................................115

Teacher-Efficacy Scale........................................................................115

Documentation.......................................................................................122

Emerging Themes and Subthemes.........................................................125

Central Question..................................................................................137

Subquestion 1.......................................................................................142

Subquestion 2.......................................................................................148

Subquestion 3.......................................................................................160

Subquestion 4.......................................................................................167
APPENDIX D: Permission to Use List of Evidence-Based Practices .................. 214
APPENDIX E: Teacher Efficacy Scale .......................................................... 215
APPENDIX F: Permission to Use Teachers Efficacy Scale .......................... 216
APPENDIX G: Request to Complete Research in School District ........... 217
APPENDIX H: Summary of Research Proposal to School District .......... 219
APPENDIX I: Permission to Conduct Research in South District .......... 225
APPENDIX J: Recruitment Letter ............................................................... 226
APPENDIX K: Consent Form ................................................................. 228
APPENDIX L: Follow-up Phone Call/Potential Participants ....................... 231
APPENDIX M: IRB Approval ................................................................. 232
APPENDIX N: Code Frequency Chart ...................................................... 233
APPENDIX O: Sub-Theme Classification Chart ......................................... 235
APPENDIX P: Code Classification Chart .................................................. 239
APPENDIX Q: Irene’s Classroom Documents ............................................ 242
APPENDIX R: Ophelia’s Classroom Documents ....................................... 248
APPENDIX S: Arlene and Bonnie’s Presentation ....................................... 254
List of Tables

Table 1: Participant Characteristics……………………………………………………………...85
Table 2: Usefulness of Evidence-Based Practices in an ED Classroom…………………..……107
Table 3: How Often an Evidence-Based Practice is utilized in an ED Classroom..........111
Table 4: GTE Scores……………………………………………………………………………116
Table 5: PTE Scores…………………………………………………………………..………..119
Table 6: Top Five Codes…………………………………………………………………….…125
Table 7: Subthemes with Six or More Codes………………………………………………..…129
Table 8: Themes and Subthemes…………………………………………………………….…132
List of Figures

Figure 1: Bandura’s Triadic Reciprocity……………………………………………………………………..36

Figure 2: Number of students identified with emotional disturbance……………………………..61
List of Abbreviations

Competency Based Teaching Model (CBTM)
Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
Emotional Disability (ED)
General Teacher Efficacy (GTE)
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
National Council for Accreditation of Teachers Education (NCATE)
Personal Teaching Efficacy (PTE)
U. S. Department of Education (USDOE)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Students with emotional disabilities (ED) present behaviors in the classroom that are challenging and difficult to manage. These behaviors affect the success of students with ED in social interactions, academics, and daily life social skills (Hecker, Young, & Caldarella, 2014). Therefore, teachers of students with ED are charged with instructing in the areas of academics, social skills, and behavior management. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004) illustrated the strong commitment America has for children and youth with disabilities and the need to identify and develop teachers to instruct and perform interventions with students with ED has been well documented in the literature (Gable, Tonelson, Sheth, Wilson, & Park, 2012). However, students with ED continue to struggle in school and teachers of students with ED continue to have a high rate of attrition (Prather-Jones, 2011). Given the commitment made to these students through the IDEA (2004), it is imperative that teachers of students with ED have the characteristics (skills, knowledge, and dispositions) necessary to effectively work with these youths.

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom through the perceptions of teachers of students with ED, administrators, and behavior specialists in South District. Through this study, a more thorough understanding of the skills, knowledge, and dispositions of teachers of students with ED was found. A collective case study design was used as the study involved multiple schools within South District and afforded the researcher an opportunity to investigate the central phenomenon of the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom in real-world settings (Yin, 2014). This chapter provides a foundation for the problem that necessitates the research
that was undertaken by the researcher. The background leading to the study, situation to self, problem statement and purpose statement will be addressed in this chapter. The chapter also provides the significance of the study, research questions, research plan, delimitations and limitations, and definitions for the proposed study.

**Background**

Students identified with ED exhibit behaviors that can be challenging in the classroom and require social and academic support to be successful in school. The number of students with ED increased following the inception of the IDEA (2004). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), the increase continued through 2010 when a slight decrease was seen. This decrease may be attributed to under-identification of this disability (Forness, Freeman, Paparella, Kauffman, & Walker, 2012). According to the United States Department of Education (USDOE) (2013) students with an emotional disability still make up 0.8 percent of the population of public schools. Teachers with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to assist this population of students gain success in the school environment are still needed. Students in this category have, and continue to experience, a higher rate of negative school and post-school outcomes than do their peers in both general and special education (USDOE, 2013).

The importance of identifying and developing teachers for students with ED has been documented in current literature (Maggin, Wehby, Moore Partin, Robertson, & Oliver, 2011; Oliver & Reschly, 2010; Simpson, Peterson, & Smith, 2011). Oliver and Reschly (2010), discussed the need to develop behavior management skills among preservice teachers, particularly those that will work with students with ED and Maggin et al., (2011) stated methods for promoting teacher knowledge and use of effective practices when working with students with
behavioral issues are needed. Thus, the significance of developing both in-service teachers and pre-service teachers of students with ED has been documented in the literature.

Several studies related to the skills and knowledge of teachers of students with ED have been completed in the past two decades (Bullock, Ellis, & Wilson, 1994; Cooley-Nichols, 2004; Maag & Katsiyannis, 1999; Walker & Cheney, 2007). Bullock et al., (1994) quantitatively examined knowledge/skill statements used in preparation programs for teachers of students with ED using teacher ratings on the importance, proficiency, and frequency of use for each knowledge/skill. Knowledge/Skill statements relating to the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) standards were highlighted and results displayed the mean averages for each knowledge/skill examined (Bullock et al., 1994). The need to look into knowledge and skills for teachers of students with ED continued as researchers examined course content for preservice teachers. In an extensive review of preservice training for teachers of students with ED, Maag and Katsiyannis (1999) found that most teachers received little specific training in working with students with ED. This lack of training led Cooley-Nichols (2004) to attempt to understand the effects of incorporating research-based strategies for working with students with ED into teacher preservice trainings. Participants in this quantitative study reported positive outcomes regarding their knowledge about working with students with ED. Addressing skills and knowledge necessary for teachers of students with ED, Walker and Cheney (2007), developed an evaluation tool using identified effective practices, knowledge, and skills necessary in a classroom for students with ED through observations and teacher ratings. These studies relied on previous literature, teacher-preparation programs, and experts in the field to identify the skills and knowledge necessary for successful teachers of students with ED. Therefore, there have been
studies relating to the skills and knowledge of teachers of students with ED; however, these studies did not address dispositions of teachers of students with ED.

Current literature provides studies based on the perceptions of teachers of students with ED. Prather-Jones (2011) examined personal attributes of teachers of students with ED who stay in the field on what personal attributes or dispositions were a good fit for teachers of students with ED. Furthering research on perceptions of teachers working with students with ED, Chong and Ng (2011) studied teacher perceptions of useful practices for success with students with ED in Hong Kong and developed a conceptual framework of possible approaches to improving behavior among students with ED.

Responding to the need of identifying characteristics of successful teachers the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) (2009) published standards for “Initial Special Education Teachers of Individuals with Exceptional Learning Needs with Emotional and/or Behavioral Disorders” (p. 99) in the book *What Every Special Educator Must Know*. The 10 standards address the knowledge, skills, and personal attributes initial special education teachers of students with ED must have. The CEC (2012) further addressed these standards by creating Specialty Sets that reflect the knowledge and skills necessary for safe and effective practice of those working in the field of special education. “CEC uses the specialized content, issues, vocabulary, interventions, settings, etc. of specialty sets to inform the CEC Preparation Standards” (CEC, 2015. p. 1). Further, special education programs may use either the initial or advanced CEC preparation standards that are informed by the applicable specialty set. Although, the standards do not clearly articulate which items in each standard are related to personal attributes.
Given the commitment made to these students through the IDEA (2004) it is imperative that teachers of students with ED have the ability and attributes necessary to provide the best education possible for these students. There is a gap in the literature that identifies the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of successful teachers of students with ED from the viewpoint of those that work directly with this population (teachers, administrators and behavior specialists). The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom through the perceptions of teachers of students with ED, administrators, and behavior specialists in South District.

Supporting this research is Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory. Bandura (1986) proposed a tri-modal interplay between the individual, behavior, and the environment. Through this model Bandura illustrated his theory that individuals are not just reactive organisms but have the ability to alter both their environment and behavior (1986). The present research used this model in an attempt to identify characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. Characteristics explored included individual cognitive factors of knowledge and attitudes, environmental factors of the ED classroom, and behavioral factors of skills and self-efficacy. Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy explains an individual’s ability to engage in self-regulation. How teachers self-regulate, behave based on their personal beliefs, impacts their environment. Therefore, the social cognitive theory was used to explain the interactions between teachers as individuals, their environment, and their behavior. By exploring teacher, administrator, and behavior specialist perceptions on the characteristics necessary for teacher success in the ED classroom, a more complete picture of these teachers emerged.
Situation to Self

In a qualitative study, it is important for the researcher to begin the study with a description of his or her personal experiences that relate to the central phenomenon being researched (Creswell, 2013). Hence, researchers need to situate themselves by conveying what their background is and how it provides an interpretive lens through which they interpret the information acquired in a study. I have always been passionate about working with students who struggle emotionally and behaviorally. Having a friend who, in the 1960s, had a very negative school experience due to emotional disabilities I witnessed firsthand some of the struggles students with emotional problems and the impact school can have on their lives. This led to my passion to work with students with ED. After 15 years of working with students with ED, my love for them and my passion to help them gain success in school has remained strong. As an educator who continually wants to grow and improve, I am consistently looking for the most productive strategies and practices that will assist my students in gaining access to and success in the general education classroom and curriculum. My personal beliefs are teachers of ED students should use evidence-based strategies, positive relationship building, and continually stay up-to-date with current research and practices through professional development, course work, and/or independent research.

As I enter my sixteenth year of teaching students with ED, I have a set of personal beliefs on how best to assist students with ED gain social and academic success. However, I also continue to learn from others in my field. Teachers of students with ED have personal attributes they bring to their classroom and an array of strategies that work in their classroom. I often learn strategies that work in my classroom by observing other teachers of students with ED and administrators working with these students. I began to wonder if it would be useful to make a list
and describe the different strategies, interventions, and practices used in self-contained ED classrooms including evidence-based practices for this population. What knowledge, skills, and dispositions do those working with students with ED deem necessary for a successful teacher? How well could this inform current teachers of students with ED? How well could this inform administrators working with students with ED? Could this information assist teachers with ED identify strengths and needs? Could this information assist in identifying future professional development sessions? Could this information lead to more success for students with ED? These questions fueled my desire to talk with and explore the different dispositions, skills, and knowledge each teacher of students with ED bring to his or her classroom and which of these factors are seen as important to administrators working with these students.

This desire has led to the current collective case study as a case study stems from the need to understand a social situation or phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Understanding the characteristics (i.e. dispositions, skills, and knowledge) of teachers of students with ED is significant to my continuing desire to help students with ED gain academic and social success. I would like to identify the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom to better inform everyday practices in ED classrooms by describing the characteristics necessary through the perceptions of teachers and administrators. My philosophical assumption is ontological as I believe the participants in this study will provide multiple views of reality related to their success working with students with ED or working with teachers of students with ED. The paradigm shaping this study was social constructivism because it provides a way for the researcher to comprehend the environment in which one works or lives and the purpose of this study was to identify and describe the perceptions of participants in the study (Creswell, 2013).
Problem Statement

According to the latest data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), the number of students with ED has consistently risen. In response to this data and the mandates of the IDEA (2004), experts in the special education field recognized the need to identify and develop teachers for students with ED (Maggin et al., 2011; Oliver & Reschly, 2010; Simpson et al., 2011). Identifying practices used by teachers of students with ED could help with the future identification and development of teachers in this field. When investigating reasons why teachers of students with ED stay in the field, Prather-Jones (2011) found teachers indicated more internal factors than external factors as for motivation to stay in the field. Looking further into personal attributes, a study on the perceptions of teachers of students with ED on what works in the classroom described personal attributes and knowledge as indicators of successful teachers of students with ED (Chong & Ng, 2011). The CEC recognized the need for identifying the personal attributes, skills, and knowledge necessary for teachers of students with ED and published standards for initial teachers in 2009 and expanded the standards to include Initial and Advanced Specialty Sets in 2012. The Specialty Sets consist of the knowledge and skills that are needed by special educators for effective practice that are common to all special educators and distinctive to particular special education disciplines (CEC, 2012). However, the standards do not clearly articulate which items in each standard are related to personal attributes.

There is a gap in the literature identifying the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of teachers of students with ED from the viewpoint of those that work directly with this population (i.e. teachers, administrators, and behavior specialists). Researchers have addressed the need to identify the characteristics necessary for special education teacher success through several studies. According to Carlson, Lee, and Schroll (2004) looking further into whether teacher
attitudes associated to student achievement are stable or whether they can be taught during pre-service preparation may move the field forward in developing high quality special educators. For teachers of student with ED the need to have the specific knowledge and skills necessary to work with this group is very important. “Effective and research-based practices are of great significance; however, attainment of positive outcomes by students with emotional behavior disorders (EBD) will occur only when these methods are used appropriately by knowledgeable, skilled, and committed professionals and support staff” (Simpson et al., 2011, p. 239). Thus, seeking a more complete picture of a successful ED teacher, through identifying the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for success, may lead to more positive outcomes for students with ED. “There is a need for preservice and in-service training that targets the development of traits, skills, and strategies that may specifically contribute to the perseverance of teachers in this field” (Prather-Jones, 2011, p. 189). It is this gap that the current study addressed by describing the characteristics for teacher success in the ED classroom.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom through the perceptions of teachers of students with ED, administrators, and behavior specialists in South District. The research term, *characteristics*, refers to the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. The Oxford Dictionary (2014) defined dispositions as “a person’s inherent qualities of mind and character.” Singh and Stoloff (2008), utilizing previous definitions and indices, defined teachers dispositions as “perceptions of self, perceptions of others, perceptions about subject field, perceptions about the purpose of education and the process of education, and the general frame of reference perceptions” (p. 2). Knowledge refers to relevant concepts and
information that teachers need in order to work effectively with students with ED and skills refer to a teacher’s ability to use, or engage in, practices that are successful with students with ED (CEC 2009; Mackie, Kvaraceus, Williams, Gabbard, & Suerken, 1957; Oliver & Reschly, 2010). The theory guiding this study is the social cognitive theory by Albert Bandura as it explains the mutual influence among cognitive, environmental, and behavioral factors for teachers. Through rich descriptions, survey responses, and documentation by teachers, administrators, and behavior specialists on the characteristics necessary for teacher success in the ED classroom, a more complete picture of these teachers emerged.

**Significance of the Study**

The intent of this study is to contribute to the literature and explore the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom through the perceptions of those who work with these students. This study is significant because it increased the understanding of the skills, knowledge, and dispositions required for success in this school setting. Simpson et al. (2011) stated that the personnel in many ED classrooms have not demonstrated they have the necessary knowledge or skills, possess the necessary personal attributes, or received training to be successful with students with ED. Exploring the perceptions of teachers and administrators currently working with students with ED is important in order to gain an understanding of the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for teachers of students with ED. Assisting teachers of students with ED gain the necessary skills and knowledge for success with students with ED is crucial for classroom success. Prather-Jones (2011) found that a need exists for trainings that address the development of the characteristics necessary for successful teaching of students with ED.
This study informs stakeholders involved in the identification and development of teachers of students with ED on trainings and support for these teachers as well as informing potential teachers and stakeholders of the dispositions necessary for this position. “One way to improve the quality of education is to ensure that all teachers of students identified as emotionally behaviorally disabled possess the knowledge and skills required to address the myriad challenges associated with this difficult population of students” (Gable et al., 2012, p. 501).

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this collective case study was to identify the characteristics (i.e., knowledge, skills, and dispositions) of special education teachers of students with ED to inform future identification and future development of teachers of students with ED. The following questions helped focus the study on describing the characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED.

**Central Question:**

What characteristics does a person need to be a successful teacher in an ED classroom?

Identifying practices used by teachers of students with ED could help with the future identification and development of teachers in this field. This study will inform stakeholders involved in the identification and development of teachers of students with ED on trainings and support for these teachers and inform potential teachers and stakeholders of the dispositions necessary for this position. “One way to improve the quality of education is to ensure that all teachers of students identified as emotionally behaviorally disabled possess the knowledge and skills required to address the myriad challenges associated with this difficult population of students” (Gable et al., 2012, p. 501).
Subquestions:

RQ1: How do educators working with students with ED describe the skills necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom?

The first question focuses on the instructional and behavioral management skills needed to gain success with students with ED. The skills needed to help students with ED behave in a more socially acceptable manner and learn all they can are more likely to come from evidence-based strategies. This question affords participants the opportunity to express the skills and practices used for success in the ED classroom. A need exists to identify the special skills required for a teacher of students with ED to gain success in the ED classroom (Kauffman & Badar, 2013). Further, future research involving classroom observations and student participation in the ED classroom to identify helpful practices that work with this population is recommended by Chong and Ng (2011).

RQ2: How do educators working with students with ED describe the knowledge necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom?

The second question was chosen to assist in identifying the knowledge required for teacher success in the ED classroom. Teachers in an ED classroom teach all core subjects and need to have knowledge of these subjects as well as knowledge regarding the characteristics of emotional disabilities and social factors relating to this population. There is a need to address the knowledge required to be successful in this setting and ensure that current and future teachers of students with ED have adequate preparation for this position (Gable et al., 2012). Additionally, Kauffman and Badar (2013) recommended research that investigates what teachers would need to know in order to provide students with ED a “more superior” education than they would receive in the general education environment (p. 24)
RQ3: How do educators working with students with ED describe the dispositions necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom?

The third question of this research affords participants the opportunity to express the personal dispositions they feel are necessary for an ED teacher. Prather-Jones (2011) found teachers of students with ED focused more on internal factors and personal attributes when providing reasons for staying in the field and implied further research into identifying ways in which dispositions could be looked at to assist students in identifying a field in special education may be useful. Practicing teachers have identified teacher affect as at the top of the list when asked about effective teacher qualities and further studies into the dispositions of effective teachers might help inform both teacher selection and training (Watson, Miller, Davis, & Carter, 2010).

RQ4: How do educators define teacher success in an ED classroom?

The fourth question addressed the definition of teacher success in an ED classroom. The criteria for teacher success varies among those in the education field as success can be defined in many ways. “Nevertheless, the criteria for teacher success are usually set by committees made up of professionals in the field, including principals, teachers, and teacher educators” (Cheung Lai-man, Cheng May-hun, & Pang King, 2008). This study explored the criteria for teacher success in an ED classroom through the voices of the teachers themselves, administrators, and behavior specialists in order to formulate a common definition of success for an educator of students with ED.

**Research Plan**

A qualitative study was chosen for this research as it explored an issue that cannot be easily measured quantitatively (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). A qualitative collective case study
design was used to describe the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom through the perceptions of teachers of students with ED, administrators, and behavior specialists. Further, the collective case study allowed this phenomenon to be studied within the context of the K-12 setting (Yin, 2014). This interpretive research seeks not to test a previous hypothesis, but to identify common themes and patterns among perspectives of stakeholders: teachers, administrators, and behavior specialists.

Data collected and analyzed in this research includes interviews, questionnaires, surveys (for descriptive purposes), and relevant documentation (e.g., level systems, classroom rules, incentives). The findings of the collective case study reported on the voices of the participants through description and interpretation of the problem (Creswell, 2013). Through the use of a collective case study, different perspectives were analyzed in the proposed research. This study included data collected from multiple public K-12 schools within South District and is bound by geographic location, time, teacher assignment (ED classroom), and public school settings. The sample size for this study was 12 teachers of students with ED, five assistant principals, and two behavior specialists. Sampling continued until saturation was reached within and across cases (Creswell, 2013; Stake 1995).

This study used open coding for validity purposes. Through the open coding process the researcher was able to divide the data into manageable units and identify concepts that helped determine themes in the data (Corbin & Straus, 2008). Any concepts or themes related to the characteristics necessary for teacher success in the ED classroom were documented. The software used in the study to analyze and code the data was Atlas Ti. This software transcribed and analyzed patterns and themes within raw data. Atlas Ti also assisted with forming relationships among items and processes in order to display interpretive analysis of significance.
Once data is imported and coded it was then tracked by themes. Tools through this software suggested subtle trends and patterns in order to explore the research questions of this study. For this study, data was imported from Microsoft Word and Excel. In the research process, the software was used to analyze data retrieved from interviews, relevant documentations, a survey, and a questionnaire.

The second method used to analyze data is naturalistic generalizations. Creswell (2013) defined naturalistic generalizations as, "generalizations that people can learn from the case either for themselves or for applying it to a population of cases" (p. 154). Using a collective case study approach to display the results, I was able to look for similarities between participants and establish a basis for naturalistic generalization.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

A delimitation of the proposed study is the decision of the researcher to use perceptions of teachers and administrators as a means of exploring the characteristics of successful teachers of ED rather than exploring practices used for successful students with ED. Other delimitations include the participants and the setting in which the study takes place. Participants in this study include teachers of students with ED, administrators in schools with an ED classroom, and behavior specialists; therefore, the number of participants was limited, and all participants work within South District. The administrators chosen to participate in this study were assistant principals assigned the special education population of the school. Another limitation is the survey that will be used as it contains closed-ended Likert scale responses. This scale was used as the ease of completion may make more people willing to complete the survey.

A limitation of this study is a lack of generalizability due to the small sample size and focus on public K-12 schools in South District (Yin, 2014). Therefore, the findings may not
reflect the perceptions of other teachers of students with ED and administrators. It is further
acknowledged that the selected participants may not fully disclose their honest perceptions of
what characteristics are necessary for successful teachers of students with ED. Lastly, the ability
to find participants for this study is limited to teachers who teach in an ED classroom,
administrators assigned to the special education population of the school, and behavior
specialists.

**Definitions**

1. *Dispositions* – “Perceptions of self, perceptions of others, perceptions about subject field, perceptions about the purpose of education and the process of education, and the general frame of reference perceptions” (Singh & Stoloff, 2008).

2. *Skills/knowledge necessary for teachers of students with ED* - Knowledge refers to relevant concepts and information that teachers need in order to work effectively with students with ED and skills refer to a teacher’s ability to use, or engage in, practices that are successful with students with ED (CEC, 2009; Mackie, et al. 1957; Oliver & Reschly, 2010).

3. *Emotional Disturbance (ED)*- is one of the 13 categories of disabilities specified in federal special education law, and under IDEA. Emotional disturbance means “a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:
   (a) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
   (b) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
(c) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.

(d) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.

(e) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

(f) Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34, Section 300.8(a)(4).

**Summary**

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the characteristics of teachers of students with ED through the perceptions of teachers of students with ED, administrators, and behavior specialists working with teachers of students with ED in a South Carolina public K-12 school district. This chapter provided the background and problem statement for the identified gap in literature concerning the characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED. The purpose statement, significance of the study, research questions, and the research plan for the proposed study were discussed. Lastly, delimitations and definitions were presented.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Chapter Two of this research provides the theoretical framework for the study and a review the relevant literature pertaining to the characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED. The theoretical framework will offer Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory as theories that will drive this study. Following the theoretical framework is a literature review on the definition of emotional disturbances, historical and current literature on the characteristics of teachers of students with ED, federal laws regarding special education, and statistics for students with ED.

The theoretical framework guiding this study is Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory as it explains the continuous interaction among one’s beliefs, their environment, and their behavior and it is this triadic reciprocity that drives human functioning (Bandura, 1986). It is the interaction of these three factors that a teacher brings to a classroom and it is this interaction this study sought to identify for successful teachers of students with ED. Bandura (1993) further explained behavior through his theory of self-efficacy and the role it plays in the outcome of a person’s behaviors. Bandura’s social cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory will assist in directing this study as they explore the teacher as a whole person who brings multiple factors to the classroom.

The related literature review for the research presents details on emotional disorders and historical and current information on the characteristics, identification of, and development of teachers of students with ED. A description of what an emotional disturbance is included as background information for a more thorough understanding of the population teachers of students with ED are called to serve. The historical literature is reviewed as a means of
acknowledging the work completed on the triad of skills, knowledge, and personal attributes of teachers of students with ED in the 1950s and 1960s, the shift in the next two decades, and current research on the characteristics of teachers of students with ED is presented. A gap in the literature is identified since the decades of early research into this issue. Concluding the literature review will be a review of federal laws concerning students with ED and the most current data for these students.

**Theoretical Framework**

Albert Bandura is a psychologist who, for almost six decades, contributed to the field of education, and in many ways, to the field of psychology. Initially influenced by Robert Sears’ work on familial antecedents of social behavior, Bandura went on to engage in studies of both social learning and aggression (Pajares, 2004). In the mid-1980s Bandura had fully developed a social cognitive theory of human functioning. Bandura identified human functioning as a dynamic interplay of behavioral, environmental, and personal factors. This work led to a series of research on observational learning and to the social learning theory. Bandura continued his work and in the mid-1980s expanded the social learning theory to what became known as the social cognitive theory (Pajares, 2004). Bandura, in 1997, wrote on his theory of self-efficacy. Bandura’s social cognitive theory continues to thrive in the twenty-first century (Pajares, 2004).

**Social Cognitive Theory**

In 1986, Bandura published *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*. In this book Bandura re-conceptualized individuals as ones that are proactive, self-organizing, self-reflecting, and self-regulating and the prior concept of triadic reciprocity was addressed further. Triadic reciprocity concerns the connections between human behavior, environmental factors, and personal factors (e.g., cognitive, affective, and biological events) and
the reciprocal determinism that explains the casual relations between these factors (Bandura, 1986). According to the social cognitive theory, a person’s behavior is a direct result of a choice to act that is based on cognitively processed information about the self, the environment, and the likely consequences of the chosen behavior. Bandura (1986) referred to this mutual influence as triadic reciprocity.

Bandura’s (1989) tri-modal interplay between the individual, behavior, and the environment illustrated his theory that individuals are not just reactive organisms but have the ability to alter both their environment and behavior (1989). Behavior depends on features of the individual, such as the individual’s expectations or goals and behavior can be conditioned, and this conditioning can control the individual’s behavior. Individual achievement can also be hindered by input from their environment, such as socioeconomic factors, that can limit the opportunities an individual has. However, individuals can also affect their environment (Bandura, 1989). Therefore, according to Bandura (1989) individuals are both affected by and affect their environment.

**Outcome expectations and efficacy expectations.** While knowledge and skills also inform behavior, they do not necessarily predict behavior. A person’s chosen behavior is based on two types of expectations: outcome expectations and efficacy expectations (Bandura, 1986). An outcome expectation, according to Bandura (1986), is the estimate a person has for a chosen behavior to result in the desired outcome and an efficacy expectation is the conviction one has on being able to successfully execute the behavior required to gain the desired outcome. This relates to teachers of students with ED as the more they believe their behavior will have positive outcomes, the more successful they may be in providing interventions. Teacher perceptions of their ability to achieve with their students is an important factor in their success using this theory.
When predicting behavior, one’s perceptions of the outcome and one’s ability to perform are better indicators than the actual skill (Bandura, 1986).

People possess self-reflective and self-reactive capabilities that enable them exercise some control over their thoughts, feelings, motivations and actions. In the exercise of self-directedness, people adopt certain standards of behavior that serve as guides and motivators and regulate their actions anticipatorily through self-reactive influence. Human functioning is, therefore, regulated by an interplay of self-generated and external sources of influence. (Bandura, 1991, p. 249)

When all of these interrelations and inclusion of the individual as an element of personal development are taken together the groundwork is laid for Bandura’s (1991) theory of self-regulation.

**Reciprocal determinism.** Bandura’s concept of reciprocal determinism is the view that three life factors interplay with each other. The foundation for reciprocal determinism lies in the understanding that personal factors (cognition, affect, and biological events), behavior, and environmental influences interact together to produce triadic reciprocity. Pajares (2002) illustrated this reciprocity and the ongoing cycle each influence has on the other as shown below.

![Figure 1. Bandura’s Triadic Reciprocity.](image)
In this model each factor plays an important role in this ongoing reciprocal cycle. The tri-modal interplay between the individual, behavior, and the environment will be used in this proposed study as it explains the connection between these factors for teacher success in a classroom for students with ED.

**Bandura and Self-Efficacy**

Bandura’s emphasis on the ability of individuals to self-organize and self-regulate can be found in his later work on self-efficacy. Self-efficacy was developed by Bandura as part of his larger theory, the social learning theory that eventually progressed into the social cognitive theory. Self-efficacy refers to the perceived ability that a person has to complete a task or activity. A person’s perceived self-efficacy contributes to both cognitive development and daily functioning.

**Self-efficacy and teachers.** Self-efficacy is the idea that people decide how to behave based more on their belief in their own capabilities of accomplishment rather than in their knowledge or skills (Pajares, 2004). Self-efficacy does not simply mean that if you believe in yourself and you will succeed because certain knowledge, skills, and experiences are also prerequisites to success. Teachers are tasked with creating learning environments that are conducive to learning and the ability to achieve this task relates to the talents and self-efficacy of teachers (Bandura, 1993). Therefore, teachers who have a strong self-efficacy, believe in their instructional abilities, are able to create mastery experiences for their students, and improve learning. High self-efficacy also leads a teacher to have high expectations for both their instruction and their students’ learning (Bandura, 1993). The self-efficacy levels of teachers of students with ED may have an impact on their success in the ED classroom. Teachers’ self-efficacy could make a difference in the education delivered in their classrooms.
**Self-efficacy and teachers of students with ED.** The characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED directly relates to the social cognitive theory and self-efficacy. Bandura’s social cognitive theory explains the interactions between teachers’ beliefs, their environment, and their behavior and it is the interaction of these three factors that teachers bring to a classroom environment. The triadic reciprocity explained by this theory addresses the teacher as a whole person, one whose behavior, cognitive, personal factors, and environmental events all operate as a unit, interacting with each other. Self-efficacy addresses the belief a teacher has in his/her ability to complete the task of instructing students and managing the classroom environment. “Teachers who believe strongly in their instructional efficacy support development of students’ intrinsic interests and academic self-directedness” (Bandura, 1986, p. 140). It is the combination of these factors that this study seeks to identify for teachers of students with ED. The social cognitive theory informs this study as it explains the interactions between a teacher’s cognitive factors (knowledge, attitude), environmental factors (social norms, environmental influences), and behavioral factors (skills, self-efficacy). It is the interaction of these factors that will assist in identifying the skills, knowledge, and dispositions of successful teachers of students with ED.

**Related Literature**

When providing a review of literature concerning teacher success in an ED classroom an understanding of what constitutes emotional disturbance is useful. IDEA’s definition of an emotional disturbance is not a simple and clear-cut one and a more in-depth understanding assists in the understanding of this disability category. Thus, adding to an understanding of the characteristics necessary for teachers of students with ED is a view into the characteristics of these students. These characteristics assist in illustrating the diversity of students teachers of
students with ED have and the challenges they face in the ED classroom. A further understanding of the characteristics of students with ED aids in providing background for the students this population that teachers seek to gain success with.

With an understanding of students with ED in mind research is then presented that seeks to identify the characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED. Researchers have addressed the issue of identifying the characteristics necessary for teachers of students with ED to be successful over the past 60 years. Throughout the years research has shifted its focus from the personal attributes and competencies required for teachers of students with ED to just the competencies required for these teachers. Currently, the shift has returned to looking into the personal attributes of these teachers; however, the research has been limited.

Federal law regarding special education students and statistics for students with ED is presented as a means of expressing the commitment made to these students by the United States government and statistical data for students with ED. The issue of providing qualified teacher for this population has not been overlooked in research. Over the past 60 years, research has started to address the characteristics of teachers for success in an ED classroom through research into the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. Further research is warranted in order to gain a deeper understanding of what characteristics are necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. This information will assist in identifying future teachers to work with students with ED and future trainings for teachers currently working with this population.

**Emotional Disturbance**

Students who are referred for a special education evaluation receive an evaluation by qualified school personnel, usually a school psychiatrist. A team consisting of qualified
professionals and parents review the assessment results and all relevant information to determine whether the child has an emotional disturbance under the guidelines of IDEA. Emotional Disturbance (ED) is one of the 13 categories of disabilities specified in federal special education law, and under IDEA. Emotional disturbance means “a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

(a) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
(b) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
(c) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
(d) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
(e) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.
(f) Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34, Section 300.8(a)(4).

This definition requires some further investigation for a complete understanding of the diversity of students identified as having ED.

When addressing the first characteristic of an emotional disturbance the phrase “inability to learn” is used. This phrase is inconsistent with an educational philosophy that all children can learn and leads one to wonder why, if there is an inability to learn, teachers who are qualified to
teach curricula would serve the student. If this term is meant to mean a significant problem exists in student learning then intellectual disabilities may be a concern. However, a student can have a learning disability and an emotional disturbance concurrently (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2014).

The second characteristic in this definition concerns interpersonal relationships. This refers to students who have a pervasive inability to develop relationships throughout a variety of situations and settings. “Examples of student characteristics include but are not limited to: physical or verbal aggression when others approach him or her; lack of affect or disorganized/distorted emotions towards others; demands for constant attention from others; and withdrawal from all social interactions” (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2014, p. 22).

Students with emotional disturbances may also exhibit inappropriate behavior and/or feeling under what others would consider normal situations. The Arkansas Department of Education (n.d.) states this characteristic may be exemplified in actions such as mood swings, looking depressed without any regard to the situation, daydreaming, inappropriate response, morbid thoughts, continuous talking, showing poor judgment, and having neurotic complaints. Although the last four characteristics are somewhat clearer, overall, the definition does not lead to an identification that is simple and clear. “Poor interpersonal relationships may be demonstrated when students struggle with making friends, fighting, and a lack of ability to communicate effectively with others” (Arkansas Department of Education, n.d., p. 3).

The last three characteristics are a little clearer. Students who struggle with depression may express this in behaviors such as insomnia or hypersomnia, fatigue or diminished energy, unexpected changes in weight, and loss of interest in formerly pleasurable activities. Students
with emotional disorders may also have fears and/or physical symptoms around personal or school problems (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2014). The fifth and final characteristic concerns the medical diagnosis of schizophrenia. This medical diagnosis in itself is an indicator under IDEA for eligibility as a student with an emotional disability.

There are many variables that enter into the identification process and an understanding of each of these variables is necessary. Further, the disability category of emotionally disturbed is used as an umbrella term for several mental disorders such as anxiety disorders, bipolar disorders, conduct disorders, and eating disorders (CEC, 2015). Consequently, teachers of students with ED address many different forms of emotional disturbances in their classrooms. Likewise it is for this diversity of students that teachers need to have the appropriate skills, knowledge, and dispositions to gain success with in the ED classroom.

Additionally, students with ED may exhibit characteristics and behaviors such as hyperactivity, aggression, self-injurious behavior, withdraw, immaturity, and learning difficulties (CEC, 2015). It is necessary for a teacher of students with ED to know and understand each of these characteristics and disorders as well as have the skills and knowledge to serve these students appropriately. Also, personal characteristics, dispositions, such as internal motivation, interest in emotional disturbances, and flexibility; also play an important part in teacher success with this population (Prather-Jones, 2011).

**Historical: Early Work on Personal Attributes and Competences of ED Teachers**

The need to identify competencies necessary for successful teaching of students with ED is not a new one. Researchers have completed studies seeking to identify the skills and knowledge necessary for successful teachers of students with ED over the past 60 years. Throughout these years the dispositions of teachers of students with ED have also been studied.
in an attempt to identify the dispositions necessary for teachers of students with ED. However, research including all three factors (knowledge, skills, and dispositions) for teacher success in an ED classroom is limited in literature.

U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Mackie et al., (1957) studied 75 superior teachers of students who were socially and emotionally maladjusted with the goal of identifying the skills, knowledge, and abilities required for success with this population. The study was part of the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare’s (1961) move to pinpoint the skills, knowledge, and abilities required for teachers of exceptional children. The project is described as:

An exploratory and preliminary way, to give serious consideration to the appropriate role of the teacher in a program for the socially and emotionally maladjusted, primarily through an analysis of the specific and distinctive competencies that will be required to do a good job in this area (Mackie et al., 1957, p. 1).

The study included a focus on the personal attributes and competencies needed by teachers of students who were socially and emotionally maladjusted through the perception of teachers working with this population.

The results of the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1961) study on requirements for teachers of exceptional children were provided to leaders in this field to assist in developing more effective teacher training programs. The practice of identifying important characteristics of teachers of students with ED and using this information to guide preservice training of teachers has continued since that time (Bullock & Whelan, 1971; Dorward, 1963; Gable et al., 1992).
Focus on types of programs and schools. This early interest in teachers of students with ED shifted in the late 1950s and very early 1960s when researchers focused more on the type of programs and schools available for students struggling emotionally and socially rather than on personal attributes and specific skills and knowledge for teachers of this population (Morse, 1965; Pate, 1963). Further, psychiatrists who dealt with mental health and psychological issues in children were the primary focus of research during this time and little work was done to address the mental health needs of students within the school setting.

However, according to Kirk (1962), a movement arose to include a focus on mental hygiene in the school context and this movement was the precursor to current programs that serve students with ED.

Pate (as cited in Dunn, 1963), agreed with Kirk (1962) stating the role of teachers of students with ED included addressing mental health and psychological issues of these students. This marks the emergence of teachers’ roles in relation to the mental hygiene of students in public schools. The term mental hygiene, at this time, referred to maintaining and restoring mental health and did not recognize the importance of academics. Recognizing the need to serve mental health needs in the school brought up another issue. Pate (1963), furthered the research on a teacher’s role in this area recognizing the shortage of teachers that had prompted “many governmental agencies to assist in recruiting and training” teachers of students with emotional disabilities (p. 274). So, not only were there a limited number of teachers for this population but also a limited number of professionals who could serve these students emotional and academic needs. Kirk (1962) also argued that a focus on mental health and psychological issues should not be at the expense of academic instruction. Therefore, recognition of the need to address social, emotional, and academic needs of students within the school system began to develop. Along
with this need came another need – the need to address the characteristics of a successful teacher to work with this population. From here, research into the characteristics of teachers of students with ED was further explored.

**Early research on characteristics of Teachers of Students with ED.** Research continued throughout the 1960s with Long, Morse, and Newman (1965) producing a book, *Conflict in the Classroom*, describing the development of the Re-education of Emotionally Disturbed Children (Re-ED) approach to working with students with ED. Dr. Nicholas Hobbs, a pioneer in the area of ED, developed this new paradigm for treating children with severe emotional disturbance in the early 1960s (Newman, 2012). Hobbs (as cited in Newman, 2012) described the most effective worker for troubled children as one who would be:

A decent adult; educated, well trained; able to give and receive affection, to live relaxed, and to be firm; a person with private resources for the nourishment and refreshment of his own life; not an itinerant worker but a professional through and through; a person with a sense of the significance of time, of the usefulness of today and the promise of tomorrow; a person of hope, quiet confidence, and joy; one who is committed to children and to the proposition that children who are emotionally disturbed can be helped by the process of reeducation (as cited in Newman, 2012, p. 26).

This early definition identified characteristics for an effective teacher of students with ED and Hobbs’s (as cited in Newman, 2012) work provided outlines for the characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED in *Conflict in the Classroom* (Long, et al., 1965). Mackie and his colleagues (1957) addressed competencies needed for teachers of students with ED and Hobbs (Newman, 2012) spoke to personal attributes required for success with this population. Through research on competencies and personal attributes a complete picture of a quality ED teacher was
sought. Nonetheless, an exploration of the teacher as a whole person (Bandura, 1986) may lead to a clearer picture of a successful teacher of students with ED than what was sought by researchers of this period such as Mackie et al., (1957) whose work sought to identify just the competencies needed for teachers of students with ED.

**Historical: The Shift to Research on Specific Competencies for ED Teachers**

After the early focus on ED teacher preparation and identification, there was a shift in the literature and research on the characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED. As noted previously, the early literature included the importance of specific competencies and personal attributes for successful teachers of students with ED (Dorward, 1963; Kirk, 1962; Mackie et al. 1957). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the primary focus of preservice teacher training and related research, including the area of ED, shifted to identifying specific competencies, with little attention to the personal attributes required for teachers (Bullock, Dykes, & Kelly, 1974; Bullock et al., 1994; Gable et al., 1992).

It was during this time that the Competency Based Teaching Model (CBTM) appeared and became the dominant model for preservice training for teachers of students with ED and related literature (Blackhurst, McLoughlin, & Price, 1977). CBTM continues to be the dominant model used in research pertaining to the characteristics of successful teacher of students with ED and research into the characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED (Brownell, Ross, Colon, & McCallum, 2005). CBTM relies on the competencies identified in research that are directly related to teachers’ observable behaviors rather than their personal attributes, which are harder to observe (Brownell et al., 2005). During this time period there was an assertion that personal attributes were difficult to measure and to define on observable means (Prather-Jones, 2011). This shift led research away from looking at teachers’ dispositions as predictors of
successful teaching; however, current literature reflects there is some interest in looking at teacher dispositions once again.

**Special Education Teacher Preparation and Continuing Development**

The question of how special education teachers should be prepared for their teaching assignment is one that continues in current research (Elik, Wiener, & Corku, 2010; Oliver & Reschly, 2010; Vernon-Dotson, Floyd, Dukes, & Darling, 2014). As researchers seek to identify the best coursework for special education teacher candidates they have also viewed attitudes as important. Elic et al., (2010) discussed the key role being ready to learn and having open-minded thinking has on future success of special education teacher candidates. Leko, Brownell, Sindelar, and Murphy (2012) stated features that are emerging as effective in facilitating pre-service teachers’ development of expertise include:

1. Coursework that blends content knowledge with procedural or pedagogical knowledge
2. Pedagogies that promote active learning
3. Coursework aligned with high-quality field experiences
4. Opportunities for special education and general education pre-service teachers to collaborate
5. Extended, rather than abbreviated, opportunities to learn to teach (Leko et al., 2012)

Preparing teachers to work with students with ED involves both coursework in core subjects and in evidence-based practices that support the success of these students.

**Evidence-based practices.** Simpson et al. (2011) presented a fundamental model for effective practice among students with ED. The fundamental components for effective practice, connected to a qualified and committed professional, were identified as environmental supports,
behavior management systems, valid social skill, interpretation, and interaction programs, academic support systems, parent and family involvement programs, and community support mechanisms (Simpson et al., 2011).

Academically, students with ED, by definition, exhibit “an inability to learn that is not explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors” (IDEA, Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34, Section 300.8(a)(4)). Consequently, the academic interventions required by this population may be different than those required by other student populations. The academic success of students with ED is significantly in danger without using evidence-based practices (Vannest, Harrison, Temple-Harvey, Ramsey, & Parker, 2011).

Several studies focused on teacher preparation of evidence-based practices in the area of behavior management as students with ED exhibit challenging behaviors. As exhibited in the definition, and clarifying examples, for emotional disturbances, behaviors of students with ED are both diverse and challenging.

Children with emotional or behavioral disorders are characterized primarily by behavior that falls significantly beyond the norms of their cultural and age group on two dimensions: externalizing and internalizing. Both patterns of abnormal behavior have adverse effects on children’s academic achievement and social relationships. (Heward, 2006, p. 223)

As students with ED are primarily identified by behavior concerns, classroom management and intervention techniques are extremely important. Oliver and Reschly (2010) studied the preparation of special education teachers in the area of classroom management and found that special education teachers may not receive adequate training in meeting the behavioral needs of students.
**Classroom management skills.** In order to address the need for both pre-service and in-service teachers of students with ED, the educational community needs to make known a knowledge base of effective practices and provide the coursework and training necessary to support accurate implementation of these practices (Kern, 2015). One vital skill needed by teachers is classroom management. A solid skill base in classroom management can assist a teacher perceive more ability to gain success in the ED classroom (Kern, 2015).

The skill of classroom management is identified by the CEC for teachers of students with ED; therefore, preparation in this area is essential for success (CEC, 2009). Also, during this time, the CEC, in 2009 and 2012, published standards for the preparation of special education teachers with a distinct specialty set for teachers of students with ED that addresses the need for behavior management. CEC’s “Initial Special Education Emotional and Behavior Disorders Specialty Set” (2012) includes a section on skills that illustrates the need for teachers of students with ED to have pertinent and particular skills related to the learning environment. The skills needed for these teachers, as identified by CEC (2012) this specialty set are:

- Create a safe, equitable, positive, and supportive learning environment in which diversities are valued
- Identify realistic expectations for personal and social behavior in various settings
- Identify supports needed for integration into various program placements
- Design learning environments that encourage active participation in individual and group activities
- Modify the learning environment to manage behaviors
- Use performance data and information from all stakeholders to make or suggest modifications in learning environments
- Establish and maintain rapport with individuals with and without exceptionalities
- Teach self-advocacy
- Create an environment that encourages self-advocacy and increased independence
- Use effective and varied behavior management strategies
- Use the least intensive behavior management strategy consistent with the needs of the individual with exceptionalities
- Design and manage daily routines
- Organize, develop, and sustain learning environments that support positive intra-cultural and intercultural experiences
- Mediate controversial intercultural issues among individuals with exceptionalities within the learning environment in ways that enhance any culture, group, or person
- Structure, direct, and support the activities of paraeducators, volunteers, and tutors
- Use universal precautions (CEC, 2012, sec. 3)

The above skills are listed to illustrate the variety of skills required for a teacher of students with ED. Gaining the necessary skills identified by CEC as ones needed for Initial teachers of students with ED, requires extensive coursework, continuing professional development, and practice in an ED setting.

Management of student behavior was also the topic of a study by Lane et al., (2015) in which it was found that teachers perceived knowledge and perceived confidence pertaining to the use of functional-assessment based interventions improved dramatically after a year-long training on functional-assessment based interventions among students with disabilities. These studies and the CEC (2012) identified the skills of classroom and behavior management as ones
requiring professional training. Oliver and Reschly (2010) indicated there is a need to identify the appropriate approach to coursework for pre-service teachers of students with ED to assist them in becoming extremely skilled and confident with both classroom organizational and management techniques.

When identifying suitable skills for classroom management the skill of forming quality teacher-student relationships may lead to more positive outcomes for students with ED. As teachers of students with ED improve their relationships with their student’s simultaneous improvement in classroom behaviors such as compliance and aggression can be seen (Alderman & Green, 2011). Teacher-student relationships begin the very first day of school and teachers understanding the impact of forming positive relationships may fare better with classroom management. For students with ED relationships can lead to vast social improvements. “Students have also shown improvement in their social interactions, higher degrees of social competence, an enhanced sense of well-being, improved academic achievement, and reductions in school failure” (Alderman & Green, 2011, p. 39). Therefore, how connected students feel to the teacher impacts their success and how to form positive teacher-student relationships should be included in teacher preparation and training.

**Coursework.** Researchers addressed the question on coursework necessary for teachers of students with ED. Conderman, Johnston-Rodriguez, Hartman, and Kemp (2013) presented preservice teachers with both methods courses and clinical trials. Participants in this study reflected having a better understanding of the role of a secondary special educator and a higher level of confidence in applying learned skills. Should more clinical trials be included in special education teacher preparation? Shillingford and Karlin (2014) examined knowledge of ED among pre-service teachers and found there was not a significant correlation between field work,
further coursework, and being familiar with a child with ED and knowledge of ED. Clinical experiences may increase confidence levels among pre-service teachers; however, coursework imparting a knowledge-base for working with students with ED is also a necessary component for pre-service special education teachers.

The personal dispositions one brings to the classroom are not addressed through preparation programs; however, need to be addressed as they are further predictors of teacher success with students with ED. Teachers’ attitudes have an influence on how effectively resources are used and how successfully interventions are implemented to improve student mental health according to a study completed on pre-service teachers’ attitudes, readiness to learn, and open-minded dispositions (Elik et al., 2010). Hence, addressing a student’s personal dispositions for working with the behavioral challenges presented by students with ED may be a useful activity. This fact, leads to a discussion on research into how special educators are prepared for the population of students they intend to serve. Conderman et al. (2013) found that “few researchers have studied how special education teachers are prepared; thus, creating a vacuum in developing a comprehensive model or theory of special education teacher preparation” (p. 196).

The CEC notes in their standards that teachers of students with ED need to have knowledge of the scope and sequence for both general education curricula standards and special education interventions (CEC, 2012). This is quite a vast amount of knowledge as it covers all core subject areas (i.e. English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies) across all grade levels. While teacher preparation programs seek to cover the curricula, knowledge needed they must also seek to cover the particular skills and knowledge needed for special
education teachers. Although there have been limited studies in the area of special education teacher preparation, some research has been done.

**Continuing education.** Training for special education teachers can occur both at a traditional block and mortar school or online. In their literature review, Vernon-Dotson et al. (2014) found that traditional and online course were equally effective in preparing teachers in the field of special education. However, the authors caution that with so many types of course delivery, more research in this area is recommended. With a variety of delivery modes, pre-service and in-service teachers have options to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for their careers.

Professional development, opportunities offered through staff development and outside the school environment, are one way for teachers to improve their skills and knowledge. As special educators seek to meet the unique needs of their students continuing professional development programs are necessary. For the ED teacher, this may be especially true as they work with students who have complex needs (Canico, Albrecht, & Johns, 2013). The need to improve both pre-service and in-service training and support in order to increase implementation and sustainability of effective practices for teachers of student with ED is underscored by Kern (2015):

> When we fully impart our knowledge base of effective practices to pre-service teachers provide adequate training and supports to in-service educators so that those practices are implemented accurately and convince school staff to take ownership of all students, we have hope of improving the outcomes of students with EBDs. (p. 26)

Webinars is one way teachers of students with ED can continue their education and increase their skills and knowledge with this population (CEC, 2015). Canico et al., (2013) further emphasized
the importance of teachers of students with ED to attend conferences and participate in professional developments that address the unique needs of students with ED in order to remain current in their field.

**Teacher Efficacy**

Teachers bring their own natural traits, learned behaviors, and characteristics to their profession as unique individuals and this impacts the classroom in which they teach. Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as the set of beliefs a person holds regarding his or her own capabilities to produce desired outcomes and influence events that affect his or her life. Consequently, a person who perceives success in a given behavior may see greater success than a teacher who does not perceive success for the same behavior. Applying the theory of self-efficacy to teachers, Tschamnen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001) described teacher self-efficacy as the perception teachers have of their own competence and ability to shape students’ knowledge, values, and behavior. Therefore, a teacher’s self-efficacy plays a role in teachers’ abilities in the classroom (Steele, 2010).

The expectation a teacher has for a student is influenced by the teacher’s beliefs and attitudes about the student and the student’s conduct (Teklu & Kumar, 2013). As this expectation can make a difference for teacher success identifying positive dispositions of teachers of students with ED is important as positive, professional dispositions are supportive of both student learning and development (The National Council for Accreditation of Teachers Education, NCATE, 2008). Gaining a deeper understanding of the dispositions of successful teachers of students with ED could lead to better identification and training of these teachers. “Building an understanding of the psychological profiles of effective teaching may help with selections training, and professional development of new and experienced teachers” (Klassen &
Tze, 2014, p. 73). Identifying positive dispositions in successful teachers of students with ED through the perceptions of stakeholders working with this population may assist with identifying future teachers in this field.

Teacher efficacy also has an impact on instructional planning. Dibapile’s (2012) review of the literature explored teacher efficacy and classroom management and found that teacher efficacy does influence planning effective instructional strategies and increases the performance of teachers. Teachers who have the knowledge of effective strategies and plan to use these strategies may have a greater impact on student achievement. “Teacher self-efficacy can influence teachers to be effective and manage difficult students” (Dibapile, 2012, p. 81). Klassen and Tze (2012) also addressed teacher self-efficacy in a meta-analysis and found teacher self-efficacy measures typically showed a closer fit with teacher effectiveness than did personality measures.

How effective a teacher’s interventions are is fundamentally related to the skills and comfort level of the teacher (Gebbie, Ceglowski, Taylor, & Miels, 2012). Through professional development and preservice coursework teachers can learn the skills required to work with students with ED and may feel more capable of using these skills in the classroom. When teachers perceive they are capable of making a difference in students with ED through the use of their skills they are more likely to be successful (Gebbie et al., 2012). The proposed study seeks to include dispositions when identifying characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED.

**Characteristics of Teachers of Students with ED**

Studies have been completed in the past two decades that relied on previous literature, teacher-preparation programs, and experts in the field to identify the skills and knowledge
necessary for successful teachers of students with ED (Bulloc, et al., 1994; Cooley-Nichols, 2004; Walker & Cheney, 2007). While identifying the skills and knowledge required the need for training in these skills and knowledge arises. The need for training in evidence-based strategies is evident for teachers of students with ED as evidenced through teacher perceptions of their preparedness (Prather-Jones, 2011). Additionally, the skills required for teachers of students with ED may be more specialized. There is a need to identify the “special skills” necessary for teacher success in and ED classroom (Kauffman & Badar, 2013).

Gable et al. (2012), compared special and general education teachers’ preparedness to implement evidence-based strategies for students with emotional disabilities and found special education teachers were slightly more prepared than general education teachers; however, both sets of teachers needed additional training in evidence-based strategies. A need exists to increase preservice teacher knowledge of ED and the strategies for working with this population (Shillingford & Karlin, 2014). Therefore, there have been studies relating to the skills and knowledge of teachers with ED; however, these studies did not address dispositions of teachers of students with ED.

**Dispositions.** The importance of dispositions as predictors of success for teachers of students with ED has not gone unnoticed. During an interview Frank Wood, a pioneer in the ED field, stated, “a lot of your teaching is filtered through and colored by your own personality” (Zabel, Kaff, & Teagarden, 2011, p. 131). As each teacher brings their own personality to the classroom the uniqueness of the individual impacts the manner in which one teaches. A teacher’s attitude has an influence on how well interventions are implemented and resources are used in the classroom (Elik et al., 2010).
Prather-Jones (2011) examined personal attributes of teachers of students with ED who stay in the field and Chong and Ng (2011) studied teacher perceptions of useful practices for success with students with ED in Hong Kong; however, skills and knowledge were not explored in these studies. Both of these studies explored the personal attributes of teachers and their perceptions on what characteristics are necessary for successfully teaching students with ED and presented findings useful to identifying teachers of students with ED.

Literature documented the vital need to identify and prepare teachers for students with ED (Maggin et al., 2011; Simpson et al., 2011). One reason for the shortage of teachers for students with ED is the number of teachers leaving the field (Prather-Jones, 2011). Prather-Jones (2011) addressed longevity of this population of teachers by examining the role teachers’ personalities play in whether or not they stay in the field. This study found that teachers of students with ED focus more on internal factors and personal characteristics than on external factors when identifying reasons for staying in the profession. “These teachers felt rewarded by the idea that they were ‘doing the right thing’ and ‘making a difference’ in children’s lives, even if it was a difference that they themselves would never see” (Prather-Jones, 2011, p. 184). From this finding Prather-Jones (2011) concluded that the retention and attrition of teachers of students with ED was not only affected by the workplace but also from internal factors. Wood, interviewed by Zabel et al., (2011) discussed his personal perception as an ED teacher stating:

When you’re in the classroom, you’re free to be yourself. A lot of teaching is filtered through and colored by your own personality. I don’t think of myself as a particularly dramatic type but know that I enjoyed that freedom to express myself. (p. 131)

This quote exemplifies the importance placed on dispositions and intrinsic factors for teachers of students with ED. Prather-Jones (2011) further hypothesized that internal factors and personality
characteristics may be even more important than workplace factors when it comes to teachers of students with ED staying in the field. In this study the major factors influencing whether a teacher stayed in the field were personal characteristics and support. Personal characteristics included traits such as intrinsic motivation, flexible, sincere interest in children with ED, and aware and accepting limitations. Support needed included administration, collegial, and assistance during the first few years of teaching.

**Perceptions.** Several studies illustrated the high value teachers of students with ED place on their perceptions and personal attributes (Canico et al., 2013; Nartgün, 2010; Watson et al., 2010). Nartgün’s (2010) study, based on the perceptions of special education staff, suggested special education teachers identify the need to have continuing training as necessary. Hecker et al., (2014) studied teacher perceptions of the internalizing and externalizing factors students with ED exhibit and identified six major themes of behavior problems that could help guide professional development for teachers of students with ED. Utilizing teacher perceptions, Canico et al., found the most cited reason teacher of students with ED gave for leaving the field was lack of administrative support. Prather-Jones’ (2011) study also examined whether teachers of students with ED felt they were properly prepared for their position, through preservice teacher preparation or in-service trainings, and found that the majority of teachers participating in the study felt they were not prepared for their teaching assignment. Yet, Mattison (2014) speculated that teachers of students with ED do not give themselves enough credit for the work they do:

> I don’t believe that EBD teachers are currently “selling” their field very well, particularly to the critics. That is, I don’t think they are communicating effectively to those outside their field about the complexity of the “whole” students they teach and the severity of these students’ disorders. Though I believe that EBD teachers on the front lines
appreciate this complexity and severity, their appreciation gets lost in the literature. To me, once you understand who students with EBD really are, it becomes somewhat amazing that so many do so well – a tribute, often in large part, to the work of EBD teachers. (p. 108)

The perceptions of teachers of students with ED on the identity of helpful practices that assist with gaining success for these students assisted Chong and Ng (2011) in formulating a conceptual framework to provide a “more holistic view of possible approaches for improving students’ behaviors in schools” (p. 184). Chong and Ng’s framework for managing students with ED consists of eight thematic approaches around the centralized topic titled “Good leadership & collaboration, staff professionalism & a caring community” (2011, p. 185). The thematic approaches are: eco-systemic, social, cultural, behavioral, cognitive, psychodynamic therapeutic, religious/spiritual, and the medical or pharmacological (Chong & Ng, 2011). Perceptions of teachers of students with ED were utilized in this study to assist researchers in identifying what works in the ED classroom.

Knowledge and skills. Students with ED may be served in the general education classroom or the special education classroom; therefore, both general and special education teachers need to have knowledge and skills to work successfully with these students. Gable et al., (2012) examined perceived knowledge and skills to work with students with ED from the viewpoint of general and special education teachers. The study found that special education teachers identified more evidence-based practices as important as general education teachers, there was agreement on the importance of crisis intervention plans and having clear rules and expectations, and there was agreement on the most important and most used practice was positive behavior supports (Gable et al., 2012). Both general and special educators indicated
they did not have the preparation necessary to implement other classroom level practices (Gable et al., 2012).

Knowledge outside of evidence-based practices is also prudent for those working with students with ED. Zabel et al., (2011) interviewed Frank H. Wood, a pioneer in the education of students with ED, and discussed future knowledge needed to best serve this population of students and Wood identified a more thorough understanding of brain function and medication as two areas in which our knowledge is growing. As more is learned about brain function and medication teachers of students with ED need to be aware of the implications this knowledge brings and what interventions may be appropriate. “One way to improve the quality of education is to ensure that all teachers of students identified as emotionally behaviorally disabled possess the knowledge and skills required to address the myriad challenges associated with this difficult population of students” (Gable, et al., 2012, p. 501).

**Professional Organizations**

The CEC published the sixth edition of professional standards for “Initial Special Education Teachers of Individuals with Exceptional Learning Needs with Emotional and/or Behavioral Disorders” in the book *What Every Special Educator Must Know* (2009, p. 99). CEC has been addressing standards for special educators since the founders of CEC embraced the idea of professional standards and ethics for those in special education. This book contains ten standards addressing the knowledge, skills, and personal attributes initial special education teachers of students with ED must have. These standards were further addressed in 2012 when CEC published Specialty Sets reflecting the knowledge and skills necessary for safe and effective practice of those working in the Special Education field. The revised initial and advanced CEC standards have been approved by the NCATE (CEC, 2012).
The standards clearly identify the skills and knowledge special education teachers should have; however, the standards do not clearly articulate which items in each standard are related to personal attributes. There are seven subsets of standards for the Special Set for Initial Special Education Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: (1) Learner Development & Individual Learning Differences; (2) Learning Environments; (3) Curricular Content Knowledge; (4) Assessment; (5) Instructional Planning & Strategies; (6) Professional Learning & Ethical Issues; and (7) Collaboration (CEC, 2012). Each of these subsets addresses knowledge and skills separately.

**U.S. Public Laws and Statistics**

The number of students with ED consistently increased following the inception of the IDEA (2004). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), the increase continued through 2010 where a slight decrease was seen. This decrease may be attributed to under-identification of this disability (Forness et al., 2012). Although the number of students identified with ED has decreased, students with this disability still make up 0.8 percent of the population of public schools. Teachers with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to assist this population of students gain success are still needed.

| Children 3 to 21 years old served under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B, by type of disability: Selected years, 2001-02 through 2011-12. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Emotional Disturbance Number served (in thousands) |
| 480 | 483 | 485 | 489 | 477 | 464 | 442 | 420 | 407 | 390 | 373 |
| Number served as a percent of total enrollment |
| 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.8 |
Figure 2. Number of students identified with emotional disturbance (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013).

Yet another reason for identifying qualified teachers to work with students with ED is the negative outcomes for these students. Students in this category have, and continue to experience, a higher rate of negative school and post-school outcomes than do their peers in both general and special education (USDOE, 2013).

IDEA, passed in 1990 and reauthorized in 1997 and in 2004, is a United States federal law that “protects the rights of students with disabilities by ensuring that everyone receives a free appropriate public education (FAPE), regardless of ability” (IDEA, 2004). IDEA, which serves individuals until age 21, amended the Education for Handicapped Children Act (EHA), or Public Law 94-142 of 1975. In August 2006, Part B of IDEA, which deals with school-age children, was published. At this time, the definition of a highly qualified special education teacher was further revised thus exemplifying the commitment to provide students with special needs a quality education from a qualified teacher. Given the commitment made to these students by the USDOE through the IDEA (2004) identifying the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for teacher success in the ED classroom may lead to better identification of these teachers, trainings for these teachers, and better classroom outcomes.

Summary

Bandura’s social cognitive theory is presented as the theory guiding this study as the tri-modal interplay between the individual, behavior, and the environment was used in this study to explain the connection between these factors for teacher success in a classroom for students with ED. The characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED directly relates to the social cognitive theory and self-efficacy.
Bandura’s social cognitive theory explains the interactions between teachers’ beliefs, their environment, and their behavior and it is the interaction of these three factors that teachers bring to a classroom environment. The triadic reciprocity explained by this theory addresses the teacher as a whole person, one whose behavior, cognitive, personal factors, and environmental events all operate as a unit, interacting with each other and it is this tri-modal interplay between the individual, behavior, and the environment that explains the connection between these factors for teacher success in a classroom for students with ED. The social cognitive theory will inform this study as it explains the interactions between a teacher’s cognitive factors (i.e. knowledge, attitude), environmental factors (i.e. social norms, environmental influences), and behavioral factors (i.e. skills, self-efficacy). It is the interaction of these factors that will assist in identifying the skills, knowledge, and dispositions of successful teachers of students with ED.

The related literature review presents detailed information concerning the definition of emotional disorders and students identified as having an emotional disorder. A literature review of characteristics of teachers of students with ED is presented. The review suggests that there have been studies on the characteristics of teachers of students with ED; however, they have primarily focused on teacher competencies. The early work in this field did focus separately on the personal attributes and competencies necessary for teachers of students with ED.

Recent studies have focused primarily on the skills and knowledge necessary for teachers of students with ED (Gable, et al., 2012, Kauffman & Badar, 201, Zabel et al., 2011) Therefore, there have been studies relating to the skills and knowledge of teachers with ED; however, these studies did not address dispositions of teachers of students with ED. As shown in this literature review there is a gap in current literature that describes the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for successful teachers of students with ED. The primary focus of this study was to
identify the skills, knowledge, and dispositions of teachers of students with ED by drawing on the perceptions of those working in the field. The research will add to the body of literature on characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED and address the gap in the literature that currently exists.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of Chapter Three is to define the methods of the research study. This chapter addresses the research design and provides the central research question and subquestions for the collective case study. Sections describing the setting, participants, procedures, and role of the researcher will follow. Next, the procedures followed for data collection and analysis will be described. The chapter will end with a discussion on trustworthiness and ethical considerations for the proposed research design.

Design

The study used a qualitative research design and collective case study methods. A qualitative research design was followed in this research as it afforded the researcher the opportunity to collect data in a real-life setting (Yin, 2014). Data collected and analyzed in this research included interviews, questionnaires, surveys (for descriptive purposes), and relevant documentation (i.e., classroom level systems and classroom expectations). The collection of the four data sources provided the researcher with the means to use triangulation and improve the trustworthiness of the research (Creswell, 2013).

A qualitative design was used as the research examined a specific population of teachers, administrators, and behavior specialists and the experiences they share in seeking teacher success in a classroom for students with ED. The rationale for this approach is centered upon seeking an understanding of the current, real-life issue of teacher success in a classroom for students with ED. Further, the parameters for a bounded system included a special education self-contained classroom for students with ED. Merriam (2009) stated “The more cases included in a study, and the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be”
The study design included multiple cases (teachers of students with ED, administrators, and behavior specialists) to assist with gaining more vigorous findings. Yin (2014) discussed using several cases to study as providing a more ideal situation for the researcher. “The evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust” (Yin, 2014, p. 63). Yin (2014) and Merriam (2009) both described the parameters and structures necessary for a collective case study and the present research falls within these guidelines.

Through the use of a collective case study, different perspectives were used and analyzed in the research. This study included data collected from multiple public K-12 schools within South District and is bounded by geographic location, time, teacher assignment (ED classroom), and public school settings. The findings of the case study report on the voices of the participants through description and interpretation of the problem (Creswell, 2013).

**Research Questions**

**Central Question:**
What characteristics does a person need to be a successful teacher in an ED classroom?

**Subquestions:**

RQ1: How do educators working with students with ED describe the skills necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom?

RQ2: How do educators working with students with ED describe the knowledge necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom?

RQ3: How do educators working with students with ED describe the dispositions necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom?

RQ4: How do educators define teacher success in an ED classroom?
Setting

This collective case study used multiple settings for data collection. The settings were comprised of various elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and a therapeutic day school in a South Carolina district. The sites for data collection were selected based on meeting the criteria of having a classroom for students with ED. Data was collected in a site chosen by each participant in order to provide each participant a location where they may be more likely to share honest, in-depth data free from hesitations (Creswell, 2013).

Data for the study was collected in K-12 public schools and a therapeutic day school in South District (pseudonym). The school district serves over 40,000 students and is located in South Carolina. This setting was chosen for its proximity to the researcher and will afford the researcher more time to conduct interviews and collect documentation.

Participants

Participants were identified using purposive sampling in South District. Purposeful sampling was used as it involves choosing participants who can specifically provide a better understanding of the central phenomenon being explored (Creswell, 2013). The teacher participants were certified in the area of ED and currently teach in a K-12 ED classroom. Administrators consisted of assistant principals and behavior specialists in charge of special education at a school(s) with a minimum of one ED classroom. Assistant principals are chosen for this study as schools have an assistant principal assigned to work with the special education population. The sample size for this study was 12 teachers of students with ED, five assistant principals, and two behavior specialists. Sampling was continued until saturation was reached within and across cases (Creswell, 2013; Stake 1995).

Procedures
The proposed study was submitted to the Institutional Review Board for approval. Approval was received and the required paperwork for district approval for the study was submitted. After permission to conduct research in South District, schools with ED classroom were identified and contact was made via email with the assistant principal primarily handling students with disabilities, behavior specialists, and teachers assigned to an ED classroom. Potential participants were contacted through email, informed of the general purpose of the study, voluntary participation in the study, and presented with a consent form if they choose to participate (Creswell, 2013).

The first contact to potential participants provided 15 participants for the study; therefore, follow-up emails were used to identify more participants. Once participants were identified for the study, interviews were scheduled and completed. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. At the time of the interview appropriate consent forms were signed and collected. Documentation was collected either in hard copy or through email. Participants completed an open-ended questionnaire on evidence-based practices (Appendix C) prior to the interview. The Teacher Efficacy Scale (Appendix E) was emailed to participants following the interview. All data collected was analyzed per the procedure outlined in data analysis.

The Researcher’s Role

I am currently employed as a teacher of students with ED. The school year 2017-2018 will mark my 18th year serving students with emotional disabilities. During these years I have acted as the special education department chair for six years and have mentored three new
special education teachers. As the human instrument of this proposed research study I need to ensure that I conduct myself with integrity and conduct the study with fidelity.

Due to my position, and years of experience in the field, I have developed my own perceptions of what works in an ED classroom and what doesn’t. I will need to be sure that my personal biases do not have an effect on the study. I do not have a personal relationship with any of the teachers or administrators participating in the study. I do; however, work within the district and have a professional relationship with one of the behavior specialists. My relationship with teachers of students with ED in the district is professional and communication only occurs at district trainings. Therefore, my professional relationship with potential participants exists with minimal contact except in the instance of a behavior specialist with whom I interact with frequently. I will use current literature and case study protocol outlined by Creswell (2013) and Yin (2014) in an attempt to minimize biases.

**Data Collection**

The first step in data collection was to obtain IRB approval for the proposed research. A letter was sent to the district describing the proposed study (Appendix G) to obtain permission to collect data from the school district’s employees and permission was granted. After necessary approvals were obtained, potential participants were emailed an outline of the study and an invitation to take part in the study. Potential participant emails included a letter explaining the research purpose, methods, procedures, confidentiality, and ethics involved in the study (Appendix I). Participation in the research was on a voluntary basis and participants signed a consent form (Appendix J). The original email was resent, and a follow-up phone call was made to potential participants who do not respond to the original email (Appendix J).
The research employed a collective case study approach, triangulating data from multiple data sources. Data was collected from individual interviews, relevant documentation, a questionnaire (Appendix C), and the Teacher Efficacy Scale (Appendix E). The collection of the four data sources provided the researcher with the means to use triangulation and improve the trustworthiness of the research (Creswell, 2013). Through triangulation of the data, converging lines of inquiry can be developed, findings are more likely to be more convincing and accurate, and the case study may be considered to have higher overall quality (Yin, 2014). Data was collected from multiple K-12 schools within South District and is bounded by geographic location, time, teacher assignment (ED classroom), and a public school setting.

**Questionnaire**

The first method of data collection focused on 20 evidence-based practices for students with ED (Gable, et al., 2012). A significant number of students with ED display acting-out, disruptive, and/or aggressive behavior in the school environment (Kerr & Nelson, 2010; Simpson, et al., 2011). Literature shows that these negative behaviors have a negative impact on students with ED academics (Burke, Boon, Hatton, & Bowman-Perrot, 2015). Teachers serving students with ED must be prepared to address the diverse needs of this population through the use of evidence-based practices (Gable et al., 2012).

The evidence-based practices that were used in this questionnaire come from a study completed by Gable et al. (2012) on the importance and preparedness of teachers of students with ED to implement evidence-based strategies. Gable et al. (2012) conducted a hand search of articles focusing on reviews of the literature on students with ED and strategies discussed in textbooks in order to identify evidence-based practices for success with students with ED. “One way to improve the quality of education is to ensure that all teachers of students identified as ED
possess the knowledge and skills required to address the myriad challenges associated with this difficult population of students” (Gable et al., 2012, p. 501). The study identified 20 evidence-based strategies to utilize in a survey for general education and special education teachers working with students with ED as a means of identifying the present knowledge and skill level of these teachers. Permission was granted to use the twenty evidence-based practices identified in the Gable et al., (2012) study for the questionnaire of the present study (Appendix D).

This questionnaire on evidence-based practices was used to provide participants the opportunity to express their perceptions and thoughts on evidence-based practices as an entry point to the research and the interview process. This questionnaire also corroborated other data collected and further explored practices used in the classroom and perceptions on these practices. The questionnaire contains two parts. The first part prompts participants to respond to 20 evidence-based practices with their perception of the value of the practice and the second prompt asks them the degree to which they either utilize the practice or observe teachers utilizing the practice (Appendix C).

**Interviews**

The second method of data collection was individual semi-structured interviews focusing on the perceptions of knowledge, skills and dispositions of successful teachers of students with ED and demographic information of the interviewee. Research questions used during the interview were open-ended, general, and focused on the central phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2013). Interviews took place at a time and location agreed upon by the participant and interviewer. During the interview the research questions were followed, staying focused on the central phenomenon, and probing for further information when the occasion arose (Appendix A).
All interviews were recorded using two digital recording devices to capture all data and the researcher transcribed data verbatim.

Open-Ended Teacher Interview Questions

Demographic

1. What is your educational background, including degrees, certification, and years of experience in the ED classroom?

Background

2. How and why did you get into this field?
3. In what ways do you meet the needs of students of ED in your classroom?
4. How well prepared do you consider yourself to be to work with students with ED?
5. How do you define student success in the ED classroom?

Dispositions

6. What dispositions, personal characteristics, do you feel are important for teachers of students with ED? Why?
7. If you had to identify a primary disposition necessary for a successful teacher of students with ED what would it be? Why?

Academic Skills and Knowledge

8. What academic teaching skills do you feel are important for teachers of students with ED? Why?
9. What strategies/skills do you use to encourage socially acceptable behavior in your classroom?
10. Please provide me with an effective method you have used to teach socially acceptable behavior?
Behavior Management Skills and Knowledge

11. In your opinion, what skills, for behavior success among students, are necessary for teachers of students with ED?

12. In your opinion, what knowledge, for behavior success among students, is necessary for teachers of students with ED?

Teachers of Students with ED

13. What environmental factors do you perceive as necessary in order for teacher success in an ED classroom?

Participant Comments

14. What else would you like to add to this study?

The purpose of the first question was to gather demographical information on the participant’s educational background, degrees, and years of experience considering internal motivation has been identified as a predictor for success and longevity in the field (Prather-Jones, 2011) and personal attributes and knowledge are related to success in the ED classroom (Chong & Ng, 2011). The second question of the interview is meant to gain an understanding of the internal and external motivations the participant has for entering the field and will assist in identifying personal characteristics, dispositions, for successfully staying in the field (Prather-Jones, 2011). The concept of self-efficacy is also addressed by the second question. Self-efficacy helps determine our life choices, it motivates us, and it helps us deal with failures and setbacks in life (Bandura, 1993). Questions three and four will assist the researcher in gaining an understanding of the perceived self-efficacy of the interviewee. Bandura (1989) described perceived self-efficacy as the degree to which a person believes he or she has the ability to
successfully reach the desired result. These questions will provide the researcher with information on the interviewee’s perceived self-efficacy.

As a means of addressing dispositions during the interview process, questions five and six seek information regarding necessary dispositions for successful teachers of students with ED through the perceptions of the participants. Identifying positive dispositions of teachers of students with ED is important because positive, professional dispositions are supportive of both student learning and development (NCATE, 2008).

Students who are academically low performers are considered to be at a greater risk for behavior problems when faced with a difficult academic task they may exhibit inappropriate behavior as a means of avoiding the task at hand (Oliver & Reschly, 2010). This avoidance may be seen in the student with ED. As the roles of special education teachers are changing special educators may find themselves in the role of a content area instructor (Vannest & Hagan-Burke, 2010). Therefore, teachers of students with ED may find themselves instructing in core content areas for which they may not feel prepared. Questions seven through nine pertain to the academic skills and knowledge possessed by successful teachers of students with ED and the application of these academic skills and knowledge in the ED classroom.

The quality of education received by students with ED is also impacted by the nonacademic skills and knowledge a teacher of students with ED possesses (Gable, et al., 2012). Interviewees will be asked to describe personal skills and knowledge as they relate to behavior in questions 10 and 11. Questions five through 11 also correspond to Bandura’s social cognitive theory as the theory explains the interactions between a teacher’s cognitive factors (i.e. knowledge, attitude), environmental factors (i.e. social norms, environmental influences), and behavioral factors (i.e. skills, self-efficacy). These questions will assist the researcher in
understanding each factor individually in order to gain an understanding of the interaction of the factors. It is the interaction of these factors that will assist in identifying the skills, knowledge, and dispositions of successful teachers of students with ED. The final question of the interview affords participants the opportunity to express any further information they feel may be useful to the research.

Open-Ended Assistant Principal and Behavior Specialist Interview Questions

*Demographic*

1. What is your educational background, including degrees, certification, and years of experience?

*Background*

2. How long have you been working with students with emotional behavioral disorders and what is your current role?
3. In what ways do you meet the needs of students of ED in your classroom?
4. How well prepared do you consider yourself to be to work with students with ED?
5. How do you define student success in the ED classroom?

*Dispositions*

6. What dispositions, personal characteristics, do you feel are important for teachers of students with ED? Why?
7. If you had to identify a primary disposition necessary for a successful teacher of students with ED what would it be? Why?

*Academic Skills and Knowledge*

8. What academic teaching skills do you feel are important for teachers of students with ED? Why?
9. In your opinion, what knowledge, for academic success among students, is necessary for teachers of students with ED?

Behavior Management Skills and Knowledge

10. In your opinion, what knowledge, for behavior success among students, is necessary for teachers of students with ED?

11. In your opinion, what skills, for behavior success among students, are necessary for teachers of students with ED?

12. What environmental factors do you perceive as necessary in order for teacher success in an ED classroom?

Participant Comments

13. What else would you like to add to this study?

The second set of interview questions, for assistant principals and behavior specialists, is similar to the teacher set of interviews with the exception of the demographic questions (Appendix B). The demographic questions pertain to the qualifications of the participant and the current role the participant plays in the students with ED educational program as a means of confirming the participant qualifies as a participant in the proposed study.

Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale

The Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (Hoy & Woolfork, 1993) was utilized to “provide information on self-efficacy as it plays a central role in one’s abilities to effectively serve students” (Silverman & Davis, 2009, p. 2). The scale (Appendix E) was explored using description only. The scale was appropriate to use as self-efficacy impacts one’s choices, effort, and feelings towards self, others, and tasks (Bandura, 1986). The belief a teacher has in their ability to make the right choices and complete necessary tasks in an ED classroom may affect
their perceptions on the dispositions, knowledge, and skills necessary for a successful teacher of students with ED. Therefore, the descriptive data gained from this scale corroborated other data collected in the study and provided a richer insight into a teacher’s belief in the ability to gain the desired result with her students. For this research permission was granted to use Hoy and Woolfork’s (2003) short form of the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (Appendix F).

Documentation

The final method of data collection concerns classroom management documents of participating teachers’ classrooms. This documentation consists of items pertaining to expectations, reward systems and/or level systems, daily point sheets, type of communication used with parents and within the school, and forms for data collection. This documentation directly relate to the evidence-based practices used by teacher and provided additional information on the skills and knowledge utilized with students with ED on a daily basis. This documentation provided data on practices that are used in the classroom on a daily basis and assisted in corroborating and augmenting other evidence collected as part of the study (Yin, 2014).

Data Analysis

The collective case study approach required that the researcher find out what people are experiencing in regard to the phenomena being studied (Yin, 2014). A collective case study approach was used for this research, as it will afford the researcher an opportunity to find out what the characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED are through the perceptions of those working with this student population. An important step in a qualitative study is to bracket out the researcher’s experiences; this helps the researcher maintain an unbiased view during the data analysis phase of the study (Yin, 2009). Further, according to Yin (2014), an awareness of
the researcher’s experiences should reflect in the analysis of data, as this is what researchers refer to as reflexivity.

Data was collected through a questionnaire, interviews, the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale, and relevant documentation. Researchers can achieve triangulation through the use of different data sources to confirm one another in an effort to corroborate the information obtained from the participants (Yin, 2014).

A questionnaire on evidence-based practices was used to provide participants the opportunity to express their perceptions and thoughts on evidence-based as an entry point to the research and the interview process. corroborate other data collected and to further explore practices used in the classroom and perceptions on these practices. Interviews were then completed transcribed verbatim. I will begin to search for patterns or insights that may be useful as data analysis progresses. Analysis of each form of data will include an initial read through of all data (taking notes/highlighting and then coded into similar categories as themes emerge (Creswell, 2013). This proposed study will use open coding for validity purposes. Through the open coding process, the researcher will be able to divide the data into manageable units and identify concepts that will help determine themes in the data (Corbin & Straus, 2008). Data will then be organized into categories, similarities and differences, through the use of open coding. Index cards will be used to organize the responses from the interviews and the relevant documentation into the two categories of similarities and differences based on interpretations of characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED. The Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale helped to provide additional data in an effort to establish patterns and themes among variables. The relevant documents collected at the interview affords the researcher to view knowledge, skills, and dispositions through practices used in the classroom and interviews afford the
researcher the opportunity to hear the perceptions of participants and their lived experiences. As concepts are found each was given a code name as a label. This process allowed me to identify patterns and themes in the data analyzed based on how many times a concept occurs. Summaries of the findings were noted as perceptions for characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED.

The software used to analyze and code the data is Atlas Ti. This software analyzed patterns and themes within raw data. Atlas Ti also assisted with forming relationships among items and processes in order to display interpretive analysis of significance (Atlas Ti, 2012). Once data was imported and coded it was tracked by themes. Tools through this software suggested subtle trends and patterns in order to explore the research questions of this proposed study. The literature review was then saved, tracked, and compared to the data entered into Atlas Ti. Atlas Ti imported results from a variety of programs, for this proposed study data was imported from Microsoft Word and Excel. In the research process software was used to analyze data retrieved from interviews, relevant documentations, a survey, and a questionnaire.

The second method I used to analyze data was naturalistic generalizations. Creswell (2013) defined naturalistic generalizations as, “generalizations that people can learn from the case either for themselves or for applying it to a population of cases” (p. 154). Using a collective case study approach allowed the researcher to look for similarities between participants and, perhaps, establish a basis for naturalistic generalization.

Trustworthiness

To ensure a high degree of trustworthiness, four essential criteria were adhered to in this study.
Credibility

The first criterion to address, concerns how believable the research is to the reader (Trochim, 2006). The research will seek to provide direct quotes of participants to ensure their perceptions and meanings are conveyed as they intended (Creswell, 2013).

Transferability

Transferability concerns the ability of the research to be generalized to other contexts (Trochim, 2006). In an effort increase transferability, the study will contain a detailed account of the participants’ experiences by providing thick, rich descriptions (Creswell, 2013).

Dependability

Dependability refers to the level that the results of the study can be repeated (Trochim, 2006). Member checks will be incorporated into my research plan so participants will be afforded the opportunity to proofread their responses to assist in ensuring the data collected, transcribed, and analyzed is congruent with their intentions and statements (Creswell, 2013).

Confirmability

Trochim (2006) discussed confirmability, which is the degree to which others can corroborate the research, and this study will use interview and questionnaire questions reviewed with an expert in the field prior to data collection. Interviews will be digitally recorded (Creswell, 2013) and participant member checks of interview transcripts will increase the confirmability of study findings (Yin, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

Formal approval from the Institutional Review Board of Liberty University will be granted before any steps are taken in this proposed research. Further, before research can begin
approval to conduct research in the school district used in the study will be obtained. Each participant involved in the study will sign a consent form that will be filed by the researcher. All participants will be informed of the central phenomenon of the study, data collection procedures, and how confidentiality will be ensured through security of all data collected.

An external auditor will be used to ensure the researcher’s findings are a truthful representation of the data. The external auditor is qualified to complete this audit as he has worked with students with ED for more than 25 years. The external auditor for this research will not be eligible to participate in the study as a participant.

Summary

This chapter identified the current research as a qualitative study utilizing a collective case study. Rationale was provided for the research design, selected site, and participants of the proposed research. The steps for completing the proposed research study were clearly outlined in the procedures section of this chapter. The data collection process was presented with information on each type of data collected (interviews, documentation, questionnaires, and surveys). The procedure used for data analysis is outlined.

The research design of this qualitative study was identified as a collective case study. The rationale for using collective case study design was clearly articulated and appropriate justification was stated. The site and participants were identified along with the rationale for why the site was chosen for the proposed research study. Data was collected from four various sources during the study and data analysis procedures were discussed. The procedures to strengthen the trustworthiness of the proposed research study were outlined. The chapter concluded by identifying and addressing ethical considerations of the study.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

In this chapter, an in-depth look at the data analysis and findings of the collective case study are discussed. The chapter begins with a detailed description of the participants. A
description of the process used for identifying themes is then provided. Next, the themes and sub-themes are discussed in detail. Lastly, the results are presented and are related to the central question and sub-questions that guided this collective case study.

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom through the perceptions of teachers of students with ED, administrators, and behavior specialists in South District. The central question of this study sought to identify the characteristics of teachers of students with ED teaching in an ED classroom. Subquestion 1 focused on the instructional and behavior management skills necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom and Subquestion 2 focused on the instructional and behavior management knowledge necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. Subquestion 3 focused more on internal factors and personal attributes by seeking to identify the dispositions necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. The final research question sought to define what was viewed as teacher success in an ED classroom in order to attempt to formulate a common definition of success for an educator of students with ED.

There have been studies relating to the skills and knowledge of teachers with ED; however, these studies did not address dispositions of teachers of students with ED. Recent studies have focused primarily on the skills and knowledge necessary for teachers of students with ED (Gable, et al., 2012, Kauffman & Badar, 201, Zabel et al., 2011). The rationale for doing this research study with the central research question and subquestions came from a lack of literature examining the skills, knowledge, and dispositions of successful teachers of students with ED by drawing on the perceptions of those currently working in this field.

For the collective case study, data was collected from interviews, surveys (for descriptive purposes), and relevant documentation. A questionnaire on evidence-based practices was the first
piece of data collection given to participants. This provided a foundation for the knowledge and skills of those who work with students with ED and was used to explore practices used in the classroom and perceptions on the use of these practices. Participants then participated in an interview and were asked if they would like to contribute relevant documentation to the study. Participants were asked to complete the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale for descriptive purposes on the efficacy of teachers serving students with ED. Participants were selected using purposeful sampling based on their role with students with ED in South District. From these data sources, open coding was initially used to determine broad themes and then data was analyzed using Atlas Ti software. Finally, data was analyzed using naturalistic generalizations. The final themes are presented in the results section of this chapter.

**Participants**

Within this collective case study, each participant met the criteria for this research. All teachers that participated in the research are certified in the area of ED and are currently teaching in a K-12 ED classroom. The assistant principals, and behavior specialists participating in the study also met the criteria of working with a school with a minimum of one ED classroom. Purposeful sampling was used as it afforded participants the opportunity to share their opinions concerning the dispositions, knowledge, and skills of successful teachers of students with ED. The twelve teachers, five assistant principals, and two behavior specialists participating in this research represented ten schools in South District. Each participant completed the Evidence-Based Practices survey, was interviewed independently, completed the Teacher Efficacy Scale survey, and was invited to share classroom documentation as it pertains to the skills and knowledge used by teachers of students with ED. Before data collection began participants signed an informed consent form (Appendix J).
In order to maintain anonymity for participants in the study, each participant was given a pseudonym. The pseudonyms used came from a list of Tropical Storm and Hurricane names for the years 2016 and 2017 and were chosen at random for each participant. The sample size for the collective case study was 19 participants, which included teachers of students with ED, assistant principals, and behavior specialists. During a semi-structured interview, participants shared information about themselves and their beliefs on the skills, knowledge, and dispositions of a successful ED teacher. The following participants were used in this study:

Table 1:

*Participant Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of Service</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Assigned Grade Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arlene</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>ED Teacher</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>ED Teacher</td>
<td>K-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>ED Teacher</td>
<td>9-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gert</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>ED Teacher</td>
<td>K-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bret</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>ED Teacher</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>ED Teacher</td>
<td>K-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>ED Teacher</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>ED Teacher</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophelia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>ED Teacher</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rina</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>ED Teacher</td>
<td>K-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tammy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>ED Teacher</td>
<td>K-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitney</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>ED Teacher</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bonnie  Female            13              Administrator           K-12
Colin  Male                       11   Administrator   6-8
Danielle Female                       17   Administrator   K-5
Fiona  Female                       24   Administrator   6-8
Julia  Female            34   Behavior Specialist           K-12
Matthew Male                       24   Administrator   6-8
Karl  Male                       32   Behavior Specialist           K-12

*Note:* All names used in this study represent pseudonyms.

Participants are described more fully in the following narratives.

**Arlene**

Arlene is a middle school teacher in South District. She has undergraduate degrees in sociology and criminology and a master’s degree in social work. Arlene worked in the mental health field within the school environment, in real estate, and as a substitute teacher prior to becoming a teacher. Her background in mental health, psychology, and sociology, she feels, made her a “perfect fit” as an instructor in an ED classroom. Teaching is her second career and she became certified to teach through a program for alternative certification and this is her seventh-year teaching. She is certified as an ED teacher only and prefers to hold this single certification. Arlene loves teaching students with ED and the other students who meet the criteria to be placed in her classroom. She is currently working on her second master’s in administration.

Arlene feels she is very prepared now to teach in the ED classroom yet she did not feel this way at the beginning of her career as an ED teacher. The years of experience she has and trainings she received have provided her with a more thorough grounding for this position.
Speaking on preparation for the position, Arlene stated she does not know “how you could do it without the background in mental health, psychology, sociology, or one of these degrees.”

**Cindy**

Cindy teaches in a K-5 ED classroom in South District and currently has eight students. She has a bachelor’s degree in Psychology and then went through a program for alternative certification to become certified as an ED teacher. She has been working in the ED classroom since 2004. At first Cindy thought she wanted to “get into something with juvenile justice.” She enjoys working with students who have behavior/emotional problems and stated she just loved to work with children. Prior to working in an ED classroom, she provided Autism therapy, but she didn’t care for this type of interaction with children as much as she likes her current position. Her current position meets her career desire of working with students with emotional/behavioral challenges who are elementary aged, and she has been teaching in South District for 14 years.

When Cindy first began teaching in an ED classroom she did not feel prepared for the position. Due to becoming certified through an alternative route to certification she did not have an internship or any experience in an ED classroom and this, she said, “It’s like there you are – go ahead. I felt like I was thrown to the wolves.” Cindy went on to say that she still feels she is learning and that she is now confident with her classroom management skills.

**Emily**

Emily is an ED teacher originally from New York. She has bachelor degrees in K-6 general education and special education and a master’s in Literacy. Emily has been teaching for 16 years and has been at her current school in South District for six years. The students she teaches are all high school students who struggle emotionally/behaviorally.
Emily did not have any intention of becoming a special education teacher when she went to college as a returning adult student; however, she had a professor who “saw something in me that I didn’t know existed” who pushed her to take a temporary position in a high school special education resource class. During this assignment, she met a male student, Fred, who had been a self-imposedmute since he was a young child. Emily stated the student would simply walk from class to class without completing any work. Emily began talking to Fred every day and her temporary position went on for several months. “The temporary position turned into several months and my position was cut when NCLB came down the pike.” Upon learning she would be leaving she went to Fred and explained. Fred actually spoke and said, “I’m going to burn down the school” and Emily replied, “Let’s work with that” and they walked and talked. Emily cried while telling the Chancellor of the school about this amazing occurrence. Emily then was determined to work with older special education students who struggled emotionally/behaviorally.

Emily meets the needs of her students by making sure their physical and emotional needs are met. First thing in the morning she does a quick check-in with her students to find out if her students have needs that should be addressed before they begin school. She stated students may be hungry, cold, tired, upset about a fight at home, or maybe were abused that morning or the night before. This is why, she stated, having a strong relationship with each of her students is so very important. Her students know she will help them address any problem they are having, and she will take them to a counselor or behavior interventionist if they don’t want to talk to her. Emily firmly stated that these types of needs must be addressed before academics can begin.

Another way Emily meets the needs of her students is identifying what they already know and then teaching them what they need to know based on the standards. She differentiates her
learning materials as she has students who are on several levels academically in her room. Emily discussed one student who refused to complete any Social Studies work and she asked him why and the student responded that he already know all the stuff he needed to know. Emily then went on to ask him questions based on the standards and if he could answer questions on one standard right he would not have to study that standard; however, if he was unable to provide the correct responses he would be instructed on the standard in question. Providing students with meaningful learning activities is engaging and respectful to the student as these students, Emily stated, are “not the type of kids that you say everyone open up to page 25 and answer the questions.”

When asked if she felt she was prepared to teach in an ED classroom, Emily stated that she felt being an ED teacher was a calling for her and she could meet their psychological and emotional needs. However, she did not feel prepared to teach the academics and found herself learning what she was teaching one day, or even one hour, ahead of her students. Emily concluded “I thank God that he gave me a couple of IQ points to rub together so I could learn what I needed to teach my kids.” Emily feels well prepared as an ED teacher at this point in her career.

Gert

Gert has a bachelor’s degree in psychology, a master’s degree in Special Education, and chose to become a teacher as “once I saw the kids I knew I wanted to work with them.” She started working with children with Autism with a Young Autism Program that used an intense behavior modification system with the goal of having the young children ready to enter Kindergarten by the age of 6 in their home district. She then worked with a county in New York
through early intervention services where she continued to work a lot with children with Autism. She began working in an ED classroom when she moved to South District.

**Bret**

Bret has a bachelor’s degree in History and is certified as a middle school teacher and an ED teacher. He has been working in an ED classroom for five years and is currently serving students in grades six through eight. Bret started out teaching because he liked to work with children and “sharing that spark when they discover they are learning.” Bret started teaching in an ED classroom after he had worked with a substance abuse treatment program for teens.

Bret meets the needs of his students is by providing them with an environment that is nonjudgmental yet acknowledges that there are consequences for negative behaviors. He feels that experience provides the one with the most preparation to work with students with ED. Bret also feels his flexibility provides assists him in being adequately prepared to work in an ED classroom.

**Irene**

Irene has been teaching in South District as an ED teacher for nine years. She has a bachelor’s degree in childhood education and a master’s in cognitive behavioral disorders. Irene knew she was going to be a teacher ever since she was young and when she was in high school the college she chose to attend changed the degree she sought to dual certification, so she became certified in both regular and special education. When she found out she would be dually certified she thought “What in the world, I don’t want to be a special education teacher;” however, during her college years she worked as a paraprofessional with special education students and she decided that special education was the field for her.
Irene was placed in an ED classroom for her student teaching assignment and she fell in love with teaching in this environment and she has worked as an ED teacher ever since. Irene currently teaches in an ED classroom for K-5 students. Irene feels very blessed this year as she has two paraprofessionals working with her in her classroom that can have students in six different grades. She feels she meets her students’ needs by working with each student individually. When Irene first began teaching in an ED classroom she stated she had no idea what she was doing, and she learned more and more about this challenging position every day. She feels well prepared now due to her experience in an ED classroom, earning a master’s degree in cognitive behavioral disorders, attending trainings through South District, and help from others in South District.

**Katia**

Katia has a master’s degree in special education and has been teaching in South District as an ED teacher for the past six years. Teaching is Katia’s second career having started out with a degree in information systems and teaching software development. Her job, teaching adults for a software company, involved traveling and when she tired of the travelling she thought teaching would be a good career. Her mother is a teacher and she was inspired by her to go into education. After receiving her master’s degree, she tried out teaching in an ED classroom and loved it.

The main way Katia meets the needs of her students is by providing what is in their IEPs and other things they may need. She stated,

A lot of times what is in their IEP is not what they need long term because in a classroom it is about making sure they are comfortable, making sure they get along with other students, and making sure they get what social component they need.
Katia addresses each individual need to the students in her classroom and ensures she gets to know them and form a positive relationship. She considers herself pretty well prepared to teach in an ED classroom and backed this up by saying she has her lesson plans completed way ahead of time and she makes sure she always has a back-up plan and an emergency plan. Her instructions are ready when the students enter the room as she feels structure is very important for these students. Katia has an agenda on the board so there are no surprises and her students know what is expected.

**Maria**

Maria teaches special education in an elementary school in South District. She has a bachelor’s degree in special education and a master’s degree in Learning Disabilities and Emotional Disabilities. Maria has been teaching students with special needs for 33 years and has taught in an ED classroom for 10 years. She entered the field of special education because it was a growing field in education at the time she was working on her master’s degree. She noted that teaching in an ED classroom is “most definitely a challenge”. Maria enjoys working with young students at the elementary age.

Maria seeks to meet the needs of her students by providing a caring, structured, safe environment with clear rules and consequences. She meets the academic needs of her students by having a safe environment where learning is fun, and it is okay to fail. Her lessons are well planned ahead of time and follow the “I do, we do, you do” structure. Maria feels she is well prepared to teach in an ED classroom.

**Ophelia**

Ophelia has been teaching as a special education teacher for 18 years. Ophelia was dually certified in elementary education and special education when she graduated college. She
first taught in a general education room and described this experience as one that “didn’t strike me as interesting in the least” and was “monotonous.” When she entered her first placement in special education she found that she preferred working with students who couldn’t help themselves and needed someone to advocate for them. At that point, she began her career path in special education and she states she has “not looked back.”

It was by pure happenstance that Ophelia became an ED teacher. In New York she had a ninth-grade student that was autistic and emotionally disabled that she was able to form a good connection with. For the next three years this particular student was placed under Ophelia’s care at school by both the student’s parents and school administration. This reinforced Ophelia’s desire to work with emotionally disabled individuals.

Ophelia meets the needs of her students by setting high expectations academically and behaviorally and expecting her students to be the best people they can be. She believes high expectations meets a need her students have that may not have been met elsewhere. Giving her students her time and listening to them is another way she meets their needs. Ophelia expounded on this stating: “Yes, we are in school for academics; however, academics have to take a back seat when you are in an emotional upheaval. They can’t focus on academics then. What they need is for you to listen.” Ophelia feels prepared to work with students with ED as her background is in Psychology and she feels comfortable in the advice she gives students and the strategies that she uses.

**Rina**

Rina graduated from high school with honors and went on to get a bachelor’s degree in science and education and a master’s degree of science from the University of Tennessee. She is currently in her 16th year of teaching in a kindergarten through grade 5 ED classroom. While
Rina was in high school she decided to become a special education teacher after working as a peer mentor in a cross-categorical special education classroom. Her degree is in special education; however, she had not specifically decided to teacher students with ED at this time. After moving to South District, the only job opening was in an ED self-contained classroom. Rina was hesitant about the position at first; however, decided to accept the position. She states she has never regretted that decision and she enjoys the challenge of teaching students with ED.

Rina provides for her students by offering them “a safe and comfortable environment where they can receive their academic instruction as well as receive strategies to help them understand and control their emotions.” She feels well prepared to work in an ED classroom as she has gone on to be specifically certified in the area of ED and annually she attends professional developments on behavior management and crisis prevention.

Tammy

Tammy attended Seton Hall University and graduated with a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and developmental disorders. Several years later she then went on to earn a master’s degree from Nova Southeastern. Tammy began teaching students with ED in New Jersey immediately after graduating with her bachelor’s degree. The school she worked at in New Jersey was an inner city private school with 24 severely emotionally disturbed students. The experience of working in such an intense environment provided Tammy with invaluable experience. At this point she realized that working with students with ED was to be the focus of her career. Upon leaving the private school she went on to teach in a high school ED classroom for one year. It was at this point that Tammy moved to South District and taught in an elementary ED classroom for 10 years.
After teaching students with ED for 10 years Tammy decided she was ready for a change and took a position as a general education elementary teacher for the next 10 years. This past year an opening became available for an ED teacher and a district behavior specialist asked her if she was interested in the position. On this career transition Tammy stated, “I was excited to combine all I learned in regular education into working with ED kids. That experience made me a much stronger teacher with my students that were on grade level.”

Tammy always knew she wanted to teach young children and having met some kids with disabilities growing up she felt impelled to work with this population. At college, she interned in many different classrooms and this provided Tammy with exposure to students with various disabilities. Tammy stated that she found her passion with the ED population and enjoys her chosen career.

Each day Tammy meets her students at the breakfast table and spends time socializing with them. “It is an informal and relaxed way to find out how they are feeling each morning. Some might need a little extra attention or a distraction to get them focused and set them up for success.” After breakfast, a social skills class is held in which she targets a plethora of skills. Tammy stated that this is her favorite part of the day and is a great way to meet student needs. The rest of the school day in her classroom looks like most other classroom. She teaches grade level reading and math and if a student is not on grade level they go to a resource class for that subject. Tammy further stated that one way she ensures she is meeting her students’ needs is through continuous progress monitoring for academics and behavior. This allows her data to be put into a spreadsheet and analyzed. Her students are provided with two incentives a day that they can earn based on their daily contract which helps with motivate them to have a good day.
During Tammy’s senior year in college she was provided great insight into how it felt to be a teacher of students with ED. She also had taken several specific courses to help her understand the roles emotions play in learning. “From this, I considered myself prepared for my first couple of years teaching. After many year of teaching ED and regular education, I realize I had so much more to learn!” Tammy stated practicing and developing a tiered level system was a critical component to learn before she started feeling success in the ED classroom.

Whitney

Whitney is a long-term special educator. She has been teaching for 39 years and continues to teach at the age of 75! Whitney shared her story of becoming a special educator by discussing her family and the success she has had with her children. This is when Whitney first got “a feel for behavior and what I could do.” Whitney moved to Cincinnati for about 12 years and one of her neighbors was superintendent of schools and asked her to become a substitute. He then asked me to go back and get certified in behavior education. Whitney earned her master’s degree and has been teaching in in behavior classes ever since.

Whitney feels she meets the needs of her students by being consistent and not showing her emotions. For an example Whitney provided the following:

A student said something really cutting to another student and I went to the board and wrote minus 10 minutes recess and he said, “you might as well make it 20” so I did. Then he said, “you might as well make it 30” and I did. That’s our whole recess. He behaved the next day.

The point Whitney was making was that she didn’t show any emotion because if you let them see your stress, hurt because of things they said, or any fear you may have they will use it in a
negative way. Whitney strongly believes one best meets the needs of students with ED by being firm and consistent yet caring at the same time.

**Bonnie**

Bonnie has a bachelor’s degree in psychology and a specialist degree in school psychology. She is certified as a school psychologist and as an education administrator. Bonnie worked as a school psychologist for eight years, as a special education director for two years, and is currently working as an administrator of a day treatment program.

As a young child, Bonnie knew that she wanted to have a career in a profession that afforded her the opportunity to help others and during high school she found that she was interested in psychology. As Bonnie progressed through her career as a school psychologist she found she had a strong passion for working with students who had significant behavior challenges. Bonnie found that her favorite students to work with were the “students that no one wanted!” She worked with day treatment programs in South District and in Wisconsin so when the opportunity arose to be the administrator of a day treatment program in South District she took the position. Bonnie feels her position of leading an amazing staff of individuals with the same passion for students with severe social-emotional deficits has be extremely rewarding.

Bonnie is an administrator at a day treatment program and student needs are met individually and the whole school uses a behavior system that includes a level system. Students can earn points every 30 minutes and their individual behaviors are also tracked at this time. This way students know what level they are on and what the rewards and consequences are based on their behaviors. Bonnie states that the entire staff, consisting of teachers, paraprofessionals, and counselors, are all consistent with this intervention. Bonnie also ensure that each student
receives individual behavior counseling at least every other week, crisis counseling as needed, and group counseling an hour a day.

With her prior experience as a hands-on school psychologist she feels very prepared to work with students with ED. Bonnie received training in brain injury and although it is different from ED it does have a behavior set and; therefore, provides her with knowledge in behavior as well. Bonnie has also had training in counseling children.

Colin

Colin graduated from a university in Ohio and was certified as a K-6 teacher and began teaching in South District. He went on to get his master’s degree in educational leadership and worked as a coach and assistant principal for two years and then moved into his current position of assistant principal for the past three years. He feels he was well prepared for his administrator position.

When asked how long he had been working with students with ED, Colin responded he had been working with students with ED since he first began teaching. He feels that some of the children he served as an elementary teacher would have fit the characteristics of a student with ED. Colin went on to tell a story of one student he taught. “When I taught kindergarten, I had a child that was probably suspended and went to a hear over 100 days. He was six-years-old and would stand on the table and threaten to kill everyone with scissors.” Therefore, Colin stated, he had been working with students with ED his entire 11 years in the education system. As an administrator at a school with an ED classroom he works with students with ED frequently. He currently working with an ED classroom for students grades 1 through five.

Colin meet the needs of his students with ED beginning the minute they walk through the school door each day. He has students who don’t go their classroom first and instead go check in
with a school-based counselor with a set plan to assist them in gaining success each day. Colin also assists in making sure each student that needs counseling services, individual or group, receive the needed service. Further, each student has a behavior intervention plan that he follows to a “T” and makes sure the techniques the IEP team has placed in the plan are used and the IEP is fully implemented. His school also addresses the academic needs of each student with ED by making sure they are receiving the correct educational component whether it be grade level instruction or specialized instruction through special education curriculum. Colin also stated that the IEP team and other stakeholders in the school are constantly looking at data to ensure they are meeting student needs and if they are placed in an ED classroom that it is the right placement.

We don’t want that to be a definite for students, like as soon as they get in there they never get out – we are constantly looking at that to see if they are ready, if my ED teacher has really worked on/with the student that wants to go out to regular education and if they can.

Colin also meets the needs of students with ED by holding them accountable for their behaviors. He states that as a school they do everything possible to keep students with ED in school by having consistent communication with parents and by following behavior intervention plans. Special transportation is also provided for some students with ED to help students have a safe ride to and from school.

Colin discussed how prepared he was when he began as a teacher as “trial by fire”. I really felt like year after year I just seemed to have one-half of my class that was a behavior problem and one-half of a class that wasn’t.” The first school Colin taught at had a system in which parents could request a particular teacher for their child. Parents didn’t request me because
I had already had one of their children, they requested me because their child didn’t have a father and I was a male role model. I taught first grade and “they had such a rough kindergarten year they thought a man could fix everything, you know what I mean?” Colin did not feel adequately trained for this; however, he feels he is prepared now after he gained experience. Since he became an assistant principal he has received de-escalation training and other training South District offered. Colin believes that just because someone is an assistant principal and has gone through all the trainings does not mean that person has the right temperament to work with students with ED. “I know people who are great people, but it is like oil and water, they don’t mix. You know what I mean. It is what it is.” Colin does feel prepared to work with students with ED between his experience and the trainings he has had.

Danielle

Danielle is an administrator at an elementary school with an ED classroom. She has a master’s degree in reading and a master’s degree in administration. Danielle loves being an administrator and she loved teaching. She has worked with students with ED since she has become an administrator; however, she had students with behavioral struggles placed in her classroom when she was teaching because, she stated, “my teaching style managed those behaviors.” Danielle was the teacher who could manage behaviors, and this led to many of these students being placed in her classroom. Therefore, on an unofficial basis, she has worked with students who have struggled emotionally/behaviorally throughout her career.

When it comes to meeting student needs, Danielle focuses on being proactive, looking at their behaviors to implement plans/contracts, using planned ignoring for attention-seeking behaviors, putting into place behavior contracts that address a student’s behaviors, and by rewarding appropriate behaviors. Her school puts a lot of positive reinforcement in place for
appropriate behaviors and, when possible, put students who struggle emotionally/behaviorally in situations where they are coached by their peers or in peer groups, so they can see appropriate behaviors.

Danielle feels very prepared to work with students with ED at this point in her career.

We are a very lucky district, I am very lucky in my position, as we were in a school that didn’t have a lot of behaviors so it was kind of trial by error, but our behavior specialist came and he was very insightful and caring and walked us through the behaviors and modeled what he was asking us to do. Then he came back and checked on us and helped us get through the learning process.

Danielle feels she would not be doing “this” (her position) if it were not for the behavior specialist coming to help. She feels that she doesn’t abuse his time, but he is real insightful and gives her school great ideas to use to help them be successful with their students.

Fiona

Fiona has a bachelor’s degree in elementary education, a master’s degree in human resources, and a doctorate in education leadership. She is certified to teach special education, grades kindergarten through 12th, elementary education, grades one through eight, and as an elementary principal. She has been working in South District for 24 years and has put a lot of time, energy, and work into her career.

Throughout Fiona’s career she has been working with students with emotional, behavioral disabilities. She began her career as a special education teacher and also taught in the general education environment. Fiona worked in the office of special education and now as an administrator in a school with an ED classroom. Each of these positions afforded her opportunities to work with and gain further insight into students with disabilities.
In describing how Fiona best meets the needs of students with ED in her school she discussed her role as an assistant principal over the special education department. She serves as the administrator for the ED classroom at her school and attends all IEP meetings for these students. Further, she helps develop IEPs and behavior intervention plans so she interacts with the ED classroom frequently.

Fiona feels she is very adequately prepared to work with students with ED but stated, “as professionals we all have room to grow.” She acknowledged that she does not know everything there is to know about this student population and she is constantly striving to know more and be better equipped. However, Fiona does feel she is adequately equipped to work with students with ED.

**Julia**

Julia has a bachelor’s degree in special education and a master’s degree in counseling. She states her counseling degree has really helped in her current position as a behavior specialist. Julia has been working with students with ED for 34 years. As a behavior specialist, she serves students with ED at 28 schools. Julia chose to work in the field of special education during her high school years when she was offered the opportunity to work with students with disabilities.

There was a little girl named Natasha and I worked with her. I went to school ½ a day and to Charlotte Human Development Center ½ a day. I had walked her with my fingers to lunch, I don’t know how many times, probably 500 and then one day, and told her “It’s time for lunch, get up, let’s walk,” and one day she stood up and said, “Let’s walk” and she was for the most part nonverbal and she was able to walk unassisted that day. It made a huge difference in my life. So, I knew what I was going to do since I was in the 10th grade.
Julia states she has never changed her mind about her career and desires to continue to work with students who have severe anger problems.

In her current position Julia meets the need of students with ED through observations and identifying possible strategies to assist students and then recommending these strategies to the teachers. Julia goes into schools and assists with writing programs for students/classes and is able to train and model the strategies she is recommending; however, she doesn’t have a lot of time to follow-up on her recommendations and she feels this is a downfall for her. Julia also serves on several committees such as the mental health committee and a committee for students with disabilities that have a diversion program among other services.

**Karl**

Karl has a bachelor’s degree in special education, a master’s degree in special education specializing in emotional disabilities, and a master’s degree in administration. He has been working with students with special needs 32 years and is currently employed as a behavior specialist. As a behavior specialist, he is assigned to 25 schools in South District. Karl works with teachers of students with ED and other professionals who may need help with students who have acting out problems.

When asked how he meets the needs of students with ED at these various schools, Karl discussed how he tries to work with teachers of students with ED and make sure that they have up-to-date behavioral assessment and that identified target behaviors are looked at so he can assist with developing intervention plans in a way that helps the teacher meet the needs of the student. Karl also tries to build relationships, as much as he can, with the students that he works with when he visits classrooms. This can be difficult as he serves many schools and he may not
get back into that particular classroom for three or four weeks. Karl feels relationships are very important and continues to seek a positive relationship with the students he works with.

Karl would like to learn more about core replacement programs they have for special education students. He doesn’t focus on the academics often due to his position; however, he feels having a better understanding of these programs would assist him in helping the teachers and students he works with. Karl explained this with the following example:

Sometimes that can be a hindrance if I’m in a classroom and a child is having difficulties with a math assignment and I don’t know how to do the new math that they are teaching. Then this becomes a deficit and that is one thing I plan on working on, learning more about the core replacement programs for math and ELA. Then I can come into a classroom and not just assist the student but also assist the teacher.

Further, Karl would like to learn more about the technology used in South District and blended learning.

Karl has a number of years of experience, has worked at an alternative school for juvenile offenders and started a pilot program for them in which he used cognitive behavior therapy and relationship building using a philosophy called “Gentle Teaching.” This philosophy is “based on relationship-centered programming to let the children know you can be trusted and once you build that relationship you start trying to work on their academics. They know they have the ability as long as they have the coping mechanisms they need, one can just help students expand on their coping mechanisms. You can then show them that they do have the ability and as long as they have the coping mechanisms there you can just help them expand on their coping mechanisms,” Karl explained.

Matthew
Matthew has a bachelor’s degree in mathematics and a master’s degree in statistics. In order to work with children in the education setting he also has a bachelor’s degree in math education for grades five through twelve and a master’s degree in secondary education. Matthew is currently an assistant principal and has yet another master’s degree in middle and high school administration.

Matthew has been a part of the field of education for 24 years. His first job, right after he graduated from college, was teaching at an alternative school. At the time he was teaching at the alternative school there were not a lot of students with IEPs and some of the students he worked with, he stated, definitely had some emotional problems. Matthew stated that he also worked with students with disabilities as a general education teacher at which time he taught students with selective mutism and other disabilities.

Results

The research process included analysis of a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, teacher efficacy scale survey, and relevant documents. This section discusses how each form of data collection was analyzed to identify patterns and codes. Further, Atlas Ti software was used during data analysis of the interviews. Once data was collected, all documents and transcripts were reviewed for recurring patterns or codes. A separate code frequency chart was created for the academic and behavior management skills, academic and behavior management knowledge, and dispositions necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. A code frequency chart was also made for the definition of success for students with ED.

The identified codes then formed six broad lists of codes as an initial analysis of the data was completed. Codes were reviewed again and only the codes that focused on the purpose of this study were maintained for the next step of analysis. This section discusses how the themes
Evidence-Based Practices

A questionnaire on evidence-based practices was the first piece of data collection given to participants. This provided a foundation for the knowledge and skills of those who work with students with ED and was used to explore practices used in the classroom and perceptions on the use of these practices. The questionnaire contains two parts. The first part prompted participants to respond to 20 evidence-based practices with their perception of the value of the practice and the second prompt asked participants the degree to which they either utilize the practice or observe teachers utilizing the practice (Appendix C).

The first part of the questionnaire, the usefulness of an evidence-based practice, reflects the knowledge participants feel teachers of students with ED should have. Knowledge, as defined in Chapter One, refers to relevant concepts and information that teachers need to work effectively with students with ED. Each of the evidence-based practices reflects teacher knowledge found to be effective in an ED classroom. Participants were afforded the opportunity to express how valuable each practice is in an ED classroom; thus, expressing the importance of teachers of students with ED having this knowledge.

The second part of the questionnaire, how often an evidence-based practice is utilized by a teacher in an ED classroom or viewed by an administrator in an ED classroom, reflects the skills participants feel teachers of students with ED should have. Skills, as defined in Chapter One, refer to a teacher’s ability to use, or engage in, practices that are successful with students with ED. In this part of the questionnaire, participants were afforded the opportunity to express how often an evidence-based practice is used in an ED classroom; thereby connecting the
knowledge (concepts and/or information) and the skills (transferring knowledge of practices that are successful with students with ED to the classroom) of the evidence-based practices.

Each evidence-based practice was examined for the value participants place on the practice. The following table displays fifteen participant responses to the questionnaire and is followed by a discussion on the usefulness of this knowledge for a teacher of ED students.

Table 2

Usefulness of Evidence-Based Practices in an ED Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>High Value</th>
<th>Moderate Value</th>
<th>Low Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Clear rules and expectations</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Systematic approach to cooperative learning</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Peer-assisted learning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Providing choice making opportunities</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Instruction in self-monitoring of student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>academic performance</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mediated intervention to promote positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>behavior skills</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Behavior support/management plan</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Pre-correction instructional strategies</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Group-oriented contingency management</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Positive behavior intervention and support</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Peer-reinforcement to promote appropriate behavior</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Self-monitoring of non-academic behavior</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. Behavior contracts  8  6  1
14. Crisis-intervention plan  5  6  4
15. Specialized instruction to promote learning and study skills  14  1  0
16. Social skills instruction as part of regular class instruction  15  0  0
17. Anger management program as part of regular class instruction  13  2  0
18. Formal procedure to develop function-based interventions  11  3  1
19. Conflict resolution program  11  4  0
20. Academic supports and curricular/instruction modification  14  1  0

Clear rules and expectations, behavior support/behavior plans, positive behavior interventions and support, and social skills instruction as part of regular class instruction all were evidence-based practices identified by all participants as being of high value practices for an ED classroom. Each of these strategies are non-academic and knowledge in these areas was considered to be of high value for a teacher of students with ED. Participants also acknowledged the high value of knowledge in academic supports and curricular/instruction modification and specialized instruction to promote learning and study skills. Each of these two practices were viewed as having high value by 14 out of the 15 participants with only one participant viewing
the practice as having moderate value. These six practices were viewed as being of high value by 93% of participants.

An anger management program, as part of regular classroom instruction, was noted by 13 participants to have high value and two participants recognized the practice was of moderate value. Twelve participants stated the practice of providing choice making opportunities was of high value, two participants felt this practice had moderate value, and one participant saw the practice as one of low value. Another practice that 12 participants felt was of high value was a pre-correction instructional strategy with only three participants viewing the practice as one of moderate value. The practices of self-monitoring of non-academic behaviors and a conflict resolution program were viewed by 11 participants as high value practices while 4 participants viewed the practices as ones of moderate value. A formal procedure to develop function-based interventions was viewed of high value by 11 participants, of moderate value by 3 participants, and of low value by 1 participant. Therefore, 73% of participants believed the above 12 evidence-based practices were of high value in an ED classroom.

A systematic approach to learning was viewed by eight participants as a practice of high value while seven participants felt it was practice of moderate value. Also considered high value practices by eight participants were the practices of instruction in self-monitoring of student academic performance and behavior contracts. For these two practices six participants viewed them as of moderate value and one participant viewed them of low value. When combined the above 15 practices were noted of high value by 53% of the participants.

The remaining five practices were ones that less than 50% of the participants felt were of high value. Peer-reinforcement to promote appropriate behavior was viewed as having a high value by 5 participants and a moderate value by 10 participants placing a moderate value to high
value on this practice. Five participants saw high value in group-oriented contingency management while eight participants felt it had moderate value and two participants felt it had low value. Another practice five participants believed was of high value was a crisis-intervention plan. For this practice six participants stated it had moderate value and four participants stated it had low value in an ED classroom. The practice of mediated intervention to promote positive behavior skills was viewed by four participants as high value, six participants as moderate value, and five participants as low value in an ED classroom. Lastly, peer-assisted learning was viewed by only three participants as a high value practice in an ED classroom; whereas six participants thought it had only moderate value and five participants felt it had low value.

Of the top six practices participants believed to have high value (Clear rules and expectations, behavior support/behavior plan, positive behavior intervention and support, social skills instruction as part of regular class instruction, academic supports and curricular/instruction modification and specialized instruction to promote learning and study skills) four are directly related to student behavior (non-academic) and two are related to student learning (academic). Four out of the five practices chosen by less than 50% of participants as having high value were ones that involved interaction among students with ED (peer-assisted learning, mediated intervention to promote positive behavior skills, group-oriented contingency management, and peer-reinforcement to promote appropriate behavior).

Having the knowledge of evidence-based practices is only one part of serving students with ED as teachers of students with ED must transfer this knowledge to the skill of using the practice in their classrooms. Each evidence-based practice was examined to discover how often participants used the practice, or how often administrators viewed the practice being used, in an
ED classroom. The following table displays responses from fifteen participants when asked how often the practice was utilized and is followed by a discussion on participant responses.

Table 3

*How Often an Evidence-Based Practice is Utilized in an ED Classroom*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Clear rules and expectations</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Systematic approach to cooperative learning</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Peer-assisted learning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Providing choice making opportunities</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Instruction in self-monitoring of student academic performance</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mediated intervention to promote positive behavior skills</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Behavior support/management plan</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Pre-correction instructional strategies</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Group-oriented contingency management</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Positive behavior intervention and support</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Peer-reinforcement to promote appropriate behavior</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>13. Behavior contracts</td>
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</tr>
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<td>14. Crisis-intervention plan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Specialized instruction to promote learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Social skills instruction as part of regular class instruction</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Anger management program</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as part of regular class instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Formal procedure to develop function-based interventions</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Conflict resolution program</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Academic supports and curricular/instruction modification</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All 15 participants utilized the evidence-based practice of using clear rules and expectations often in ED classrooms. The practices of using behavior supports/management plans and positive behavior interventions and supports were used often by 14 of the 15 questionnaire responders. Therefore, 93% of participants used these three evidence-based practices in their classrooms often.

Thirteen participants stated the practices of specialized instruction to promote learning and study skills and an anger management program were used often in an ED classroom with two participants stating these practices were used sometimes. The practice of social skills instruction as part of regular class instruction was noted as being used frequently by 13 participants, sometimes by 1 participant, and rarely by 1 participant. Providing choice making opportunities for students in an ED classroom was used by 12 of the participants with 1 participant using this practice sometimes and 1 participant using this practice rarely. Eleven
participants utilized the practice of academic supports and curricular/instruction modification often. Whereas three participants utilized the practice sometimes, and one participant rarely utilized this practice. Hence, 73% of participants stated the above eight evidence-based practices were used often in an ED classroom.

The practices of pre-correction instructional strategies and self-monitoring of non-academic behavior were used often in nine ED classrooms, sometimes in four ED classrooms, and rarely in one ED classroom. Eight participants used behavior contracts and formal procedures to develop function-based interventions often, six used these practices sometimes, and one used the practices rarely. Subsequently, the above 12 evidence-based practices were used often in ED classrooms by 53% of the participants.

The remaining eight evidence-based practices were noted as being used often in fewer than 50% of the ED classrooms. Instruction in self-monitoring of student academic performance and the use of a conflict resolution program were used in seven ED classrooms often, seven ED classrooms sometimes, and one ED classroom rarely. Five participants used systematic approach to cooperative learning often and nine participants used this practice sometimes while only one participant rarely used this practice. Another practice involving cooperative learning is the practice of using peer-reinforcement to promote appropriate behavior and this practice was used often in five ED classrooms and sometimes in ten ED classrooms. A crisis-intervention plan was stated to be used often by five participants, sometimes by six participants, and rarely by four participants. Four participants noted a group-oriented contingency plan was often used, nine participants stated this practice was only used sometimes, and two participants noted this practice was used rarely. The practice of mediated intervention to promote positive behavior skills was used often by three participants, used sometimes by six participants, and used rarely by six
participants. Lastly, the evidence-based practice of peer-assisted learning was used often by only one participant, frequently by ten participants, and rarely by four participants.

Comparing the usability of an evidence-based practice to the actual usage of this practice leads to a more complete understanding of both the knowledge viewed as important for ED classroom teachers and the skills used by teachers in ED classrooms. The only evidence-based practice that was viewed by all participants as one of high value and used often in an ED classroom was clear rules and expectations. Behavior support/management plans were viewed as of high value by all of the participants yet one participant stated this practice was only used sometimes in his/her ED classroom. Another practice that was viewed as of high value in an ED classroom by all participants was positive behavior interventions and supports yet one participant felt this practice was rarely used. Additionally, all participants deemed the social skills instruction as part of regular class instruction; however, one participant stated this practice was only used sometimes and one participant stated the practice was rarely used. Other noticeable differences in usability of an evidence-based practice and how often it was used in the ED classroom were the practices of academic supports and curricular/instruction modifications and pre-correction instructional strategies.

Five evidence-based strategies (peer reinforcement to promote appropriate behaviors, crisis intervention plans, group-oriented contingency management, mediated intervention to promote positive behavior skills, and peer assisted learning) were deemed as high value by less than 53% of the participants and used often by less than 53% of the participant. Notably, peer-assisted learning was viewed as the least useful practice and the practice least used often.

During this part of the data analysis process, data was analyzed to identify any regular patterns or codes. From the analysis of the evidence-based questionnaire a list of codes was
created for both knowledge (usability) and skills (frequency used) with the frequency of each code dependent upon the number of participants who found either high value in the practice related to the code or used the practice often in an ED classroom often. The codes identified from this part of data collection were put into an excel spreadsheet to be used with final data analysis of all data collected in this study.

**Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with 19 participants who met the criteria for the study and were completed during one-on-one interviews. Participants included twelve teachers of students with ED, five assistant principals working with students with ED, and two behavior specialists. The length of the interviews was between 34 minutes and 126 minutes. Interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher the same day the interview was completed. After the interviews were transcribed the researcher checked for any errors by listening to the recording of the interview a second time and comparing this to the transcribed interview that was printed for data analysis purposes.

**Teacher-Efficacy Scale**

The teacher efficacy scale was the third piece of data to be collected for this research. Self-efficacy is part of Bandura’s social cognitive theory, the theoretical framework guiding this study, and refers to the perceived ability a person has to complete an activity and; therefore, contributes to both cognitive development and daily functioning. Further, teacher efficacy is “a teachers’ confidence in their ability to promote students’ learning” (Hoy, 2000, p. 2). High self-efficacy also leads a teacher to have high expectations for both their instruction and their students’ learning (Bandura, 1993). The self-efficacy levels of teachers of students with ED and
administrators working with students with ED could make a difference in the education delivered in their classrooms.

The survey contained 10 statements about people, organizations (schools), and teaching and was delivered in anonymous format using Survey Monkey. Each question asks participants to state whether they strongly agree, moderately agree, agree slightly more than disagree, disagree slightly more than agree, moderately disagree, or strongly disagree to the statement given. The purpose of the survey was to gather information regarding the level of efficacy teachers, administrators, and the behavior specialist working with students with ED have in the areas of general teacher efficacy (GTE) and personal teaching efficacy (PTE). The survey was given as a group questionnaire to all participants and 16 participants completed the survey. An analysis of the survey instruments was completed for the GTE, PTE, and individual questions.

A score for GTE and PTE can be found by scoring the five statements for each of these independent factors of efficacy separately. Questions 1, 2, 4, 5, and 10 are statements concerning GTE and statements 3, 6, 7, 8, 9 reflect PTE. The following table represents data collection for the independent factor of GTE.

Table 4

*GTE Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4.3</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>4.6</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10  0  0  1  2  4  9  5.3
Total  4  8  11  7  24  26
Percent  5%  10%  13.8%  8.8%  30%  32.5%

Note: Column numbers reflect: 1- Strongly agree, 2-Moderately agree, 3-Agree slightly more than disagree, 4-Disagree slightly more than agree, 5-Moderately disagree, 6-Strongly disagree.

GTE “appears to reflect a general belief about the power of teaching to reach difficult children” (Hoy, 2000, p. 7). GTE scores reflect high efficacy in this area for 32.5% of participants and moderate to high efficacy for 62.5% of participants.

An analysis of each statement, based on a highest possible score of 6.0, follows. The first statement, “The amount a student can learn is primarily related to family background,” had an average score of 4.9 which is in the “moderately disagree” range. Using family background as a reference Whitney discussed the fact many of her students come from families who have never been far from their home and the fact that this sedentary life is generational; however, she believes students can learn despite this lack of environmental background.

I couldn’t believe that I have several kids that have never been to the ocean. So, you talk about things and they have no ideas what you are talking about. Here, so many of them have never been anywhere. So many of the things we are trying to teach them they have no frame of reference about. So, I spend a lot of time talking about our class and what goes on here in our class and around the States and the world to help them understand what I am teaching. They wouldn’t hear it at home.

Clearly, Whitney has high teaching efficacy when it comes to this statement.

The second statement, “If students aren’t disciplined at home, they aren’t likely to accept my discipline,” had an average response of 4.3, which was slightly less than the first statement
yet in the same “moderately disagree” range. Participants discussed how a student’s home life impacts their success at school; however, participants were also quick to point out that the impact does not necessarily mean the students won’t gain success. Speaking on behavior success, Colin stated:

I would say we meet the needs of these students the minute they walk through the door. We have students who don’t go to their classroom first and they go check in with behavior counselors, we have some children that have a set plan from the get-go each morning to help them gain success in school (Colin).

The statement, “A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student’s home environment is a large influence on his/her achievement,” had an average score of 4.6 and was in the “moderately disagree” range. This statement continued to seek how much influence home environment has on student achievement.

An average score of 3.0 for the statement “If parents would do more for their children, I could do more” reflected the lowest score for general teaching efficacy. This score is at the top of the “disagree slightly more than agree” range. Through examination of the individual scores for the question one can see that 11 out of 16 participants either agreed slightly more than disagreed, moderately agreed, or strongly agreed with this statement. Therefore, 11 participants feel their effectiveness as a teacher is impacted by parents of their students.

The last statement concerning general teaching efficacy, “When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can’t do much because most of a student’s motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment,” afforded participants the opportunity to respond to a broad connection between home environment and school. This statement had the highest average
response, 5.3, which is in the strongly disagree range. Emily conversed about the impact home environment often has on her students when they arrive to school each morning.

First and foremost, I make sure their physical and emotional needs are met. Are they tired? Are they hungry? Are they cold? Did they have a fight at home? If I can attack that then I can work with them academically.

Danielle also spoke on this subject stating, “You can’t learn if you’re worried about survival.” Danielle further explained survival as “May be worried about eating or hasn’t slept. I think that this is one of the things we forget when we try to make every kid mainstream.”

Personal teaching efficacy (PTE) statements are written from the first-person point of view, saying I as the aim was to assess participants personal beliefs about themselves. These statements also include words such as “can” and “be able to” as a means of focusing on what a participant felt he or she could do. The following table presents data from this portion of the Teacher Efficacy Scale that included question numbers 3, 6, 7, 8, and 9.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Percent**

|     | 0 | 0 | 1.3% | 3.8% | 27.5% | 67.5% |

*Note:* Column numbers reflect: 1-Strongly disagree, 2-Moderately disagree, 3-Disagree slightly more than agree, 4-Agree slightly more than disagree, 5-Moderately agree, 6-Strongly agree

Notably, all averages for PTE questions are in the strongly agree range which means most of the teachers, administrators, and behavior specialists that participated in the survey have a high sense of PTE. Overall, 67.5% of responses reflect a high sense of PTE and 95% of responses reflect either a moderate or high PTE.

The first statement “When I really try, I can get through to the most difficult students” all but one participant moderately or strongly agreed with. Katia discussed this topic in her interview stating,

> It is a tough business but there is goodness in all children and they all can do something, and they can all meet some academic goal. There is no such thing as they cannot do something and that is what I hope teachers have in their heart – that these kids can accomplish a lot of things.

This statement reflects the strong interpersonal skills those working with students with ED have.

The second PTE statement, “If a student did not remember information I gave in a previous lesson, I would know how to increase his or her retention in the next lesson” speaks to skills needed to feel success. Cindy, when asked what academic teaching skills she thought were important for a teacher of students with ED replied “You always have to have a plan B because you think you know what strategies these kids are going to work with, like the same concept, and then your teaching them something and it doesn’t work. Being able to stand on your feet real quick is important to me.” Cindy recognized the need for a teacher of students with ED to know how to recognize when a strategy is not working and identify a new strategy that may work.
Looking at behavior rather than academics, the next statement asks about ability during classroom disruption. “If a student in my class becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him or her quickly.” The average score for this statement was 5.8 which is very close to the perfect score of 6.0. Behavior management is an area in which many of the participants felt was an area of strength. Irene expressed how knowing what to do in the classroom “goes back to compassion and understanding. Specific skills like clear expectations, clear consequences, high expectations, and consistency work well.” Rina echoed the need to have the skill of using consistency with behavior management: “I think it is necessary for teachers to maintain a consistent behavior management system within the classroom. If a teacher is not consistent with consequences, students will not understand the classroom/teacher expectations.”

The next statement focused on a teacher’s ability to meet an individual student’s academic needs. “If one of my students couldn’t do a class assignment, I would be able to accurately assess whether the assignment was at the correct level of difficulty.” Gert spoke to about this ability during her interview stating, “I think teachers of students with ED have to know all grade level material because we teach everything in an ED classroom. In an ED classroom, you need to be able to teach anything, at any level, at any given time.” Taking the need to accurately assess the level of difficulty for students one step further, Ophelia explained “I academically differentiate for every student in my room. I have 13 plans per day in my classroom and I put 13 separate subjects on the board every day and students are taught at their own level.”

The last statement for PTE, “If I try really hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students” scored an average of 5.6 points. When responding to the level
of which they agreed or disagreed with this statement, all participants chose either moderately agree or strongly agree. The strong commitment teachers of students with ED have to get through to even the most difficult students can be seen in Emily’s statement: “I need to find out what they need and help them meet their needs. You need to meet them in a way that they want to positively interact.”

A teacher’s GTE relates to a belief that a teacher has about the power of teaching and reaching even the most difficult students. Teachers of students with ED are challenged with teaching students who have difficulty in school. A teacher’s PTE is based on their personal beliefs about students. Through analysis of the survey results a picture of efficacy for GTE and PTE emerged showing teachers of students with ED had high PTE efficacy and moderate to high GTE efficacy. Therefore, teachers of students with ED have slightly higher PTE than GTE showing more confidence in their personal teaching abilities. GTE scores reflect high efficacy in this area for 32.5% of participants and moderate to high efficacy for 62.5% of participants.

**Documentation**

Documentation was collected from participants who wanted to share practices used in their classroom. Documentation presented to the researcher included daily point charts, level systems, level privileges, daily contracts, information on two web-based applications designed for classroom management use, and a power point describing the FBA and BIP process, level system used for students with ED, strategies used with students with ED, and data management.

Irene shared several documents concerning classroom management (Appendix Q). She uses a daily point chart to assist students with earning recess based on success with behaviors such as actively participating and completing all work, writing legibly, and completing all work on time. Irene also makes use of a level system that begins with red as the lowest level and blue
as the highest level. Each level contains privileges a student will receive if on that level. For example, a student on the red level will be able to read in the reading corner or draw at recess, student on yellow level will have use of playground equipment and games at recess, and a student on blue level will have use of recess bins and/or computers at recess. Several other privileges are available on the yellow and blue levels. Irene uses daily contracts and four daily contracts were provided the researcher to show the individualization she uses when using this intervention with students. Each contract lists the subjects/time of day a behavior is related to and then lists a student’s targeted behaviors. For example, a contract may allow for a point to be given for behaviors such as following directions, completing assignments, using kind words, and participating. To further individualize the daily contracts, Irene uses pictures of behaviors in place of words for younger students. These documents exemplify the skills of individualizing behavior plans, positive behavior interventions, point and level systems, consistency, classroom management plan, and choice making opportunities.

Ophelia utilizes an online web-based app that assists teachers in recording and sharing behavior points in real time. This app is very easy to use and affords teachers an opportunity to define the behavior(s) being targeted and records points in real time; therefore, parents can sign in and see how their child is doing behaviorally at any time during the school day. “The parents, students, and I have the app and they can track their behavior throughout the day. It is really working.” Students in Ophelia’s class are able to spend their points at a classroom store every two weeks. Ophelia also shared a classroom documents that she uses to assist her students in gaining success (Appendix R). This level system has six levels with level one being the lowest and level 6 being the highest. As students earn higher levels they receive increase privileges such as additional research time and being able to plan and teach a lesson to the class. She also uses a
daily positive behavior tracking form with individual students that navigate through the school to different classes. This form provides a spot for each teacher to score a student on up to three target behaviors and provide a comment. Teachers may score a student using a one to five Likert Scale with a score of one being poor and a score of 5 standing for outstanding. Another form of documentation Ophelia uses is a time on task sheet. The goal is for students to stay on task 100% of the time throughout the six daily class periods. Each period students can earn anywhere from 0% on task to 100% on task. The final two documents provided by Ophelia are daily contracts that are individualized for students requiring an additional measure to assist them in gaining behavioral success. These documents show the commitment Ophelia has to provide positive behavior interventions, individualized and group contingency plans, and a supportive environment for her students.

Arlene and Bonnie shared a Power Point presentation titled “A=B Every Single Time: FBA, BIP & Classroom Management for Special Education Teachers” (Appendix S). This presentation discusses the importance of a functional behavior assessment and behavior intervention plan as well as covering classroom strategies, crisis plans, and communication with other professionals and parents. A point and level system that is used at Arlene and Bonnie’s school is described and other teachers of students with ED, such as Gert, use this point and level system in their classrooms. The presentation is part of a training Arlene and Bonnie provided to other special educators.

Katia also shared the point level system she uses in her classroom. She uses an online app called Class Dojo that provides a positive atmosphere in her classroom as students earn points for positive behaviors. Student names are linked to a fun avatar that is displayed so students can view points earned. Parents are able to log into Class Dojo and view their child’s
progress throughout the school day. Class Dojo can also be used for classroom announcements, such as field trips, and individual student comments.

The documentation was analyzed as a means of providing more information on teacher use of evidence-based practices and the skills and knowledge necessary for a teacher in an ED classroom. During the analysis patterns and codes were identified and placed on an excel spreadsheet along with the frequency of each code (Appendix N).

**Emerging Themes and Subthemes**

An initial review of the data collected was completed through transcription of interviews and a read through of all data. During an initial read through of the data, color coded highlighting was used to begin to identify similarities within the data. Data collected was also entered in Atlas Ti and a thorough search of similar words and phrases was completed. Through this process a list of 129 codes emerged. Codes were then reviewed again, index cards were used to identify codes that were comparable, and a final list of 51 codes was found (Appendix N). The chart below reflects the five codes that occurred more than 50 times in the data.

Table 6

*Top Five Codes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiation</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Interventions</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aptitude to Teach Special Education Programs</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency/Clear Rules</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each of these codes represent topics that were discussed by participants as well as mentioned in the survey, questionnaire, and/or the documentation provided by participants. The high need for procedures, consistency, and clear rules was expressed by Julia:

There has to be a procedure for everything. There has to be a procedure for a child walking through the door and what he is expected to do first. Whether it is to hang up a coat or whatever. They thrive on procedure and clear rules. I don’t think many teachers spend as much time as needed in this area. So, they have a problem in March because a kid is not raising his hand. I go observe and neither are the other kids half the time and you respond to them. If you want him to raise his hand, there needs to be a procedure and consistency.

Behavior interventions were mentioned throughout the interview process, the Teacher Efficacy survey, and in documentation as necessary for success in an ED classroom. Results of the Teacher Efficacy Survey showed a total of 14 participants agreed with statements such as “When I really try, I can get through to the most difficult students” and “If a student in my class becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to redirect him/her quickly.” Another piece of data collection that addressed behavior interventions was the evidence-based questionnaire which asked participants to respond to the importance and usefulness of a behavior support/management plan. In response to this question 14 participants placed a high value on the practice and the usefulness of the practice. Throughout the documentation behavior interventions are evident in the individual student contracts, level systems, and daily point charts.

Participants also spoke to the need to be able to teach special education curriculum and differentiate to meet student needs. Emily enthusiastically stated that “a typical day is not just
one lesson, it is differentiation to the max.” Karl discussed meeting the needs of students in ED classrooms, “I think there should be more hands-on learning with these types of children, learning that is relevant, project-centered, and on their level.” The need to have engaging lessons written at various ability levels was mentioned by 11 participants.

The codes aptitude to teach general education curriculum, direct instruction programs, engaging, structured lessons, teacher-student relationships, positive gestures and praise, well-written BIPs, and supportive, safe classroom emerged in the data between 40 and 49 times showing the importance placed upon these characteristics of a teacher of students with ED.

While discussing the general education curriculum Cindy shared the need “to know your stuff. Some of these kids are really smart cookies and you really need to know what you are teaching so they trust you know what you are talking about.” Participants acknowledged the varying abilities students with ED may present in an ED classroom. These abilities may range from students performing below-grade level, grade level, or above grade level.

When addressing the need to build a positive relationship with students, Arlene expressed the strong need to build positive relationships with students with ED stating that “relationships are the most important part of working in an ED classroom. If you don’t love them then you need to leave. If you don’t love these kids, then don’t just be here for the paycheck.” As well as building positive relationships with students, participants expressed the need to use positive gestures and praise. The use of a positive behavior interventions was noted as useful by 14 participants taking the evidence-based practices questionnaire and was noted in the documentation six times. Providing students with positive gestures and verbal praise was evident in the interviews as well. This type of intervention was viewed as a necessity by Marie as
“positive strategies such as positive praise and positive gestures, such as a thumbs-up, will help a student with ED increase positive behavior.”

The need to have a well-written BIP was discussed 22 times during the interviews, viewed as valuable and useful 23 times in the evidence-based practices questionnaire, and evident three times in the documentation illustrating the importance placed on BIPs. Karl discussed the need for current FBAs and well-written BIPs.

I try to work with teachers to make sure they have an up-to-date behavioral assessment and that we’re looking at the target behaviors in a way that we can then develop good behavior intervention plans in a way that can best meet the needs of the child.

A PowerPoint provided the researcher discussed FBAs and BIPs in detail, as well as the need to ensure they are written in response to the target behavior and address the needs of the student.

The frequency of nine codes was between 30 and 39 including understanding causes of behavior, loving and passionate, well-written IEPs, skills to write lesson plans for different grades and abilities, knowing core-replacement curriculum, compassionate, strong interpersonal skills, and an ability to increase knowledge in subject areas. These characteristics of teachers of students with ED were viewed by participants as important throughout the interview process. The need to use a level system in ED classrooms and to understand the causes of behavior was evident in the interviews, documentation, and in the evidence-based practice questionnaire. Strong interpersonal skills were deemed to have high value during the interviews and in the Teacher Efficacy Scale.

Breaking down the final codes further, 13 codes had a frequency of 20 – 29 occurrences in the data, 23 codes had a frequency of 10 – 19 occurrences in the data, and two had a frequency of nine or less occurrences in the data. These codes contained characteristics such as self-
monitoring, knowledge of ED, strong content knowledge background, and long-term academic success. An analysis of codes occurring less than 30 times in the data revealed that these codes directly described characteristics of teachers with ED and were maintained on the code list.

Codes were analyzed again and placed into categories based on their similarities. This process involved matching up codes that had commonalities and formulating a subtheme heading that would envelope the codes. A total of 15 subthemes were identified consisting of two to ten different codes (Appendix 0). Subthemes identified were positive interventions, classroom management, social skills instruction, command of curriculum, lesson plans for different grades and abilities, affective disposition, cognitive disposition, standards-driven curriculum and special education curriculum, behavior principles, environmental supports, characteristics, and Federal and State Law. Three of the subthemes identified with six or more codes as shown in the table below (Appendix 0).

Table 7

Subthemes with six or more codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subthemes</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson plans for different grades and abilities</td>
<td>Connect learning to life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differentiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engaging/Structured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consistency yet flexibility as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-teaching/follow through</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The subtheme affective disposition directly relates to the moods, feelings, and attitudes held by teachers of students with ED. Emily delivered a passionate, emotional response during her interview that expressed her beliefs on the attitudes a teacher of students with ED should have.

High empathy, high patience, high tolerance, a true understanding of others, and an ability and willingness to write 14 lesson plans before you get to one that works and then

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom Management</th>
<th>Consistency/Clear Rules</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Well-written BIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crisis Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daily Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedures</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affective Disposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian yet nurturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate/Empathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loving/Passionate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calm and Collected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sincere interest in ED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to students with ED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not taking things personally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
you have to change it every year. Without being highly empathetic and compassionate you will not have patience or tolerance with these ED babies. I never, ever take it personally – it never has anything to do with me. I see the teachers that have the hardest time do take it personally. I need to find out what my students need and help them meet their needs. Meet them in a way that they want to positively interact.

Bonnie also spoke to the need to “be committed, very committed to students with social/emotional needs” when discussing the affective dispositions teachers of students with ED need to have.

Karl addressed the need to write lesson plans that are engaging and connect learning to life. “I think they should be more hands-on learning with these type of children, going back to making it relevant, differentiated, and project-centered.” Throughout the interviews participants echoed the need for differentiation, hands-on, relevant lesson plans that are engaging to students in different grade levels with varying abilities.

The subtheme classroom management was based on codes relating to behavior support in the classroom. The need to have high expectations, a level system, BIPs, crisis management, and clear and consistent rules was mentioned by participants throughout the interview process. Bret discussed using rewards and a point and level system to assist his students with gaining behavioral success and the need to have a point and level system was viewed as an important practice in ED classrooms by 14 participants. Julia expressed her beliefs in using a positive level system in which students earned points for appropriate behavior as opposed to losing points for inappropriate behavior. Fiona spoke on the effectiveness of a level system.

I just think with the point/level system, I think one thing that makes it effective that can be a struggle is the fidelity that it is implemented with and they sign off on it and agree to
follow it. A teacher follows it, but it is hard because a lot of times it’s easy to say ‘Maybe that isn’t quite so bad and they’re not going to lose any points, but it needs to be implemented with fidelity on a daily basis in order for it to work. Students need to understand it, as well as the parents – parents need to know what is expected.

When discussing behavior management knowledge needed for a teacher in an ED classroom Bret, Tammy, Danielle, Colin, Arlene, Emily, Ophelia, Katia, Gert, Irene, Cindy, Bonnie, Julia, and Fiona all expressed the importance of having a point and level system as a classroom management tool.

At this point in the data analysis process, subthemes were combined to form overall themes indicative of the data. Seven essential themes emerged from the analysis procedure as illustrated in the table below (Appendix O).

Table 8

Themes and Subthemes

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The theme of learning environment management related the skills required to maintain an environment in which students with ED can grow behaviorally and academically to the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. Learning environment management skills were also viewed as very important during the interviews. Gert finds consistency and teaching and following procedures were important skills to have because you need to be able to be consistent. It can’t be just sometimes – sometimes doesn’t exist. It is always this way and never that way because when you start working into the sometimes, these kids are smart, so you can’t let one kid get away with something sometimes because then every kid is going to see that, and every kid is going to take advantage of this. The rules are the rules, period end of story.

Whitney also expressed the value of using the skill of consistency in the classroom as “Consistency is the biggest thing, must have this behavior management skill in the ED
classroom.” Arlene also spoke on this topic and the need to set an example for students to follow when she stated:

Structure, procedures, consistency, follow-through, you need to set it up from day one what you want it to look like and then model it. Whatever you want the kids to do you need to do it first. A lot of pre-teaching goes into it.

Danielle also spoke to the importance of this topic stating “we work hard to remember procedures and how can we expect students to remember them without practicing them? Teachers need to practice and model procedures.”

The second theme, command of curriculum, addressed the skills necessary to teach the varying levels of abilities in an ED classroom. Bonnie discussed the need to “close the gap” for themselves in order to assist with “closing the gap” for individual students.

I really rely on my district level learning specialists to make sure we are closing the gaps for ourselves. There’s no way you are going to know all these levels. You are going to have to be willing to try and work to learn the low and high stuff and rely on your paraprofessionals to assist.

As teachers of students with ED are tasked to have a command of both general education and special education curriculum, participants viewed this theme as a necessary characteristic for successful teachers of students with ED.

Passion and commitment to students with ED was the third theme identified in the analysis process. This theme spoke to the characteristic of dispositions necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. Both affective and cognitive dispositions were identified by participants as important for a teacher in an ED classroom. Speaking to the passion needed Fiona explained, “I think that teachers of ED students need to understand these students and
realize they come from different backgrounds. I think these students come with a lot of baggage, so they need passion.” Being a caring person who genuinely listens to children with empathy was viewed as an important requirement for teachers of students with ED by Katia and Irene expressed her strong feelings for passion stating “Love them for who they are and not who you want them to be. Some days it’s awful but I love it probably because I am crazy!” Having compassion for students with ED was viewed as a positive disposition to have by Fiona as well. “It takes so much compassion not to take things personal in this setting. I think you have to have compassion for the students, love and care about them, and start each day fresh.” Throughout the interviews participants expounded on dispositions such as passion, commitment, strong interpersonal skills, relationships, and being patient.

The fourth theme emerging from the data was proficiency with standards-driven and special education curriculum. This theme addressed the need to have in-depth content knowledge as a characteristic of successful teachers of students with ED. Discussing the need for this knowledge, Ophelia stated that teachers of students with ED need to be strong in all course areas and have a good solid vocabulary base. Also expounding on this need, Gert stated: “I think we have to know all grade level material because we teach everything in an ED classroom. In an ED classroom, you need to be able to teach anything at any given time.” The depth of knowledge teachers in an ED classroom need to have was described by Irene as “Sometimes I think we need a wider range than most teachers because all types of academic levels may be in our rooms. A range of tools and knowledge and an understanding of multiple curricula is needed.” This theme encompassed a vast amount of knowledge of both standards-driven curriculum and special education curriculum and was directly related to the central question of this research.
The need to have an expertise with principles of behavior support was the fifth theme that emerged during this analysis. This theme addressed the knowledge teachers of students with ED need to have to assist their students with gaining behavioral success. Knowledge of behavior principles and environmental supports was viewed as important for teachers in an ED classroom. Matthew explained this as:

The knowledge goes hand in hand with the skills as you have to be knowledgeable about the things that are out there, so you can support your students. It might be something you’ve come up with on your own or it might be something you’ve researched, read about, and found that research says this is the best way you can handle this type of child. I think the knowledge and the skills an ED teacher need for behavior management go hand in hand. You get the skills from having the knowledge.

Knowledge was viewed as going hand-in-hand with the skills one needed to be successful in an ED classroom.

Understanding of the characteristics of ED was the sixth theme that emerged from the data analysis. This theme addressed the characteristics of ED, causes of behavior, medication use, college coursework in psychology, sociology, and ED, well-written IEPS, and special education law and assisted in answering the central question by identifying the knowledge needed in the area of ED and Federal and State Law.

The final theme emerging from the data concerned a definition for success in an ED classroom. Success was overwhelming viewed as personal growth by participants and could over a short period of time, such as a day, or a long period of time, such as a school semester. Fiona shared her thoughts on success as being based both on academic growth and behavior growth because “when they are working to their academic and behavioral potential it is success
and it is different for every student. How we define success changes throughout the year because they’re taught strategies and then pushed harder and harder.” The need to take success day by day for a student with ED was expressed by Arlene:

Some of the kids – if they can make it through the day are successful. Success can come without any academic gains. I think it just depends on the student. When you see the light bulb, that is kind of cool and this is success.

Colin defined one type of success as moving up on the classroom level system and/or going out to a regular education class.

The themes identified are consistent with the literature regarding teachers of students with ED and directly connect to answer the central question and the subquestions of this research. Based on the qualitative case study design of this research, the following section provides a description of each emerging theme as they interact to answer the central question of the research and then answer the individual subquestions.

Central Question: What characteristics does a person need to be a successful teacher in an ED classroom? The central question explored the experiences and beliefs of educators working with students with ED to identify the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. This question was answered by all the seven themes that emerged from this collective case study (Appendix P). When identifying the characteristics of teachers of students with ED, the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary were sought, as well as a definition of what success means in an ED classroom.

The first two themes, learning environment management and command of curriculum instruction directly address the skills necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. The skill of having learning environment management that is based on positive interventions, consistency,
and had a social skills component was viewed as a necessary teacher characteristic for success in an ED classroom. It is important to have the skill to give students with ED positive feedback when they are doing the right thing even though they may misbehave at other times. Danielle discussed how her school recognizes positive behaviors explaining “we do a lot of positive reinforcement for those appropriate behaviors and when possible, we put them in situations where their coached by their peers, so they can see appropriate behaviors.” Karl quantified this as “if we can catch kids being good and tie into that, it again builds on the relationship and that ties into the student feeling they’re successful. If students feel they are successful they’re going to learn more.” Speaking on this topic, Katia stated how important this was to her classroom management as “I make sure every time we reach a goal or demonstrated a good social behavior that there is some recognition for that. We also follow that behavior as a good example that we will talk about following from now on.” Each of these participants identified ways in which they utilize positive interventions and consistency in their classrooms.

Teachers in this environment also need to have a command of the curriculum as they need both an aptitude to teach and an aptitude to write lesson plans for different grade levels and abilities. These skills were viewed by participants as necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. Daily instructional skills and lesson planning were noted to be necessary by several participants. Karl stated, “If teachers can relate lessons to their daily life then it makes more sense and students are able to connect to it and I think there should be more hands-one learning with these types of children and relevant and project-centered.” Discussing daily lesson plans, Cindy expressed a need for her lessons to engage students when she stated, “I want to bring it to them in a way they will want to do it.” Further addressing the need for engaging lessons that will involve students, Julia conversed about the need these students have.
These kids have failed many times academically and a lot of acting out behavior comes from ‘I can’t do,’ ‘I don’t want to,’ and things like ‘I’ve been in this math book for three years and I still don’t know it.’ So, we have to do something about that math book – we can’t teach out of that math book. They need to be able to develop lessons using technology, using videos, and using hands-on activities. They need to have engaging lessons.

The teacher characteristics of learning environment management and command of curriculum instruction were viewed as necessary teacher characteristics for success in an ED classroom and directly related to the characteristic of skills necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom.

The third theme identified in the data analysis process was passion and commitment to students with ED. This theme had the sub-themes of affective disposition and cognitive disposition thus linking the domains of one’s affective dispositions (emotions and feelings) with one’s cognitive dispositions (thinking) to an overall theme. Participants viewed the affective dispositions of loving and passionate, authoritarian yet nurturing, compassionate, calm and collected, flexible, empathetic, sincere interest in ED, commitment to students with ED, patient, and not taking things personally as necessary characteristics of a successful teacher of students with ED. It was the belief of several participants that being authoritative and nurturing at the same time was useful dispositions in the ED classroom. Julia expressed the balance these two provided as “someone who has a good balance of authoritarian disposition as well as nurturing. I feel strongly they need to have both.” Colin spoke to the need for this balance describing the teacher in an ED classroom as one who is “level-headed so they can deescalate a situation and someone who can be firm yet loving.” Whitney conversed about this dual need for a teacher in an ED classroom “to be firm and consistent yet caring and nurturing at the same time.” The
cognitive dispositions of having strong interpersonal skills, thinking outside the box, and relationships were also included in the theme of passion and commitment to students with ED. This theme directly relates to the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom as it explores the characteristic attribute of dispositions.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth themes directly relate to the central question as they provide a deeper understanding of the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. The fourth theme proficiency with standard-driven and special education curriculum relates to the curriculum knowledge necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. Participants viewed knowledge in data, standards, and core-replacement curriculum as important. Matthew stated “I think you have to be knowledgeable about all the content. Just because you have a child that’s ED doesn’t mean they’re not going to need upper level content. So, you have to know all the subject areas taught.” Arlene echoed this when she described the knowledge a teacher in an ED classroom needs as “you need to be able to teach all levels of academics from alternative curriculum to core curriculum to gifted and talented curriculum. You need to do this for multi-grade levels. This is the toughest part.”

The fifth theme, Expertise with principles of behavior support, spoke directly to the characteristic of behavior knowledge for teacher success in an ED classroom. This theme identified behavior principles such as a well-written BIP, behavior interventions, and formal procedures for functional behavior analysis and environmental supports such as procedures, a point and level system, and a supportive and safe classroom. All participants noted that a good understanding of behavior supports area that required the most specialized knowledge. Gert expressed the need to be a continuous learner in this area when she said “you should have knowledge on behavior intervention systems. You should be willing to learn more behavior
interventions as needed and be open to using new interventions.” Irene also spoke on the need to have behavior support knowledge stating, “I do a lot of interventions that I don’t even know or remember the term for because I use so many different behavior interventions.” Behavior strategies that are specific for an individual student or broader for an entire class were seen as valuable behavior management knowledge.

The sixth theme, Understanding the Characteristics of ED, addressed the knowledge a teacher would need to have on the characteristics of ED, causes of behavior, medication use and side effects, and Federal and State Law. This knowledge was deemed as necessary in order to fully serve and understand a student with ED. Ophelia discussed the need to understand the causes of behavior in the ED classroom as “Yes, we are in school for academics; however, academics have to take a back seat when you are in an emotional upheaval. They can’t focus on academics then.” It is at these times that a teacher of students with ED need to understand the characteristics of ED in order to gain success with this population.

In answering the central question, a common definition for the meaning of success in an ED classroom was sought. Success was defined in terms of formative and summative personal student growth. Formative growth was measured by short term growth and student attributes such as being happy, expressing feelings, working to ability, going up in level system, and achieving a daily goal were viewed as evidence of personal student growth. Summative growth was measured over a longer term, such as a school semester or school year, and considered attributes such as long-term academic success, mainstreamed, and maintaining positive relationships as being indicative of summative student success. Together, formative and summative student personal growth defined teacher success in an ED classroom according to participants of this research.
These seven themes directly described the characteristics necessary for a successful teacher of students with ED. Each theme independently relates to skills, knowledge, or disposition (characteristic) necessary for success in this position. The following section describes how each subquestion was answered by one or more themes and provides further examples of how the themes were identified using participants' words as examples.

**Subquestion 1: How do educators working with students with ED describe the skills necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom?** Subquestion 1 examined the skills needed for a teacher to gain success in an ED classroom. This subquestion was answered by two of the seven themes identified, which were theme one, learning environment management; and theme two, command of curriculum (Appendix P). The theme learning environment management was divided into the subthemes of positive interventions, classroom management, and social skills instruction (Appendix O). While discussing the skills necessary for behavior support, participants expounded on the need for learning environment management stating the need for interventions such as positive reinforcement, high expectations, level systems, daily contracts, positive point sheets, Gentle Teaching, planned ignoring, social skills instruction, and incentives. To further express the importance of this skill, participants provided documentation illustrating level systems, behavior plans, point sheets, and daily contracts that are used for classroom management. Participants also rated the need to have management techniques as very high on the Teacher Efficacy Scale.

Participants further noted the need to have a positive attitude when addressing behavior in an ED classroom. Several positive skills were mentioned such as building relationships, catching students doing the right thing, using positive gestures and verbal praise, and placing positive phone calls to the student's parents or guardians. Arlene expressed the strong need to
build positive relationships with students with ED stating: “The relationships are the most important part of working in an ED classroom. If you don’t love them then you need to leave. If you don’t love these kids, then don’t just be here for the paycheck.” Karl further addressed the need for relationships asserting:

A lot of times when they’re cursing at you or not doing something it is because they are trying to build a trust bond with you and if you can work through that and let them see that you honestly do care about them then you will be better able to work with them. Danielle also felt positive praise was necessary stressing those who worked with students with ED needed this skill.

They to know how to give continuous positive praise. They need to know that skill and how to practice that because it’s the hardest thing to do over and over and over and remember to praise the little tiny good things they do when they just did something really, really bad.

Another way to provide a student with positive feedback discussed by Arlene, Marie, and Rina was to make positive phone calls home. Building relationships involves both students and parents/guardians as Arlene articulated:

You need to know about mental health and have education about how you communicate effectively with parents. A lot of times when we get the kids the parents are ‘done’ with the school and we have to regain their trust. We make positive phone calls.

Therefore, the need for positive interactions with students and parents/guardians was noted by several teachers, administrators, and behavior specialists.

Having well-written BIPs and crisis management statements was also viewed as important behavior management skills to have. Having a behavior plan in place that addressed
the students as soon as they arrived at school was addressed by Colin. “We make sure that our students have BIPs and we follow those to a ‘T’ and make sure whatever techniques the IEP team has come up with we use and we are working the plan to the fullest.”

Another behavior specialist, Julia, discussed the strong need to have training in crisis management interventions and have a solid plan for a child if he or she has a crisis while at school.

The topic of having appropriate BIPs also included the need to have a classroom program in place for classroom management. Participants spoke of level systems and progress monitoring as two important components of an overall classroom management system. Colin spoke to this need stating

These teachers need to have the skills to have some type of program or something in place that is going to work for the good of the students they are serving. I know it varies from group to group and from child to child, but they need to have something in place that is going to try to alleviate some of the behaviors those students have. Otherwise, you are going to end up with chaos.

Julia also spoke to this need by stressing the importance of a positive level system. “It is better giving kids points based on good behavior as opposed to taking points away for negative behaviors.” Gert, Rina, Tammy, Bret, Whitney, and Irene all stated they used a point-based level system in their classroom. Katia and Ophelia use an online program for tracking points/progress as a classroom management tool in their classroom. Katia uses Class Dojo which is an online program that promotes a positive classroom culture by encouraging identified skills and values the teacher would like to encourage. The program also has a feature that affords parents the opportunity to view their child’s progress throughout the day. Ophelia uses an online application
called Live School. When discussing effective methods used for classroom management Ophelia stated:

Positive reinforcement. I used Power Positive Points. It was literally a small token, little foam pieces. Just handing them out and letting the kids earn those for a classroom store. This year I went digital with it and I used a program called “Live School” and the kids are issued paychecks every 2 weeks. The parents, students, and I have the app and they can track their behavior throughout the day. It is really working ‘Oh man look at that at 9 o’clock this morning I wasn’t doing so good but now I am!’ It’s a newer app and the creators of the app have been adding to it so it is under construction, but it is a really cool tool. I bring it to IEP meetings and I have my data right there. I can pull it up from any computer/iPad. I do a classroom store and every two weeks they are able to purchase things from the store.

This web-based app makes it easy for teachers to record student points, provide parents with the opportunity to view how the child is doing throughout the day, and create daily and weekly reports.

Other classroom management techniques used included using individual daily contracts, Gentle Teaching, planned ignoring/peer reinforcement, and setting high expectations. The use of an individual daily contract for students to assist them in displaying appropriate behavior throughout the school day, in all settings, was cited as a useful strategy used by Danielle, Tammy, Rina, Irene, and Gert. Danielle stated her school will typically put in place contracts that address misbehavior and reward appropriate behaviors and Tammy discussed the student daily contracts she uses to promote socially acceptable behavior. Karl shared the Gentle Teaching approach that he is fond of. “I am a strong advocate of Gentle Teaching, which is a
relationship-centered philosophy. It is not data-driven, but the proof is in the pudding when you can see teachers who use Gentle Teaching and where their students wind up.” Another skill used in the ED classroom is planned to ignore and peer reinforcement. Danielle and Bonnie discussed planned ignoring and the usefulness of this strategy in the ED room. Peer reinforcement was thought to be useful and used often by Marie, Whitney, and Gert. The skill of setting and maintaining high expectations for all students was mentioned by 15 of the participants as extremely important.

The final skills that were brought up during interviews were those related to social skill instruction. Katia stated “they need to know how to teach kids how to self-advocate and gain independence. These are skills that need to be taught.” Tammy discussed role-play as a skill valuable to a teacher of students with ED as using this strategy helps students gain a better understanding of socially appropriate behavior. Rina, expressing the importance of social skill instruction, shared that she taught “a social skills group daily for 30 minutes to address social skills. I currently use the Second Step program, as well as supplemental materials.” Self-monitoring, self-advocacy, and social skills taught through programs and role-play were all deemed important by Ophellia, Julia, Tammy, Karl, and Rina.

The theme of having a command of the curriculum instruction had the subthemes of command of curriculum and lesson plans for different grade levels and abilities (Appendix O). Teachers of students with ED have to be able to teach using the regular education, special education, and gifted education curriculum. To reach the wide range of academic abilities in an ED classroom, the need to have skills in lesson planning were evident.

Participants spoke about academic skills necessary for a teacher of students with ED citing several different skills. Danielle reflected on the strong need to have math and reading
skills across all grade levels as students may be functioning on a grade level other than their actual grade level. Whitney also spoke on the need to have strong math and reading skills:

  Laughing – Oh my Lord! I think in the ED classroom you need a lot. I have had students for the past three years that have put me back to the very basics. I have several students that are reading on the second and third grade level and I have one who has a Lexile of over 1000 as a 7th grader. I have to be able to present whatever we are doing on several levels because otherwise I will not reach all of them.

The skill of being able to teach a variety of grade levels, both below and above a student’s current grade level, was echoed by Arlene, Cindy, and Marie.

  Further academic skills identified as being necessary were the ability to learn subject content, connect learning to life, and to create a well-written IEP. Ophelia also spoke on this topic: “Set expectations high. I think we are meeting a lot of their needs that haven’t been met elsewhere.” The need to be skillful in IEP writing was addressed by Colin when he stated that teachers of students with ED “need to be able to write a well-written IEP in order for that child to be successful.” Katia also addressed IEP skills as “they really need to be educated on IEPs and the law and how to complete student meetings and what the different disabilities are and how to serve these children.” Arlene also spoke to the need to both have an engaging lesson and pre-teaching and follow-up lessons that are engaging to ensure students have retained and understood what they have learned.

  A teacher of students with ED not only needs to write engaging lessons plans they need to write multiple lesson plans. Emily spoke on this topic stating these teachers need to have “An ability to write lesson plans multiple ways and to change lesson plans at a heartbeats notice (or have back up lesson plans planned out).” Ophelia described her lesson planning as having “13
lesson plans per day in my classroom and I put 13 separate subjects on that board every day and they are taught at their own level.” The need to be skillful in lesson planning in order to write multiple lesson plans for each subject was mentioned by Tammy, Marie, Jessie, and Ashley as well. Participants noted the strong need for lesson plans that reach individual students’ academic levels, are engaging, differentiate for student strengths, are procedural, connect learning to life, and are based on findings from analyzing individual academic data.

**Subquestion 2: How do educators working with students with ED describe the knowledge necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom?** Three themes were identified for the knowledge needed to gain success in an ED classroom (Appendix P). Theme four, proficiency with standards-driven and special education curriculum; theme five, expertise with principles of behavior supports; and theme six, understanding of the characteristics of ED all directly relate to the knowledge needed to be a successful teacher in this environment.

The fourth theme, proficiency with standards-driven and special education curriculum described the academic knowledge necessary for teachers of students with ED with subthemes of standard-driven curriculum and special education curriculum (Appendix O). Teachers of students with ED have varied abilities in their classroom and need to have the knowledge to teach this range of abilities. Students with ED are often able to access grade level curriculum; therefore, knowledge in all subject areas for grades taught is important. Since ED classrooms usually have students on more than one grade level, it is imperative to know all curricula content. Students in an ED classroom may also have gaps in their learning, often due to behaviors that impede with their learning, and require core replacement curriculum to assist them in gaining academic success.
Teachers working in an ED classroom were viewed as having to know both general education material and special education material. Fiona expressed her firm belief that a teacher in an ED classroom know all curriculum content asserting:

I think that along with differentiation teachers need to be familiar with the curriculum and the programs our district has implemented. For example, our students do Transmath (core-replacement program) in the ED classroom unless their able to be mainstreamed out to go into the general curriculum and we also use the Language Live program for Language Arts. So, I think they need to be knowledgeable of the programs the District has implemented. They need to be knowledgeable and familiar with the students’ accommodations and needs of the student. A lot of the time students who are ED don’t necessarily have deficits in academics, so I think the ED teacher also should be knowledgeable of the general curriculum and programs as well. For our school, we are able to mainstream some of the students out so they receive their instruction in a general education classroom, but I think that ED teacher needs to be knowledgeable of the curriculum and programs as well because sometimes behavior requires that student stay in the ED classroom, so even though they are in that classroom they can still get grade level instruction.

Cindy also saw the range of knowledge needed to be successful in an ED classroom as vast:

Oh- I mean depending on the grade level you really need to know your stuff. Some of these kids are smart cookies. You really need to know, and they need to trust you in a person type of way and they also need to trust that you know what you are talking about. I think that is one of the things I struggle with, is being professional academically and being professional behaviorally. I think it is really hard on us ED teachers to be
professional academic and on the behavior side of it, it’s hard. And always having a plan B because these kids, you think you know what they are going to work with, like the same concept, and your teaching them something and it doesn’t work. Being able to stand on your feet really quick is important for me.

Matthew spoke on this topic stating ED classroom teachers “have to have a special education background as they have to be knowledgeable about the diverse academic needs of the children in their room.” Teachers in ED classrooms need to have not only the knowledge to teach core replacement programs, they also need training in special education programs. Colin emphasized this as:

They need to have an education in how to teach children to read, they need to have the same with math. They also need to be trained in the special education programs we have. You can’t just take anyone off the street and have them teach those programs.

Karl also addressed this need:

If their using specific core replacement programs in the classroom they really need to take the time to work through those core contents and make sure they participate in any district-wide trainings that are available. Then they need to take those programs home and practice and become even more knowledgeable. They should not come in one morning and open up to a page and just read a script. They need to know it.

Addressing the need to attend trainings and become as knowledgeable as possible in core replacement programs, Gert stated that a teacher in an ED classroom needs to know “all the programs at the school. If the child needs direct instruction then the teacher needs that knowledge, if the child needs grade level content, then the teacher needs that knowledge. Thankfully, our district provides training for this.”
Along with knowledge of the general education curriculum, Colin stated, comes the need to know the academic standards for each grade level taught. Arlene spoke about the need for teachers in ED classroom to teach standards because:

Students in ED classrooms are held to the same standards as everyone else, they have the same tests, but they have behaviors others don’t have. In the classroom with all the different levels and grades it is hard to give them all what they need and meet the standards; however, you need to know the standards to try and get them there.

Tammy and Rina voiced their opinions on this knowledge stating that they needed to know all academic standards for all academic grades taught.

Teachers in ED classrooms also need to know how to analyze academic data, according to Danielle, because “once you’ve analyzed the data and if you find a second grader who is reading on the fourth-grade level then you may need to be having to do some things on the fourth grade level as your dealing with behaviors that are there.” Colin also expressed this need as “They also need to have knowledge of the data and what the data means. If you are not looking at the data you don’t know what level they are on and what they need to be taught.” Bonnie, Cindy, Irene, Gert, Ophelia, Matthew, Colin, Rina, and Tammy all expressed the strong need to be knowledgeable in data and what data means.

The fifth theme, expertise with principles of behavior support, describes the behavior knowledge needed for teacher success in an ED classroom (Appendix P). The theme expertise with principles of behavior support attends to the supports and interventions that are developed to address the specific characteristics of ED and was associated with the subthemes of behavior principles and environmental supports (Appendix O). Teachers of students with ED need to have
the knowledge of creating positive behavior intervention plans, using research-based behavior interventions, and developing a classroom environment that is safe and supportive.

When discussing behavior management knowledge 14 of the 19 interview participants viewed functional behavior assessments, behavior intervention plans (BIPs), and the need to understand the root of behavior and how to decrease behavior as necessary knowledge for a teacher in an ED classroom. Karl expressed the need for teachers in ED classroom

…to understand competing pathway behaviors, looking at setting events and antecedents with the target behaviors, to find why a child is doing a behavior and what the child is getting out of it. When you can figure those things out you can start working on replacement behaviors and trying to set up consequences that meet the same needs as they’re fulfilling when they are doing the target behavior.

Rina also identified functional behavior assessment as important as “you need to understand the root of student behaviors, so you can figure out the best strategy or approach to extinguish the negative behavior.” Karl, Katia, Rina, Danielle, Colin, Bonnie, Julia, and Arlene stated the need to understand behaviors and be able to identify the root of behavior in a functional behavior assessment was important knowledge for a teacher in an ED classroom as it was through this knowledge that teachers are able to write effective BIPs and assist students in gaining success with socially appropriate behaviors. Katia wrapped up her statement on behavior management knowledge by stating “you have to have experience with BIPs and children, it takes a lot of time and a lot of experience, but you have to know and understand behavior.”

Bonnie also spoke to behavior management as formal knowledge received through coursework, experience, and classroom management trainings:
They should have a foundation of behavior management, classroom management, whether it be in a Bachelor of Arts or training, they need to understand that our kids understand structure so that they could jump in and do what we are doing. They need to understand a level and point system, know and use positive reinforcement and use rewards more than consequences as much as possible. We don’t punish kids ever. They need to know and understand strategies that must be in place for kids with ED.

Gert clearly stated this in her final statement on behavior management knowledge:

To come to an ED class, you should have some basic behavior management. I mean you should not just come out of school and be an ED teacher. You will be eaten alive. You need to have some background working with behaviors. The best knowledge you can get is experience either as a paraprofessional or some other way. You have to keep trying things, learning things, and see what works.

Therefore, participants spoke on the vast amount of behavior management knowledge for success in an ED classroom.

Bret discussed using rewards and a point and level system to assist his students with gaining behavioral success. A point and level system were viewed as an important practice in ED classrooms. As noted under the heading “Academic Skills” a point and level system assist students in improving academics as well as producing more socially appropriate behavior. Julia further expressed her beliefs in using a positive level system in which students earned points for appropriate behavior as opposed to losing points for inappropriate behavior. Fiona spoke on the effectiveness of a level system:

I just think with the point/level system, I think one thing that makes it effective that can be a struggle is the fidelity that it is implemented with and they sign off on it and agree to
follow it. A teacher follows it but it is hard because a lot of times it’s easy to say ‘Maybe that isn’t quite so bad and they’re not going to lose any points’ but it needs to be implemented with fidelity on a daily basis in order for it to work. Students need to understand it, as well as the parents – parents need to know what is expected.

When discussing behavior management knowledge needed for a teacher in an ED classroom Bret, Tammy, Danielle, Colin, Arlene, Emily, Ophelia, Katia, Gert, Irene, Cindy, Bonnie, Julia, and Fiona all expressed the importance of having a point and level system as a classroom management tool.

Building relationships with students was identified as necessary for teachers in an ED classroom both as knowledge needed and as a skill needed. Arlene articulated this when she stated that relationship building was the most important part of working in an ED classroom and one needs to have the knowledge of how to build relationships and the skills to build the relationships with students. Karl spoke on relationship building relating it to a bridge formed once a relationship is formed.

Then you can start to help to build a bridge to allow them to trust others and by doing that you might have to not react to things they say to you that might be, um, if they’re starting to be disrespectful you are not taking it personally.

Colin also spoke to the need to know how to build relationship with the toughest kids, which he considered a skill as well, stating:

Children who are drug babies or see drugs at home every night or violence they see at home – I try to give each one of these children the best I can. This is kind of where the ED teacher really has to have the knowledge and skills to build a relationship with these
students and families, so they can let them know they understand and they may not have all the answers for them, but they do understand.

Participants also cited the knowledge needed to create a ED classroom that was safe and supportive for students. Danielle discussed the classroom environment:

Well, I am from RTI era, so I think that the calm, warm, inviting environment is necessary. I think that there are things that belong to the child, so the classroom belongs to them too. I think that a teacher that is engaged with the students and is happy to see them and talks to them about their lives and their world and actually gets to know them is part of the environment of the classroom and I think that makes it. I think that consistent procedures are part of the environment, so they know what to expect and what the reactions will be. We work hard to remember procedures and how can we expect students to remember them without practicing them. The teacher’s need to move when they are on the line the students are walking. My pet peeve is these are not your children, they don’t because I told you so. You need to practice procedures and remember you are modeling them for the kids.

Karl described the classroom as a place where:

There needs to be appropriate space because kids with emotional challenges are often, um, their personal space is a little larger than a typical person (a foot-and-a-half to three feet). There’s probably about 6-8 feet where they feel safe. A lot of these kids come from families or situations where they have witnessed or been a victim of physical or psychological abuse. I believe each classroom should have its own bathroom because sometimes just transitioning in the hallways, not all children but some children find it
overwhelming. They need an area within the classroom they can go to if they need to decompress, that’s set up in a way that is relaxing and kind to them.

The need for an understanding of a safe, supportive environment was also noted by Matthew:

I think there has to be a supportive environment in the classroom. I think you have to have processes in place that’s going to support those students and particularly you have to have an environment where a student’s knows that, in an ED classroom, where you might be the only person or there might be an aide, that you are doing many things at one time so it has to be an environment where you teach children that “I’m going to have to spend some time here, I’m going to have to spend some time here, and I’m going to have to spend some time here.” So really, it’s an environment that is trusting, sharing, and it has to be participatory, especially on the part of the teacher.

The knowledge of how to create an environment that is structured and supportive was discussed by participants often using very clear descriptions of the physical classroom. Bonnie described the physical classroom as:

The room needs to not be overwhelming, you know, there needs to be academic content and behavioral content displayed but not overwhelming for ADHD kids. They need to know the expectations and they need to be visible. They need to know that it is also a happy place and it not a psych ward with plain walls. It needs to look like a learning environment but also it needs to be a little limited in terms of furniture because they will pick it up and it can be distracting as well. It’s best, in my opinion, that the student has his own space and they know where they are going to be for either that whole day or for that class. But they know they have their own spot, because that is also very important for our kids, and they need to take ownership of that, whether it is a cubby or a desk, they
need to have something that is theirs. Needs to be safe. My number 1 job is to the kids’
safe and my number 2 job is to help them learn.

Another factor considered by Arlene when discussing the ED classroom environment was the
knowledge necessary to lead a team of adults to best serve the students:

The classroom should have a team in the room, so I treat my paras as teachers. I
introduce them as teachers and we call each other teachers. We all back each other up and
they don’t question anyone’s authority. Our building is pretty rustic and old, and I don’t
think that’s important and we are creative on making tactile things for the students. You
know they have done studies where rooms should be bare as they can be for less
stimulation, but I find the kids really like to decorate the room with their work because
they are proud of it. I don’t necessarily agree with that and I don’t want it to be like a jail
cell. They like what is nice to them. I think it is mostly the people that make the room.

Another physical feature that was found useful in an ED classroom concerned support through
calmness and student ownership of the room as Fiona explained:

I think that the environment within the classroom needs to be very calm. I think that
students need their own space. Within our classroom the students have their own cubicle
that they work in and there are other areas in the class that are set up for direct instruction
and for them to do their rotations. I think it needs to be calming, I think it needs to feel
like their own personal space. The students put some of their personal things in their
cubicles, some of their pictures and whatever it is that helps them feel secure.

Emily also described her room and the advantages it offers students:

It should be welcoming, user friendly, know and get pencil and materials they need,
shouldn’t be too hot or cold. You should be able to manipulate around the room safely.
You want to sit on the carpet that’s fine, you want to work together that is fine too as long as you are working. As soon as they are not working they have told me through their behavior that this choice is not what they need. As far as the environment, I have tables they can work on, I have regular desks, I have softer chairs and harder chairs, I have rugs, I have clipboards if you want to sit on the floor. The only steadfast rules are that I have to be able to see your computer screen at all times. I don’t allow outside drinks in the room, but I make tea on a regular basis. Someone is not feeling well, and I make them hot tea. Within the school I think that the rules and procedures and expectations for all students should be modeled by the general education students, so ED students are able to see that all students are held to a high standard. I think that those things need to be modeled and seen by ED students, so they can see that it can be done and they are capable of doing it as well.

Marie stated, “students must feel safe to learn and I meet this need by having a caring, structure, safe environment with clear rules and consequences.” Irene spoke on safety as well:

I think the biggest thing in an ED classroom is safety. I was in a portable my first year and that was not a safe environment as my kids could run out and not be in the building anymore. You must have a locking cabinet for scissors and such. Having a calm, relaxing environment that is grade level appropriate is needed.

Rina also considered the knowledge of how to create a structured and safe environment when she stated, “I offer my students a safe and comfortable environment where they can receive their academic instruction, as well as receive strategies to help them understand and control their behavior.” Julia described the knowledge one needs to so they know what to look for in an ED
classroom to order to maintain safety and what physical strategies may be supportive for the students:

Oh Lord, God I could go on and on. Number one the room has to be set up appropriately. You need to think about if kids are going to jump out of windows then where are you going to place the teachers desk. If the kid is an escape artist, you may need to block the door at times. I feel that the fluorescent lighting is not good, and I recommend that teachers get the nonflammable paper that you can put over the lights to dim them. I prefer them not to sit in desk chairs and I like, and I ordered for our new schools, balls and bases so that they can wiggle and move – for elementary and middle new schools. Social Skills instruction a minimum of 30 minutes daily. There should be carpet – seclusionary time out rooms especially at elementary schools – they are necessary for some so that is an environmental accommodation. Seating needs to be selected, ADHD kids shouldn’t sit next to the pencil sharpeners or seating next to the cubbies where kids og get their writing paper or whatever – that needs to be done. The para in the classroom need to be – there needs to be a schedule a visual schedule for the kids on the wall and a schedule between the teacher and the para. What is the teacher going to be doing at 8:40 and what is the para going to be doing at 8:40. So that there is no talk about can you go run this group today because I am doing this or whatever. It should run seamlessly if you have those schedules.

Overall, 17 participants discussed the strong need to have background knowledge in creating an ED classroom that both was supportive and safe for students with ED. Participants further identified procedures as knowledge necessary for a teacher in an ED classroom.
The sixth theme, understanding the characteristics of ED, directly relates to the characteristics of ED defined by IDEA. Participants expressed their belief that an in-depth understanding of these characteristics was a requirement to serving students with ED in the best manner possible. The subthemes of characteristics and federal and state law described this theme (Appendix O). Characteristics included knowledge of the characteristics of ED, causes of behavior, medication use and side effects, and the need to have college coursework in psychology, sociology, and ED. The subtheme of federal and state law spoke to the need to have well-written IEPs and be up-to-date with federal and state special education laws.

Arlene conversed about medication used by students and the need to know about these medications as you “need to know about what medication your students are taking and what to be on the lookout for, side effects or other concerns. Be aware of this when you are taking data, so you can note anything medication wise.” The topic of medication knowledge was mentioned by Karl, Emily, and Bonnie. The need for college coursework in and around the field of emotional disabilities was discussed by several participants. Arlene shared that teachers in ED classrooms need to “know the DSM-5 – not just the diagnosis so much but to be able to identify them and how to help them” and Katia also believed college coursework was necessary in IEP law and in disabilities. Bonnie mentioned the need for teachers in ED classroom to be prepared through coursework to work with this population of students.

Subquestion 3: How do educators working with students with ED describe the dispositions necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom? This subquestion addressed the dispositions participants believed were necessary for teachers of students with ED. The theme associated with this subquestion was the third theme, passion and commitment to students with ED (Appendix P). Dispositions noted as important for teachers of ED were divided into two
distinct subthemes: affective dispositions and cognitive dispositions (Appendix O). Affective dispositions viewed as necessary for success in this environment included traits such as authoritarian yet nurturing, compassionate, loving, calm and collected, flexible, empathetic, patient, sincere interest in students with ED, passion for students with ED, and a sense of commitment to working with students with ED. Participants spoke to the need to accept students for who they were as individuals and to be loving yet firm enough to help these students gain emotional and behavioral success. It was also noted throughout the research process that the cognitive dispositions of having strong interpersonal skills, being able to look at the big picture, and thinking outside the box were also necessary in gaining success in an ED classroom. Overall, a passion for students with ED and a commitment to this population was evident in participants’ voices, documents, and teacher efficacy.

Participants were very enthusiastic and opinionated when it came to personal characteristics, dispositions, teachers of students with ED should have. The need to have a nonjudgmental and sincere love for students with ED was expressed by teachers, administrators, and behavior specialists. Colin spoke to the tolerance of all individuals as “if your judgmental you can’t even get through the day.” Matthew addressed the need for compassion as “ED teachers must be compassionate and understanding of their students’ disabilities and especially with children who are emotional because everybody doesn’t understand them. I think it is really just being compassionate about these types of behaviors.”

When one has compassion for another person it becomes easier to accept the person for who they are. Karl addressed this by commenting that you “need to have the ability to forgive.” Cindy also viewed the disposition of compassion as one teachers of students with ED need to have:
You need to have a genuine concern for the child. Like, just helping them to have better lives. As a teacher, I would think just genuinely having true compassion and care for the actual child no matter what they do and just truly caring for the child. Having a compassionate disposition was viewed as necessary for teachers of students with ED. Julia termed this disposition “passion and heart” stating they are the same thing. As a behavior specialist, she interviews teacher candidates and states this is the number one disposition she looks for as:

I can’t teach heart and I can’t teach passion. I can tell them to stand outside their room and greet a student every day and how to build a relationship and I can give them other tips on classroom management, but I can’t teach the heart for the job. Having the passion and heart for these students is a primary characteristic needed for this job.

Clearly, compassion and nonjudgmental love is viewed as a necessary characteristic for teachers in an ED classroom.

The disposition of be calm and collected was also viewed as a characteristic necessary for teachers in an ED classroom. Colin spoke on the need to be “calm in voice and action” and Matthew described his feelings about this disposition stating:

I think you have to be calm, and you have to be collected, and you have to make sure that don’t act just at the spur of the moment. I think it is more about how you respond and react to them and it really is about trying to put yourself in the position of trying to find out why they are acting the way they do. And if you can do that, and you can stay calm and collected, then I think that most of the time you can keep those behaviors from escalating.
Arlene spoke on the need “to stay calm in a crisis” and Bret noted “a calm disposition” as a necessary disposition for teachers in ED classroom. Rina feels strongly that teachers of students with ED “need to be able to maintain a calm demeanor in voice and in body language.”

The dispositions of being flexible and having patience were used together when describing a teacher in an ED classroom by Ophellia:

Patience means you are going to be tested and tried from one day to the next and you can’t overreact. Really take things in stride. Flexibility is understanding your days are going to be up down and all around and you don’t know what you’re going to encounter when you walk into the classroom. Your wonderful on everyone’s page or disastrous for everyone on the very same day. You need patience and to be flexible.

Danielle described these dispositions necessary because “you can be calm and not handle it in any way. Flexible is the key there and willing to change and adapt based on the emotion and attitude of the child. Patience and flexibility are required.” The understanding that things are consistently changing in an ED classroom and the need to be flexible and patient was identified as a necessary disposition for teachers of students with ED by Fiona as well. Throughout the interviews the dispositions of flexibility and patience are used frequently.

The disposition of having high empathy for the students served in an ED classroom was noted to be very important by participants. Danielle stated, “I think they have to have an empathetic nature to be able to look at things through the child’s perspective, to manipulate the situation so it doesn’t deteriorate” and Karl cited a similar reason to be empathetic:

They have to be able to empathize with the students they are working with, not to make excuses for the behaviors they exhibit but understand where they are coming from, such
as their life history and life situations the kids have been put into). Then they can understand why a student is doing what they are doing and not take it personal.

Emily also noted that empathy was a prerequisite for having patience, tolerance, and a true understanding of students with ED:

High empathy, high patience, high tolerance, a true understanding of others, and ability and willingness to write 14 lesson plans before you get to one that works and then you have to change that every year. Without highly empathetic you will have no patience, no tolerance, especially with ED babies. I never, ever take it personally – it never has anything to do with me. I see the teachers that have the hardest time do take it personally. I need to find out what they need and help them meet their needs. Meet them in a way that they want to positively interact.

Danielle further described the need for an empathetic nature:

I think they need to have, I don’t want to say empathy training, but they need to have sort of empathy training, they need to have a knowledge base that the child is acting like this but all these things have happened but you’re here at school. I think that when we get a background and whether you’re in the flight or fight mode. You can’t learn if you’re worried about survival. But I think that support can come into the classroom and needs to know that the child is in flight or fight mode 20 hours a day. May all be worried about eating, or he hasn’t’ slept – I think that this is one of the things we forget when we try to make every kid mainstream.

Tammy and Marie felt empathy was a “major disposition” for teachers in an ED classroom and Katia felt “some type of empathy” was important. Emily believed having a highly empathetic nature was the number one disposition a teacher in an ED classroom needed to have.
During discussion on dispositions necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom, the personal quality of not taking things personally was viewed as an important disposition to have. Emily noted that she sees “the teachers that have the hardest time do take things personally” and Gert stated, “you can’t take things personal.” Whitney and Gert shared that taking things personally doesn’t work in the ED classroom.

Teachers of students with ED need to have a sincere interest in students with ED according to several participants. Whitney simply stated, “You have to like what you do.” Colin expressed this disposition in more detail:

I think someone who is able to kind of be like a therapist but not a therapist, someone who can talk through things with children. I think the best people I’ve seen work with these students have even temperaments and don’t get excited when things start happening. If you’re going to do something in any field, especially with emotional disabilities, you have to be someone who is committed, confident, and caring of these children. It is a tough business.

Bonnie expressed the need to be committed to this population in particular in order to gain success in an ED classroom:

I think that they need to be committed very committed, not just to students, but to students with social/emotional needs. They need to know that population and understand the little things that I was just talking about (punching the wall instead) they really need to understand the population. They need to be compassionate and patient but also be really structured. It’s helpful if their structured within themselves as well because you have to walk the walk because kids can see right through. They need to understand how important organization is and be up on that. They need to be able to work well with
parents that also might have mental illness and not get frazzled by things and in the classroom, know you can’t get upset if a parent cusses you out because it probably will happen. I would really look for the best special education teachers there are because those are your best ED teachers.

Emily summed up her feelings on those who should work with students with ED as:

There’s this one big factor, the indescribable itch. You can’t teach someone to have it – you either have it or you don’t. If you don’t have the itch to work with these students and gain success with ED kids, then you will not make it in this position.

Truly having an interest in emotional disabilities and children was seen as a necessary disposition for teachers in ED classroom.

The final disposition identified as necessary for a teacher in an ED classroom was the need to have strong interpersonal skills. Teachers in ED classrooms need to work with other professionals, such as other teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, and doctors, so they need to be able to work as part of a team, and be a leader, to best serve the student. Matthew shared:

I think one of the most important things is that if you do, if you’re a teacher lucky enough to have an aide or aides, you are all working together. I think with the adults in that room working together they can really help those students be successful. I really think it is a team effort by the people who are in that classroom.

Arlene also spoke to the need to work with others as a team stating:

I and three paras are in the room and we decide who will work best with each student. We will do a quiet swap if it is not working. However, it works best and sometimes it looks crazy, but we all do what is best for each individual student.”
Irene commented on the paraprofessionals in her room, “I teach k-5 so I can have up to six grades in my classroom! This year I have two paras and feel really blessed. We all work together and do things individually.” Speaking to the disposition of working with others, Julia shared:

The characteristics of the para is as important. Let me say this about the teacher, the teacher has to have the knowledge to supervise a para even though they are not the supervisor of record they are the supervisor of day to day what goes on in the classroom and so they have to have the ability to manage staff. And not ask for more staff – the problem doesn’t get better if you add a person. They need to have similar strengths. My paras have always been my lifesavers when I was teaching, I couldn’t have done my job without them as a matter of fact I married my para. I think paras are important.

Administrative support and the teacher needs to have the ability to collaborate with the administrators. Many administrators don’t know a thing about an ED classroom. New principals many haven’t had an ED classroom before. They built a schedule that didn’t have social skills in there. And so, I talked with them. You have to have the ability to collaborate with administrators before a crisis.

Having an innate ability and desire to communicate effectively with others was viewed as a desired trait for teachers of students with ED.

**Subquestion 4: How do educators define teacher success in an ED classroom?** Success in the ED classroom was overwhelmingly defined as student personal growth (Appendix P). Students with ED show growth behaviorally and academically. The theme student personal growth describes how educators defined success in an ED classroom. Growth was seen as both formative and summative (Appendix O). Formative growth is measured day to day and is evidenced by growth such as a student being happy, identifying and expressing feelings, working
to their ability, advancing a level in the level system, and achieving a daily goal. Summative growth was defined as growth over time and educators discussed long-term achievement such as a student having positive behaviors, which lead to academic success, mainstreamed for academic class(s), and maintaining positive relationships. Success in the ED classroom was defined in terms of success for individual students rather than as a whole group or teacher success.

Success was defined over a period of time (school year, grading period) as noted by Ophellia, “Success is to have some behavioral growth throughout the year. Improvements upon and looking toward a goal, maybe not achieving it behaviorally, but at least working towards it.” Another way to look at success concerned IEP academic and behavior goals. Katia shared her view on success as:

A lot of students have a lot of different needs and my goal is to make sure on their IEP goals have been met. When we meet their academic goals, met their social goals, with the accommodations we have in place for them. That is what I consider success. A lot of kids will not meet their academic goal but as long as they meet some objective than that is fine. Progress is progress with me and if I’m seeing progress then that is good. So, success is defined by showing some academic and social progress.”

Julia explained, “the way I measure student success is, well of course we use lots of data to do this, is a decrease in behavioral episodes and increase in positive replacement behaviors.

Success was also defined in terms of an individual school day by participants such as Danielle. “Daily is today is a good day and this is why and today is not a good day and this is why. This is a formative as you can develop the next day’s plan based on today.” Colin described daily success as:
I think of everyday as a new day and I think that is how you have to look at it with any child. Every day is a new day and we are going to learn from it. If I have a good day today it is a success. Whether they are on green or leveling up through the level system or getting through their lesson and being able to read that story or do that math problem. That is a success to me. Not tearing up the classroom that day is a success.

Success is defined as an individual thing each student can reach success daily as Whitney stated, “Tomorrow is a new day, we come in and start over and do better today as an individual.” The belief that success needs to be defined for each individual student with ED, both daily and over the long term, was also discussed by Fiona:

Success for the student, a successful day for a student is they arrive to the classroom, they follow the classroom rules and procedures, they earn all the privileges they are entitled to and they not really have a perfect day because there are days they don’t get everything right but I think success for them is that they haven’t had any incidents that would require them to lose privileges. When I say privileges, for example they could lose the privilege to go and socialize with their peers at lunch and recess and have to eat lunch in their classroom. If they are having such behavioral difficulties that hinders them from being out in the mainstream they may even spend some extra time in their classroom. Successful is that they are able to get out mainstreamed and get everything they are entitled to.

Fiona also spoke to this stating, “students are successful when they are able to get out mainstreamed and get everything they are entitled to.” Students with ED have behavior goals in their IEPs and BIPs that assist them with gaining success in the school environment. Tammy spoke to these behavior goals when describing success for a student with ED:
Learning and mastering their behavior goals in order to create new behavior goals. When they finally learn how to control their emotions and use their strategies, they can slowly return back to the general education environment. A student returning to the general education population, even for a fraction of the day, is the definition of success for me.

By viewing each student as an individual and setting expectations at each student’s individual level Cindy expressed how she views success:

I have some that are showing success that are still not able to go out into the regular education setting but they are show success within my classroom. But major success would be being able to go out into the regular setting and being able to start there. I see small success but nowhere near ready to go mainstream. Reducing the disruptive behaviors, what they are doing occurs one day a week or more – reducing the behavior that keeps them out of the regular setting. They go on and I have some that go out of my class and they go to middle school and they are still not in self-contained which is great. It ranges. There are some who show success in self-contained and they show growth and others get into the regular education classes and show growth. That is way wonderful.

Another way in which participants defined success was when a student gained behavioral success as, Julia and Marie both stated, when “behavior is in check, then academics will be in check.” When a student is happy Whitney feels there has been success:

I think whether or not they are happy. There are a lot of students that I deal with that are never going to be A students there are a lot of them that are not going to get a high school diploma – they are going to get an occupational diploma. But I try and emphasize the fact that, you know, with an occupational diploma you can own your own business. You can fix anything. You can own a fix-it shop. You know how much I pay someone to come fix
something in my house that’s broken? Someone I pay doesn’t necessarily have a high school diploma. So, I feel I’m successful when I can see they are happy with themselves. When they come to terms with the fact that maybe they’re not going to go to college, but they are going to get up in the morning and work and someone’s going to say ‘Wow, he’s a great worker he is always on time and does a fabulous job’.

Karl viewed success in a very personal, individual way with his definition of success:

I define student success in an EDSC when a student is met with compassion and understanding and also with high expectations both academically and socially and emotionally. Student success is determined by how the teacher connects both on a heart and head level. Many of these students are labeled BAD and I have to agree if we all define BAD as BROKEN HEARTED, ABANDONED AND DEMORALIZED. Only when we can build a Safe Loving Relationship with these students can they in turn be Loving and Engaged in the classroom. When a student can define themselves in levels of success instead of failures can we say we have successfully healed the Broken Heart, have given back a sense of Community and Lifted up the Spirit of Healing. This is what defines student success in an ED Classroom.

Therefore, success for a student with ED was defined by participants as an individual thing that could be measured daily or over a length of time and could be based on academics, behavior, or on a student’s sense of self.

Summary

This chapter provided an in-depth look at the thoughts and experiences of 19 educators directly working with students with ED. The participants included assistant principals, behavior specialists, and teachers of students with ED. Data collection included a questionnaire on
evidence-based practices used in ED classrooms. This questionnaire provided a foundation for
the knowledge and skills needed for those working with students with ED and was used to
explore practices used in these classrooms. Participants were then interviewed and asked to
complete a Teacher Efficacy Scale and to contribute relevant documentation to this study.

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the characteristics necessary for
teacher success in an ED classroom through the perceptions of teachers of students with ED,
administrators, and behavior specialists in South District. A thorough analysis of the data
obtained revealed seven essential themes describing the characteristics necessary for teacher
success in an ED classroom: (a) learning environment management, (b) command of curriculum
instruction, (c) passion and commitment to students with ED, (d) proficiency with standards-
driven and special education curriculum, (e) expertise with principles of behavior support, and
(f) understanding of the characteristics of ED. Further, the theme for the definition of what
success means in an ED classroom was sought and was found to be student personal growth.

This study revealed the strong commitment to students with ED that is required for
success in this position. As participants spoke about their experiences a sense of caring and
commitment to students with ED was apparent. Participants communicated how important
learning environment management skills are in order to maintain a positive learning
environment. The need to have knowledge of the characteristics of ED and behavior supports to
assist teachers in achieving success with students with ED was also discussed. The vast amount
of academic knowledge and skills were described as knowing all standards-driven curriculum for
all grades taught and proficiency with special education curriculum that provides direct
instruction for students who have gaps in reading, writing, and/or math. A special educator in
this position needs to be willing to be a life-long learner in behavior supports, grade-level
academics, special education curricula, special education law, and psychological and sociological advances in the area of emotional disabilities.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

Students with ED present behaviors in the classroom that are challenging and difficult to manage. These behaviors affect the success of students with ED in social interactions, academics, and daily life social skills (Hecker, Young, & Caldarella, 2014). Therefore, teachers of students with ED are charged with instructing in the areas of academics, social skills, and behavior management. Teachers of students with ED having the dispositions, knowledge, and skills necessary may exhibit more success in the ED classroom. Given the commitment made to these students through the IDEA (2004), it is imperative that teachers of students with ED have the characteristics necessary to effectively work with these youths.

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom through the perceptions of teachers of students with ED, administrators, and behavior specialists in South district. This chapter will provide a summary of the findings and a discussion of how the findings relate to the theoretical and empirical literature. The empirical, theoretical, and practical implications will then be discussed. As a conclusion the limitations of this collective case study and recommendations for future research will be addressed.

Summary of Findings

A collective case study design was used to explore the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. Several studies related to the skills and knowledge of teachers of students with ED have been completed over the past two decades (Bullock, Ellis, & Wilson, 1994; Cooely-Nichols, 2004; Maag & Katsiyannis, 1999; Walder & Cheney, 2007). These studies relied on teacher preparation programs, experts in the field, and previous literature
to identify the skills and knowledge necessary for successful teachers of students with ED. The majority of research focused on the knowledge and skills necessary for teachers of ED from the viewpoint of those not working directly with students with ED; the teachers. Therefore, the present collective case study is significant as it assists in gaining a more complete understanding of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom from the viewpoint of those working directly with students with ED (administrators, teachers of students with ED, and behavior specialists).

A thorough data analysis process was completed, and seven themes emerged: (a) Learning environment management, (b) command of curriculum instruction, (c) passion and commitment to students with ED, (d) proficiency with standards-driven and special education driven curriculum, (e) expertise with principles of behavior support, and (f) understanding of the characteristics of ED. Each of the themes identified directly answered one of the research questions. A seventh theme, personal growth, was identified for subquestion four.

**Central Question Findings**

The central question of this study sought to gain a more in-depth understanding of the dispositions, skills, and knowledge necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom and all seven themes emerging from this study answered the central question. Administrators, special education teachers, and behavior specialists provided their thoughts and specific details on the characteristics needed for a teacher to gain success in an ED classroom and defined what success means in this setting. Throughout the interview process participants provided rich description of the characteristics necessary for a teacher of students with ED. Participants further provided information on evidence-based strategies, provided documentation used in their ED classroom, and responded to a teacher efficacy scale. All seven themes emerging from the study provided
insight into the characteristics of teachers of students with ED and answered the central question (Appendix P). The findings indicated the passion participants had for students with ED and the curriculum and behavior knowledge and skills needed for success in this position and the personal dispositions that play a role in this success. Further, a definition for the meaning of success in an ED class was found to be defined in both summative and formative terms.

The themes indicated the following characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom:

(1) The skill of being able to manage the ED classroom/learning environment effectively assisted students with gaining success in this environment.

(2) Having a command of curriculum instruction provides teachers of ED students with the background necessary to deliver core and core-replacement instruction skillfully and effectively.

(3) A teacher of students with ED needs to be proficient with standards-driven and core-replacement curriculum as this knowledge is necessary to teach the vast array of grade levels and abilities in this environment.

(4) A knowledge of behavior and behavior supports is required so behaviors can be managed using evidence-based practices and supports are based on individual student needs.

(5) An understanding of the characteristics of ED assists teachers in this environment in gaining a complete understanding of the students they serve.

(6) Teachers who work in this environment need to have a passion and commitment for students with ED.
Success in an ED classroom is defined as individual personal success and this success is celebrated daily as a formative measure of individual success and over a period of time as a summative measure of individual success.

**Subquestion 1 Findings**

Subquestion 1 focused on the skills educators in the ED field perceived as necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. This subquestion was answered by two of the themes that emerged from this study. The first theme answering this question is learning environment management which includes such strategies as positive interventions, consistency, and a structured environment (Appendix P). Each participant mentioned the need to have classroom management skills to gain success in an ED classroom. The second theme answering this subquestion was command of curriculum (Appendix P). All but one of the participants discussed the fact that most ED classrooms are comprised of students in multiple grade levels and each grade level is required to learn core content on grade level or be instructed using a core replacement program. In order to reach this vast spread of curriculum, some ED classrooms consist of five grade levels, a special education teacher in this environment must have a command of the curriculum he/she teaches. Expertise in instructing each core academic area, reading, writing, math, social studies, and science, is required to successfully teach this population. Together, these two themes identified the skills of management of the learning environment and expertise in all core curriculum, both general education and special education, for the various grades taught in an ED classroom.

**Subquestion 2 Findings**

Subquestion 2 focused on the knowledge educators in the ED field perceived as necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. Three themes directly answered this question
The theme of proficiency with standards-driven and special education driven curriculum spoke to the need to not only have the skill to teach core and core-replacement curriculum but to also have the in-depth knowledge of both curriculums. Participants noted the varying grade levels and abilities that are inherent in this environment when discussing the need to have knowledge of curriculum that is driven by state standards and by programs seeking to advance special education students knowledge in reading, writing, and math. Another theme answering this subquestion was the need to have an expertise with principles of behavior support. Students with ED struggle with appropriate behaviors and all the participants directly identified a need for teachers of students with ED to become experts in understanding behavior and behavior supports to gain success with this population. Lastly, the theme of understanding characteristics of ED was seen by all but two of the participants as necessary for teachers of students with ED. The characteristics of ED are identified by IDEA and an in-depth understanding of these characteristics and federal and state special education law pertaining to this disability was believed by all but two of the participants to be extremely necessary to serve each individual student in an ED classroom as students exhibit one or more of the characteristics of ED. Together, these three themes express the need for teachers of students with ED to have knowledge of standard-driven and special education curriculum, behavior supports, and characteristics of ED.

**Subquestion 3 Findings**

Subquestion 3 addressed the dispositions participants felt were necessary for teachers of students with ED. The theme of passion and commitment to students with ED answered this subquestion (Appendix P). The participants collectively shared the belief that teachers of students with ED must have a passion for this population of students and be committed to
working with these students in a classroom environment. Students with ED exhibit challenging behaviors and require adults who are compassionate, calm and collected, empathetic, and have a sincere interest in helping these students grow as individuals emotionally, behaviorally, and academically.

Subquestion 4 Findings

Subquestion 4 sought to define what success means in an ED classroom. The theme personal growth describes how educators defined success for these students (Appendix P). All but one participant defined success in an ED classroom by discussing individual student growth. Participants discussed both formative growth, short-term, and summative growth, long term, as they pertain to success. Teachers in this environment spoke to the need, and provided documentation to support this need, to assist students in gaining success daily and recognizing that each day is a new start. However, participants also noted success in terms of individual growth over a semester or a school year. Success was defined as personal growth for individual students.

Discussion

The following is a discussion of the findings in relation to the theoretical and literature discussed in Chapter Two. The collective case study was grounded in Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory. The literature review provided in Chapter Two examined emotional disturbances, historical research on teachers of students with ED, teacher efficacy, characteristics of teachers of students with ED, professional organizations, and federal laws and statistics for this population of students.
Discussion of Theoretical Framework

Bandura’s social cognitive theory explains the continuous interaction among one’s beliefs, their environment, and their behavior. It is the interaction of these three factors that teachers of students with ED bring to the classroom and this interaction is evident in the findings of the present study identifying the characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED. Triadic reciprocity concerns the connections between behavior, environmental factors, and personal factors and the reciprocal determinism that explains the causal relations among these factors (Bandura, 1986). This is relevant to identifying the characteristics of teachers of students with ED as it explains the need to investigate interactions between a teacher’s cognitive factors (knowledge, attitude), environmental factors (social norms, social influences), and behavioral factors (skills, self-efficacy). Participants of this study noted that for a teacher to be successful in an ED classroom they would need specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions. One of the participants, Whitney, stated “A teacher can have all the knowledge in the world but if she doesn’t have the skills and attitude to deliver the knowledge in an ED classroom then the knowledge is not worth a hill of beans.” Therefore, it is the interaction of these three factors identified by Bandura’s social cognitive theory that led to a more complete understanding of the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom in this study.

Throughout the interview process participants discussed having high expectations and expecting the best from their students. This behavior is explained by Bandura’s outcome expectations and efficacy expectations. According to Bandura (1986), an outcome expectation is the estimate a person has for a chosen behavior to result in the desired outcome and an efficacy expectation is the conviction one has on being able to successfully execute the behavior required to gain the desired outcome. The findings from this present study reflect the high expectations
participants had for themselves and their students indicating their belief that when the appropriate academic and behavior interventions are used, and they are confident in being able to execute these interventions, their students will have success.

Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy was also present in the findings of the current study. Self-efficacy is the idea that people decide how to behave based more on their belief in their own capabilities of accomplishment rather than in their knowledge or skills (Pajares, 2004). The present study utilized the Teacher’s Efficacy Scale (Hoy, W. K, and Woofolk, A.E., 1993) to gain an understanding of the teacher sense of efficacy for administrators, teachers, and behavior specialists working with students with ED. Through analysis of the survey a picture of efficacy for GTE and PTE emerged showing teachers of students with ED had high PTE efficacy and moderate to high GTE efficacy. Bandura (1993) noted that high self-efficacy leads a teacher to have high expectations for both their instruction and students’ learning and the results of the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale illustrate the high sense of efficacy participants had for both their general teaching abilities and personal teaching abilities.

The findings reflect the characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED and directly relate to the Bandura’s social cognitive theory and theory of self-efficacy. Bandura’s social cognitive theory explains the interactions between teachers’ beliefs, their environment, and their behavior and it is the interaction of these three factors that teachers bring to a classroom environment. The triadic reciprocity explained by this theory addresses the teacher as a whole person, one whose behavior, cognitive, personal factors, and environmental events all operate as a unit, interacting with each other. This reciprocity was evident throughout the research process and in the findings as each participant identified knowledge, skills, and dispositions that were necessary for success in an ED classroom and expressed the need for each factor to be present.
Self-efficacy addresses the belief a teacher has in his/her ability to complete the task of instructing students and managing the classroom environment. It is the combination of self-efficacy and Bandura’s triadic factors that led to a more complete understanding of the characteristics of successful teacher of students with ED was evident in the findings of the current study.

**Discussion of Related Literature**

It is imperative that teachers of students with ED have the characteristics (skills, knowledge, and dispositions) necessary to effectively work with these students. Literature documents the vital need to identify and prepare teachers for students with ED due to a shortage in this field (Maggin et al., 2011; Simpson et al., 2011). One reason for the shortage of teachers for students with ED is the number of teachers leaving the field. Further, teachers of students with ED focus more on internal factors and personal characteristics than on external factors when identifying reasons for staying in the profession (Prather-Jones, 2011). Participants in the current study stressed the importance of having compassion and commitment to students with ED to be successful and remain in this field. While there were numerous studies on teachers of students with ED, there was a lack of literature identifying the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. Through IDEA a commitment has been made to effectively serve this population of students and identifying teachers who can work effectively with these students is significant.

IDEA provides a definition for an emotional disturbance and it is necessary for a teacher of students with ED to have the skills and knowledge to serve students falling into this disability category. The ability to effectively serve students who fall into one or more of the characteristics of ED, as stated in IDEA, was a main point during each of the interviews. Participants also
recognized the importance of having the knowledge and skills necessary to serve students with ED as individuals. CEC’s professional standards for teachers of students with ED were echoed during the interview process of this study. Participants addressed each of the seven subsets of standards for this specialty, as identified by CEC. during the interviews and in the documentation provided by participants to the researcher.

In the 1960s Hobbs (as cited in Newman, 2012), described an effective teacher of emotionally disturbed children as one that was educated, well trained, a person of hope, confidence, and had a commitment to children with ED. Participants echoed Hobbs sentiments of an effective teacher as they discussed the education, training, and the strong commitment a teacher must have to be successful with this population of students. However, participants believed that having a strong commitment was not enough by itself to gain success with students with ED and teachers also needed dispositions such as patience, compassion, empathy, calmness, and strong interpersonal skills.

The research of the late 1960s and 1970s focused more on the competencies needed for successful teachers of students with ED. At this time the CBTM was created based on teachers’ observable behaviors. Participants of the current study recognized skills, such as classroom management, that are observable in ED classrooms. Studies have been completed in the last two decades that addressed the skills and knowledge for success in this field and recognized that more specialized trainings for teachers of students with ED may be necessary. Participants of this study also stressed the need for specialized training, as “the skills necessary to gain success in a classroom with students who struggle emotionally and socially are unique to other settings” (Bonnie). Continuing education was noted by all but two of the participants as necessary due to the vast amount of curricula knowledge, learning, environment, and behavior support knowledge
required for success in this field. Canico, Albrecht, and Johns stated continuing special development programs were needed for these teachers as they work with students who have complex needs (2013).

An ability to manage an ED learning environment was identified in the literature and by participants. The need for training in evidence-based strategies is evident for teachers of students with ED through teacher perceptions of how they were prepared for this position (Prather-Jones, 2011). Participants reflected on their first year in an ED classroom and described the training, or lack of training, they had prior to teaching in an ED classroom. The role that teacher-student relationships plays in the success in this environment was highly stressed both in the literature (Alderman and Green, 2011) and participants of the current study. Additionally, the use of evidence-based practices for individual behavior supports and classroom management was evident through participants discussions of knowledge and skills needed for success in an ED classroom. The need for teachers in ED classrooms to use evidence-based practices when assisting these students gain academic and behavior success is evident in the literature. Special education teachers serving students with ED identified evidence-based practices that played an important role in success with this population of students (Gavel, et al., 2012).

The CEC also notes in their standards that teachers of students with ED need to have knowledge of the scope and sequence for both general education curricula standards and special education interventions (2012). This vast array of knowledge required by teachers of students with ED was discussed throughout the interviews with all participants noting the need to continue their learning to keep up with the curriculum they teach.

A teacher’s dispositions have an influence on how well interventions and resources are used in a classroom (Elik et al., 2010). Participants of the current study stressed the importance
of having compassion for and a commitment to students with ED in order to have success in the
with in an ED classroom and to work long term in this specialized field of teaching. Prather-
Jones (2011) hypothesized that internal factors and personality characteristics may be even more
important than workplace factors when it comes to teachers of students with ED staying in the
field. Participants of this study concurred with this hypothesis by stating the importance of
having the “right personality” for the position and being committed to this population of
students.

Consistent with the literature, the present study found that teachers of students with ED
need knowledge in general education and special education curricula, specialized skills, and a
commitment to and compassion for students with ED. The literature does not address the teacher
as a whole person. The current study defines a successful teacher in an ED classroom
recognizing that it is the interactions among a teacher’s behavior, cognitive, personal factors, and
environmental events that characterize their position.

**Implications**

The results of the present study have theoretical, empirical, and practical implications. This study explored the characteristics of successful teachers in an ED classroom through the
perceptions of assistant principals, special education teachers, and behavior specialists that work
directly with this population of students. These findings might be beneficial to school systems
and individual schools when identifying trainings for teachers of students with ED and when
hiring teachers for these positions. The results from the present study aims to add to the existing
literature by providing insight into the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED
classroom through the perceptions of those currently working in the field.
Theoretical Implications

There were two theoretical implications that will assist school boards, district office personnel, principals, and others involved in the interviewing process for teachers of students with ED. Bandura’s theory states a person’s chosen behavior is based on two types of expectations: outcome expectations and efficacy expectations (1986). An outcome expectation, according to Bandura (1986), is the estimate a person has for a chosen behavior to result in the desired outcome and an efficacy expectation is the conviction one has on being able to successfully execute the behavior required to gain the desired outcome. Participants directly identified the confidence teachers of students with ED need to have in their personal abilities to gain success in an ED classroom. The social cognitive theory explained participants perceptions of the connectivity between belief in personal ability and in being successful in an ED classroom.

The first theoretical implication informs stakeholders involved in hiring teachers of students with ED on the need for these teachers to have the confidence in their ability to be successful in an ED classroom. The Teacher Efficacy Scale could be used when identifying questions for the interview process. Potential teachers of students with ED might be asked questions such as “If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students” (Hoy, 2000). Another probing question that will assist interviewers in gaining an understanding of the confidence a teacher has in their ability to be successful may be “When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can’t do much because most of a student’s motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment” (Hoy, 2000). As potential teachers answer the questions interview teams can ask them to explain their answer in further depth to discover the confidence a teacher has in their personal ability to be successful as it directly relates to teacher success in an ED classroom.
Teachers are tasked with creating learning environments that are conducive to learning and the ability to achieve this task relates to the talents and self-efficacy of teachers (Bandura, 1993). Teachers of students with ED need to create a learning environment for students with emotional and social struggles. Participants spoke to the challenges inherent in an ED classroom yet believed in their ability to create a safe, positive learning environment in which all students could gain success. High self-efficacy also leads a teacher to have high expectations for both their instruction and their students’ learning (Bandura, 1993). The self-efficacy levels of participants in this study were high and this has a positive impact on their success in the ED classroom. Participants exhibited a high sense of self-efficacy in the current study as well as describing the difference this efficacy made in the education delivered in their classrooms.

The second theoretical implication concerns the need for school board members, district office personnel, and principals to assist teachers of students with ED in maintaining a sense of high self-efficacy. Confidence in teaching the subject matter was a factor in determining self-efficacy and school board members and administrators need to ensure that teachers of students with ED have a strong knowledge of the core subjects they are teaching. As standards and curriculum changes occur teachers of students with ED need to be involved in trainings on these changes. Teachers of students with ED need to receive continuous training in what they teach to maintain confidence in teaching both the general education curriculum and special education curriculum. This would include professional conferences that specifically address the needs of their students, paid for by the school or the school district.

**Empirical Implications**

The results of this study have two empirical implications. This study strengthened other research into the coursework and trainings that support teachers of students with ED. The need to
improve both pre-service and in-service training and support to increase implementation of effective practices was noted by Kerm (2015). Further, research shows that preparation programs and trainings have not always adequately prepared special educators for their positions (Gable et al., 2012). The findings of the current study provide insight into the knowledge and skills needed for success in this position, as well as providing insight into the knowledge base and usage of evidence-based practices in ED classrooms.

The first empirical implication addresses the need for trainings in evidence-based practices. Specifically, academic trainings in systematic approaches to cooperative learning, peer-assisted learning, and instruction in self-monitoring of academic performance were identified as evidence-based practices that teachers of students with ED would benefit from. Additionally, non-academic evidence-based practices in the areas of crisis plans for emergency situations, programs of peer-mediated interventions to promote positive behavior skills, pre-correction instructional strategies, group-oriented contingency management, and peer-reinforcement to promote appropriate student behavior were identified as target areas for future trainings.

Teachers’ dispositions influence their success, or lack thereof, with implementing interventions and using resources in the classroom (Elik et al., 2010). The participants of the present study offered a candid look into who they are as individuals and what dispositions they bring to an ED classroom. Participants also provided information on how stress may be reduced in this position. Prather-Jones (2011) found that retention and attrition of teachers of students with ED was highly influenced by internal factors. One such internal factor is having a strong content knowledge of what one is teaching.
The second empirical implication would require school and district personnel to provide trainings and conferences to teachers of students with ED that recognize them as academic professionals. A teacher of students with ED has a vast array of academic abilities in their room on a daily basis and they need to meet each student’s needs at his or her present level. To assist them with maintaining internal motivation as professionals in this position, providing them with the ability to attend trainings offered that acknowledge them as professionals with both with standards-driven curriculum and special education curriculum may help teachers maintain internal motivation.

**Practical Implications**

The findings in this collective case study provide key insights into the characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED and indicate four practical implications for school board members, district office personnel, and school administrators. The results from this study can assist district personnel and administrators in both identifying teachers to work with students with ED and identifying future trainings for teachers of students with ED. District and school personnel are involved in the hiring of teachers to work in ED classrooms and it is vital that they have an abundance of relevant information to assist them in choosing a teacher to work with students with ED.

The first implication considers the information provided to personnel involved in hiring teachers of students with ED. Questions posed during the interviews for teachers of students with ED could be directly related to the themes found in this study as characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED. Interview teams could use the themes of learning environment management, command of curriculum instruction, proficiency with standards-driven and special education curriculum, expertise with principles of behavior supports, and an
understanding of ED to formulate questions for interviews. For example, interviewers could ask probing questions relating to an interviewee's knowledge in both standards-driven and special education curriculum and learning environment management. Having the skills to understand the cause of and effectively address student behavior is necessary for teachers of students with ED and interviewers could use questions such as asking interviewees what they know about level systems and whether they had ever used one, what positive interventions are and how often they should be used, and how they would create a safe and supportive classroom for students with ED.

The information provided in the current study also provides information to district and school personnel on appropriate trainings for teachers of students with ED. There is a myriad of challenges associated with working with students with ED and one way to improve and build upon teacher success in this environment is to ensure that these teachers receive the continual training necessary to assist their students in gaining academic, behavior, and social success. The vast amount of knowledge and skills required for this position in the areas of general education curricula standards and special education curriculum, behavioral support interventions and practices, IEPs, BIPs, and special education law was documented throughout the research.

The second practical implication addresses trainings that would benefit teachers of students with ED. These trainings may be based on topics such as standards-driven curriculum in all core subject areas, special education curriculum, behavior supports and interventions, writing lesson plans for multiple grades and abilities, social skills instruction, BIPs, and Federal and State laws as they pertain to students with ED. Each of these trainings would recognize teachers of students with ED as professionals in these areas.
One of the biggest challenges noted by participants was the feeling that other education professionals did not understand the day to day challenges of an ED classroom. Participants likened this to being on an island as an ED classroom is unique among typical general and special education classrooms. Administrative support was viewed as highly necessary and several participants shared that their administrator had met with them and asked what they could do to help. Overall, there was little negativity about the duties required in this setting as most participants strongly believed in doing what was right for the students. Recommendations from teachers of students with ED concerned having some time to plan as there may be up to 13 lesson plans a day, administrator support, and recognition as professionals. Ophelia articulated these recommendations stating:

We are very unique, and we teach so many different subjects. I have been blessed this year to actually have time to meet with my colleagues and to be able to say this is where I’m at. However, going to a planning session is not necessarily beneficial to me because my kids are not where general education kids are. Reality is, I am not bringing chemicals in my room for science. I do believe we are an island upon ourselves and we need to speak up, not in a complaining way, to say what we need. It is like meeting with our new assistant principal and she wants to meet with me to understand what it is I am doing. I have 13 preps a day and emotional students. So, if I’m not at a meeting I may be with a student or drained and she told me she didn’t know all this, and she was happy I told her.

The third implication of the present study is the need for administrator support. Administrators can support teachers of students with ED by providing planning times for them to work on multiple lesson plans, IEPs, and BIPs. Administrators can also provide support by meeting with teachers of ED and asking what would best help them maintain success in their ED classroom.
Participants also noted that they often felt alone, and no one knew or offered appreciation or support for the job they did in their classroom. Administrators could provide positive feedback by writing notes or sending emails that recognize teachers of students with ED for the work they are doing in their classrooms.

A fourth implication could be for colleges and universities to use this as a way to determine which applicants who state they want to be ED teachers really have the characteristics, knowledge base and teaching ability to be a successful ED teacher. All too often, college students take course work that focuses on the theory of learning and disabilities but hardly ever are there courses that specifically focus in on the candidate themselves and what their personality traits, belief system and view of the world around them hinders and strengthens their ability to be an effective ED teacher.

The fifth implication from this research would be to use the result to develop a self-evaluation system for potential teachers of ED students who could independently administer it to themselves and then reflect on those strengths and areas of need that might support or hinder their ability to be an effective ED teacher. These teachers could identify those areas of need and focus on course work that would strengthen those areas of need or seek out a successful teacher of students with Ed to act as a mentor.

The final practical implication comes from participants’ recommendations to school and district office personnel. Participants expressed a need for time to collaborate with other teachers of students with ED.

Cindy expressed:

Working with other teachers would be nice. It would be very beneficial if I had planning time with other ED teachers, some collaboration. It would absolutely cut down on the
stress. I would even like to visit other ED classrooms. I think collaboration with other ED teachers would make a big difference.

Irene was very enthusiastic during the interview and felt collaboration among teachers of students with ED would be positive:

I am actually enjoying this! I am actually talking with another ED instructor that goes through this every day. Most teachers at my school have no idea what I teach. Even the special education teachers have no idea what I teach and why my students are different from theirs. They have no idea why you go to work and get cursed out and go back the next day and they give you a hug and you start all over again. I would not teach anything else. I love ED! They do teach us to be a better person. I always say on staff development days if you could let ED teachers sit around and talk to each other it would be useful. We could share ideas.

Therefore, district personnel could provide time for teachers of students with ED to get together, share their ideas and stresses with other teachers like themselves.

District and school personnel may find the frank dialogue of participants in the current study useful when making training-related decisions and providing support for teachers working in an ED classroom. The vast amount of skills and knowledge identified by the participants leads to many choices for trainings and collaborations. Participants felt these trainings could be held on staff development days and during the summer for those teachers who do not want to be away from their classrooms.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

This collective case study has delimitations and limitations that are inherent in qualitative research studies. The delimitations of this study concern the research boundaries that were set by
the researcher. The population of interest for this study was confined to teachers of students with ED, administrators working with students with ED, and behavior specialists; therefore, excluded the majority of teachers in South District. Another boundary set by the researcher was containing the scope of the study to one school district.

This research also contains limitations that are inherent in qualitative research studies. One limitation to the present study is the fact that the researcher was the only one conducting the interviews. A second limitation concerns the demographics and geographic location of South District as one school district located in South Carolina. There may be a lack of generalizability due to the small sample size and focus on public k-12 schools in South District (Yin, 2014). Further, the 19 participants for this study were purposefully selected as teachers, assistant principals, and behavior specialists working with students with ED in elementary schools, middle schools, and day treatment schools. Therefore, the findings may not reflect the perceptions of other teachers of students with ED, administrators, and behavior specialists.

It is further acknowledged that participants of the current study may not fully disclose their honest perceptions of the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom. Some participants may not express themselves fully due to concerns about reactions, especially among supervisors, to their perceptions and beliefs. Do you believe that location may have affected your study results? What about the use of only elementary classrooms?

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This collective case study provides data regarding the characteristics of teachers of students with ED through assistant through the perceptions of assistant principals, teachers of students with ED, and behavior specialists. Along with adding to the current body of literature on the characteristics of teachers of students with ED the current study also lends itself to
identifying recommendations for future research. This study focused on perceptions of those working closely with students with ED. Future research could focus more on observational data than interviews, delve deeper into documentation used in ED classrooms, and academic and behavior data.

Additionally, future research could expand on these findings by conducting a similar collective case study in a school district in a different geographic location. The present study was completed in a school district serving over 42,000 students with special education students representing approximately 13.8% of the student population. Future studies could be conducted in one or multiple school districts that are more rural or urban than the current study.

Summary

The purpose of this collective case study was to describe the characteristics necessary for teacher success in a classroom for students with ED through the perceptions of teachers of students with ED, administrators, and behavior specialists in South District. A qualitative research design and methodology was appropriate for this collective case study as the data collected provided rich descriptions of the characteristics (knowledge, skills, and dispositions) necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom and this topic cannot be easily measured quantitatively (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). The experiences of 19 participants were explored using interviews, documents, and surveys and a vivid description of teachers of ED emerged. Additionally, participants provided insight into the meaning of success in an ED classroom. This collective case study contributed to the existing literature by providing district and school personnel with information and resources to use as they seek to hire teachers of students with ED and support current teachers of students with ED.
Previous research into the characteristics of teachers of students with ED has been conducted; however, these studies were not completed through the perceptions of those working directly with this population of students. Further, previous studies explored either the knowledge and skills or the dispositions necessary for teacher success with students with ED. The present studies explored the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of teachers of students with ED as it is the interaction of these three characteristics that teachers of students with ED bring to their classrooms. In response to the research questions guiding this study, participants provided rich descriptions of the characteristics of teachers of students with ED thus addressing gaps in the literature and providing schools and school districts with valuable insight to assist during hiring of teachers for students with ED and when identifying appropriate supports and trainings for teachers currently teaching in an ED classroom.
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Appendix A: Special Education Teacher Interview Guiding Questions

Questions

Demographic

1. What is your educational background, including degrees, certification, and years of experience in the ED classroom?

Background

2. How and why did you get into this field?

3. In what ways do you meet the needs of students of ED in your classroom?

4. How well prepared do you consider yourself to be to work with students with ED?

5. How do you define student success in the ED classroom?

Dispositions

6. What dispositions, personal characteristics, do you feel are important for teachers of students with ED? Why?

7. If you had to identify a primary disposition necessary for a successful teacher of students with ED what would it be? Why?

Academic Skills and Knowledge

8. What academic teaching skills do you feel are important for teachers of students with ED? Why?

9. What strategies/skills do you use to encourage socially acceptable behavior in your classroom?

10. Please provide me with an effective method you have used to teach socially acceptable behavior?

Behavior Management Skills and Knowledge
11. In your opinion, what skills, for behavior success among students, are necessary for teachers of students with ED?

12. In your opinion, what knowledge, for behavior success among students, is necessary for teachers of students with ED?

*Teachers of Students with ED*

13. What environmental factors do you perceive as necessary in order for teacher success in an ED classroom?

*Participant Comments*

14. Is there anything else pertaining to characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED that you would like to mention?
Appendix B: Assistant Principal and Behavior Specialist Interview Guiding Questions

Questions

Demographic

1. What is your educational background, including degrees, certification, and years of experience?

Background

2. How long have you been working with students with emotional behavioral disorders and what is your current role?

3. In what ways do you meet the needs of students of ED in your classroom?

4. How well prepared do you consider yourself to be to work with students with ED?

5. How do you define student success in the ED classroom?

Dispositions

6. What dispositions, personal characteristics, do you feel are important for teachers of students with ED? Why?

7. If you had to identify a primary disposition necessary for a successful teacher of students with ED what would it be? Why?

Academic Skills and Knowledge

8. What academic teaching skills do you feel are important for teachers of students with ED? Why?

9. In your opinion, what knowledge, for academic success among students, is necessary for teachers of students with ED?
Behavior Management Skills and Knowledge

10. In your opinion, what knowledge, for behavior success among students, is necessary for teachers of students with ED?

11. In your opinion, what skills, for behavior success among students, are necessary for teachers of students with ED?

12. What environmental factors do you perceive as necessary in order for teacher success in an ED classroom?

Participant Comments

13. Is there anything else pertaining to characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED that you would like to mention?
Appendix C: Evidence-Based Practices Survey

The following directions are provided through Survey Monkey: For each evidence-based practice please rate the practice as one of high value, moderate value, or limited value in the ED classroom and whether you utilize practice often, sometimes, or rarely.

School-wide

1. How valuable is the practice of using clear rules and expectations in the ED classroom?
2. How often do you utilize the practice of using clear rules and expectations in your classroom?
3. How valuable is using a crisis-intervention plan for individual students in your classroom?
4. How often do you use a crisis-intervention plan for individual students in your classroom?

Classroom - Academic

5. How valuable is the practice of using academic supports and curricular/instructional modifications in your classroom?
6. How often do you use academic supports and curricular/instructional modifications in your classroom?
7. How valuable is the practice of a systematic approach to cooperative learning in your classroom?
8. How often do you use the practice of a systematic approach to cooperative learning in your classroom?
9. How valuable is the practice of using peer-assisted learning in your classroom?
10. How often do you use peer-assisted learning in your classroom?
Individual Practices - Academic

11. How valuable is the practice of providing choice making opportunities for students in your classroom?

12. How often do you use the practice of providing choice making opportunities for students in your classroom?

13. How valuable is the practice of specialized instruction to promote learning and study skills in your classroom?

14. How often do you use the practice of specialized instruction to promote learning and study skills in your classroom?

15. How valuable is the practice of instruction in self-monitoring of student performance in your classroom?

16. How often do you use instruction in self-monitoring of student performance in your classroom?

Classroom – Nonacademic

17. How valuable is a program of peer-mediated intervention to promote positive behavior skills in your classroom?

18. How often do you use a program of peer-mediated intervention to promote positive behavior skills in your classroom?

19. How valuable is social skill instruction taught as part of regular class instruction in your classroom?

20. How often do you use social skill instruction taught as part of regular class instruction in your classroom?

21. How valuable is an anger management program in your classroom?
22. How often do you use an anger management program in your classroom?
23. How valuable is a behavior support/management plan in your classroom?
24. How often do you use a behavior support/management plan in your classroom?
25. How valuable is pre-correction instructional strategies in your classroom?
26. How often do you use pre-correction instructional strategies in your classroom?
27. How valuable is a group-oriented contingency management in your classroom?
28. How often do you use a group-oriented contingency management in your classroom?

Individual - Nonacademic

29. How valuable is a system of positive behavior intervention and support in your classroom?
30. How often do you use a system of positive behavior intervention and support in your classroom?
31. How valuable is the use of peer-reinforcement to promote appropriate student behavior in your classroom?
32. How often do you use peer-reinforcement to promote appropriate student behavior in your classroom?
33. How valuable is instruction in self-monitoring of nonacademic behavior in your classroom?
34. How often do you use instruction in self-monitoring of nonacademic behavior in your classroom?
35. How valuable are behavior contracts in your classroom?
36. How often do you use behavior contracts in your classroom?
37. How valuable is a formal procedure to develop function-based interventions in your
classroom?

38. How often do you use a formal procedure to develop function-based interventions in your classroom?

39. How valuable is the practice of pre-correction instructional strategies in your classroom?

40. How often do you use the practice of pre-correction instructional strategies in your classroom?
Appendix D: Permission to Use List of Evidence-Based Practices

Permission to use the list of Evidence-Based Practices given by Robert Gable through email correspondence on July 25, 2016.

Cheryl:

You have my permission to use the list of 20 evidence-based practices that appears in the article published in *Education and Treatment of Children*.

Best wishes,

Bob Gable

Robert A. Gable, PhD
Constance F. and Colgate W. Darden Professor
Darden College of Education
Old Dominion University
Appendix E: Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale (Short Form)

The Short Form of The Teacher’s Efficacy Scale is located at

Appendix F: Permission to use Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale

Dear

You have my permission to use the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale in your research. A copy the scoring instructions can be found at:

http://u.osu.edu/hoy.17/research/instruments/

Best wishes in your work,
Appendix G: Request to Complete Research in School District

Dear Director of Assessment and Program Evaluation,

As a graduate student in the College of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership. The title of my research project is *Characteristics Necessary for Teacher Success in a Classroom for Students with Emotional Disabilities* and the purpose of my research is to describe the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom through the perceptions of teachers of students with ED, administrators, and behavior specialists.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research in Horry County School District and wish to contact teachers of students with emotional disabilities, behavior specialists, and assistant principals working with students with emotional disabilities and invite them to participate in my research study. Participants will be asked to participate in an interview and complete an online survey and teacher sense of efficacy scale. The data will be used to inform stakeholders involved in the identification and development of teachers of students with emotional disabilities of trainings and support for these teachers and inform potential teachers and stakeholders of the dispositions necessary for this position. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. I have attached a summary of dissertation proposal per guidelines and included my original dissertation proposal as an appendix. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on approved letterhead indicating your approval. Thank you for your time and consideration.
Sincerely,

Cheryl Bowers, Ed.S.
Special Education Teacher,
Appendix H: Summary of Research Proposal Provided to School District

Dissertation Proposal Summary

Students with emotional disabilities (ED) present behaviors in the classroom that are challenging and difficult to manage. These behaviors affect the success of students with ED in social interactions, academics, and daily life social skills (Hecker, Young, & Caldarella, 2014). Therefore, teachers of students with ED are charged with instructing in the areas of academics, social skills, and behavior management. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004) illustrated the strong commitment America has for children and youth with disabilities and the need to identify and develop teachers to instruct and perform interventions with students with ED has been well documented in the literature (Gable, Tonelson, Sheth, Wilson, & Park, 2012; Walker and Cheney, 2007). However, students with ED continue to struggle in school and teachers of students with ED continue to have a high rate of attrition (Prather-Jones, 2011). Given the commitment made to these students through the IDEA (2004), it is imperative that teachers of students with ED have the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary to effectively work with these youth.

The proposed collective case study will seek to describe the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom through the perceptions of teachers of students with ED, assistant principals, and behavior specialists in South District. Through this study, a more thorough understanding of the skills, knowledge, and dispositions of teachers of students with ED will be sought.

Several studies related to the skills and knowledge of successful teachers of student with ED have been completed in the past two decades (Bullock, Ellis, and Wilson, 1994; Cooley-Nichols, 2004; Walker and Cheney, 2007). These studies relied on previous literature, teacher-preparation programs, and experts in the field to identify the skills and knowledge necessary for
successful teachers of students with EBD. Therefore, there have been studies relating to the skills and knowledge of teachers with EBD; however, these studies did not address dispositions of teachers of students with EBD. Prather-Jones (2011) examined personal attributes of teachers of students with EBD who stay in the field and Chong and Ng (2011) studied teacher perceptions of useful practices for success with students with EBD in Hong Kong; however, skills and knowledge were not explored in these studies.

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) published the 6th edition of professional standards for “Initial Special Education Teachers of Individuals with Exceptional Learning Needs with Emotional and/or Behavioral Disorders” in the book What Every Special Educator Must Know (2009, p. 99). This book contains ten standards addressing the knowledge, skills, and personal attributes initial special education teachers of students with EBD must have. These standards were further addressed in 2012 when CEC published Specialty Sets reflecting the knowledge and skills necessary for safe and effective practice of those working in the Special Education field.

Given the commitment made to these students by the USDOE through the IDEIA (2004) it is imperative that teachers of students with EBD have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to provide the best education possible for these students. There is a gap in the literature that identifies the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of successful teachers of students with EBD from the viewpoint of those that work directly with this population (teachers and administrators). When investigating reasons why teachers of students with EBD stay in the field, Prather-Jones (2011) found teachers indicated more internal factors than external factors as for motivation to stay in the field and the need for preservice and in-service training focused on the development of the skills and strategies that contribute to success in this field. Looking further
into personal attributes, a study on the perceptions of teachers of students with EBD on what works in the classroom described personal attributes and knowledge as indicators of successful teachers of students with EBD (Chong & Ng, 2011).

The purpose of this collective case study will be to identify the characteristics (knowledge, skills, and dispositions) of special education teachers of students with ED to inform future identification and future development of teachers of students with ED. The following questions helped focus the study on describing the characteristics of successful teachers of students with ED.

Central Question:
What are the necessary characteristics for teacher success in an ED classroom?

Subquestions:

RQ1: How do educators working with students with ED describe the skills necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom?

RQ2: How do educators working with students with ED describe the knowledge necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom?

RQ3: How do educators working with students with ED describe the dispositions necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom?

RQ4: How do educators define teacher success in an ED classroom?

The proposed research will employ a collective case study approach, triangulating data from multiple data sources. Data will be collected from individual interviews, relevant documentation, an open-ended questionnaire, and the Teacher Efficacy Scale. The collection of the four data sources will provide the researcher with the means to use triangulation and improve the trustworthiness of the research (Creswell, 2013). Through triangulation of the data,
converging lines of inquiry can be developed, findings are more likely to be more convincing and accurate, and the case study may be considered to have higher overall quality (Yin, 2014). Data will be collected from multiple K-12 schools within South District and is bounded by geographic location, time, teacher assignment (ED classroom), and a public-school setting.

The first method of data collection will be individual semi-structured interviews focusing on the perceptions of knowledge, skills and dispositions of successful teachers of students with ED and demographic information of the interviewee. Research questions used during the interview will be open-ended, general, and focused on the central phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2013). Interviews will take place at a time and location agreed upon by the participant and interviewer. During the interview I will follow the research questions, staying focused on the central phenomenon, and probing for further information when the occasion arises. All interviews will be recorded using two digital recording devices to capture all data. All data will be transcribed verbatim.

The second method of data collection concerns classroom management documents of participating teachers’ classrooms. This documentation may consist of items pertaining to the rules, reward system, and/or level system used in the classroom. This documentation will provide data on practices that are used in the classroom on a daily basis and will assist in corroborating and augmenting other evidence collected as part of the study (Yin, 2014).

The third method of data collection will focus on 20 evidence-based practices for students with ED (Gable, et al., 2012). A significant number of students with ED display acting-out, disruptive, and/or aggressive behavior in the school environment (Kerr & Nelson, 2010; Simpson, et al., 2011). Literature shows that these negative behaviors have a negative impact on students with ED academics (Burke, Boon, Hatton, & Bowman-Perrot, 2015). Teachers serving
students with ED must be prepared to address the diverse needs of this population through the use of evidence-based practices (Gable et al., 2012). The evidence-based practices that will be used in this questionnaire come from a study completed by Gable et al. (2012) on the importance and preparedness of teachers of students with ED to implement evidence-based strategies.

The fourth method of data collection will be “The Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale” (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993) which is utilized to “provide information on self-efficacy as it plays a central role in one’s abilities to effectively serve students” (Silverman & Davis, 2009, p. 2). The scale will be explored using description only. The scale is appropriate to use as self-efficacy impacts the choices we make, effort we put forth, and how we feel about ourselves, others, and tasks (Bandura, 1986). The belief a teacher has in their ability to make the right choices and complete necessary tasks in an ED classroom may affect their perceptions on the dispositions, knowledge, and skills necessary for a successful teacher of students with ED. Therefore, the descriptive data gained from this scale will corroborate other data collected in the study and provide a richer insight into a teacher’s belief in the ability to gain the desired result with her students.

Provided with this summary is a copy of the original dissertation proposal as an appendix. All interview and survey questions are explicitly stated, and a copy of the Teacher Efficacy Scale is provided. Also, as an appendix, are copies of the proposed recruitment letter and informed consent letter for potential participants of the study. All participation is voluntary, and participants may drop out of the study at any time.

The intent of this study will be to contribute to the literature and explore the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom through the perceptions of those who work with these students. This study will be significant because it will increase the understanding of the skills, knowledge, and dispositions required for success in this school
setting. Simpson et al. (2011) stated that the personnel in many ED classrooms have not demonstrated they have the necessary knowledge or skills, possess the necessary personal attributes, or received training to be successful with students with ED. Exploring the perceptions of teachers and administrators currently working with students with ED is important in order to gain an understanding of the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for teachers of students with ED from those currently working with this student population. Assisting teachers of students with ED gain the necessary skills and knowledge for success with students with ED is crucial for classroom success. Prather-Jones (2011) found that a need exists for trainings that address the development of the characteristics necessary for successful teaching of students with ED.

This study will inform stakeholders involved in the identification and development of teachers of students with ED on trainings and support for these teachers and inform potential teachers and stakeholders of the dispositions necessary for this position. This study will be significant because it will increase the understanding of the skills, knowledge, and dispositions required for success in this school setting.
Appendix I: Permission to Conduct Research in South District

October 28, 2016

Cheryl Bowers

Dear Ms Bowers,

Your request to conduct research titled Characteristics Necessary for Teacher Success in a Classroom for Students with Emotional Disabilities is approved subject to the following conditions:

1. You must comply with the conditions set forth in the District policy, "Research Involving Students," and S 1232h, "Protection of pupil rights," of the U.S. Code;
2. You are not to release, present, or publish any personally identifiable information concerning students, their parents, or District staff members;
3. You are not to identify ---------- or any school in our District in any publication, presentation, or release of information associated with your research without my written permission;
4. The records and raw data associated with your study are to be destroyed when they are no longer needed for the purposes set forth in your request; and
5. You are to provide a copy of your completed research report to me at the District Office.

Specifically, you have been granted permission to work with teachers of teachers with ED, assistant principals, and behavior specialist. You will need to gather appropriate permissions and consent from these individuals and their principals.

I hope your research goes well. If you have any questions or are in need of further assistance, please contact me at [blank].
Appendix J: Recruitment Letter

Date:

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the College of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership. The title of my research project is *Characteristics Necessary for Teacher Success in a Classroom for Students with Emotional Disabilities* and the purpose of my research is to describe the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom through the perceptions of teachers of students with emotional disabilities, administrators, and behavior specialists. I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are a teacher providing services to students with emotional disabilities, an assistant principal working with students with ED in the school environment, or a behavior specialist you are invited to participate in this research. If you choose to participate you will be asked to participate in a one-to-one short interview with the researcher, complete a short questionnaire, and a Teacher Efficacy Scale. At the interview, you may provide any documentation that you choose to illustrate your teaching style (such as level systems, point systems, and other classroom specific tools). The interview should take approximately 30 minutes and the time to complete both the Teacher’s Efficacy Scale and the questionnaire should be approximately 30 minutes. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be required.

*Horry County School District* is neither sponsoring nor conducting this research. There is no penalty for not participating and participants will not be personally identified. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

To participate please review the attached consent form and respond to this email so an interview can be scheduled. The consent form contains additional information about my research. You may sign the consent form and I will either pick it up or you can scan and send to me via email (the original will be picked up by the researcher at the time of the interview). Both the
questionnaire and the Teacher Efficacy Scale will be sent to you through email once the researcher receives your consent form.

If you choose to participate, you will receive a $25 gift card for Walmart upon completion of all research components.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Bowers, Ed.S.
Special Education Teacher
Appendix K: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM
CHARACTERISTICS NECESSARY FOR TEACHER SUCCESS IN A CLASSROOM
FOR STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL DISABILITIES
Cheryl A. Bowers
Liberty University
Education Department

You are invited to be in a research study of the characteristics necessary for teacher success in a classroom for students with emotional disabilities. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a teacher working in a classroom for students with emotional disabilities, a behavior specialist, or an assistant principal working with an ED teacher. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Cheryl Bowers, a doctoral candidate in the Education Department at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to describe the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom through the perceptions of teachers of students with ED, assistant principals, and behavior specialists in South District.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1) Complete a survey regarding your thoughts about teaching. This survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.

2) Complete a questionnaire regarding your perception on the value of/use of 20 evidence-based practices. This questionnaire should take between 15 to 30 minutes to complete.

The survey and questionnaire are anonymous and will be completed online.

3) Participate in an interview with Cheryl Bowers. The interview should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete.

4) Provide any documentation you would like to Cheryl Bowers that will assist in understanding your perceptions on a successful ED classroom (such as level/point systems, classroom rules/procedures, etc.)

The interview and documentation are confidential information and the researcher will not disclose any identities.
**Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:** The risks involved in this study are no more than you would encounter in everyday life. It is unlikely that you would experience any risks associated with participating in this research.

The benefits to participation are being instrumental in identifying the characteristics (knowledge, skills, and dispositions) to inform future identification and future professional developments for teachers of students with ED.

**Compensation:** You will receive a $25 Walmart gift card for taking part in all parts of this study.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. Research records will be stored on a hard-drive owned by the researcher, which will be stored, along with audio recordings, in a locked file box.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw from the Study:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Cheryl Bowers. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at cbowers@horrycountyschools.net or 843-467-3118. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty advisor, Rebecca Bowman, at rbowman3@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

*Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

*(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)*
☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

__________________________________________
Signature                                      Date

__________________________________________
Signature of Investigator                      Date
Appendix L: Follow-Up Phone Call/Potential Participants

Good morning/afternoon. My name is Cheryl Bowers and I recently sent you an email concerning research that I am completing as part of my dissertation. It would be great if you were able to participate in this research on teachers of students with emotional disabilities. The title of my research project is *Characteristics Necessary for Teacher Success in a Classroom for Students with Emotional Disabilities* and the purpose of my research is to describe the characteristics necessary for teacher success in an ED classroom through the perceptions of teachers of students with emotional disabilities, administrators, and behavior specialists. I am calling to follow-up on the invitation to participate in my study. I have also resent the original email. Would you be able to participate in the study? If you are, please review the consent document in the email and we can schedule a time for the interview now. If you are unable to participate I appreciate you taking the time to speak with me.
Appendix M: IRB Approval

October 31, 2016

Cheryl Bowers

IRB Approval 2627.103116: Characteristics Necessary for Teacher Success in a Classroom for Students With Emotional Disabilities

Dear Cheryl Bowers,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971
## Appendix N: Code Frequency Chart

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<th>Code</th>
<th>Frequency from Interviews</th>
<th>Frequency from Questionnaire</th>
<th>Frequency from Documents</th>
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Student expresses feelings
Working to ability
Going up in level system
Achieving daily goal |
|                            | Summative | Long-term academic success
Mainstreamed
Maintain positive relationships |
## Appendix P: Code Classification Chart

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<td></td>
<td>Long-term academic success</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mainstreamed</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintain positive relationships</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Q: Irene’s Classroom Documents

Daily Contract

Name: ____________________________ Date: ____________

*I will earn a 1 for each goal I meet during each subject and a 0 if I don’t meet my goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Follow directions by 2nd prompt.</th>
<th>Participate and try my BEST.</th>
<th>Use kind words and actions.</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrival and Breakfast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning Work &amp; Read Aloud</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ELA Stations</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science/Soc. St.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
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<td>Math</td>
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<td>Specials</td>
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<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>Recess</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Skills</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bonus Points:

Homework Completed _______   Reading Log Completed _______

Total Score: _____________

Parent Signature ___________________________

Student Signature ___________________________
Daily Contract

Name:          Date:___________

*I will earn a 1 for each goal I meet during each subject and a 0 if I don’t meet my goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Follow Directions.</th>
<th>Use kind words.</th>
<th>Use kind actions.</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrival and Breakfast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Morning Work &amp; Read Aloud</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELA Stations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science/Soc. St.</td>
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<td>Writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Skills</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bonus Points:

Homework Completed _______   Reading Log Completed _______

**Total Score:**   Parent Signature _______________________________

Student Signature _______________________________
Daily Contract

Name:          Date:___________

*I will earn a 1 for each goal I meet during each subject and a 0 if I don’t meet my goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Participate in activities and complete assignments.</th>
<th>Use kind words.</th>
<th>Use kind actions.</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrival and Breakfast</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Morning Work &amp; Read Aloud</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELA Stations</td>
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<td>Science/Soc. St.</td>
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<td>Writing</td>
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<td>Social Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recess</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bonus Points:

Homework Completed _______   Reading Log Completed _______

**Total Score:**   Parent Signature

Student Signature
# Level Privileges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Privileges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Blue (24-30) | - Use of Mystery Motivator  
- Talking Table at Lunch  
- Backrest Pillows in the Reading Corner  
- Playground Bin/Computers at Recess  
- Independent Work in Reading Corner  
- Cleaning Tables at Lunch  
- Running Errands |
| Yellow (17-23) | - Use of Mystery Motivator  
- Cushions in the Reading Corner  
- Playground Equipment/Games at Recess  
- Helping in the Classroom |
| Red (0-16)     | - Reading Corner and Drawing at Recess                                    |

*You are entitled to all the privileges in your color level, as well as those in lower color levels.*
_ is working hard to earn recess!
Goal: Follow safe adult directions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_ is working hard to earn recess!
Goal: Use kind words to help others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_ is working hard to earn recess!
Goal: Use nice hands and nice feet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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<th>10</th>
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<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_ is working hard to earn recess!
Goal: Try my best, even when it’s hard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
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<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_ is working hard to earn recess!
Goal: Write legibly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<th>9</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_ is working hard to earn recess!
Goal: Use a tissue.

- is working hard to earn recess!

Goal: Focus on my work, instead of others.

- is working hard to earn recess!

Goal: Actively participate and complete all my work.

- is working hard to earn recess!

Goal: Write legibly.

- is working hard to earn recess!

Goal: Complete all of my work on time.

Appendix R: Ophelia’s Classroom Documents
Appendix R: Ophelia’s Classroom Documents

Student: ____________ Date: ____________
Goal: To stay on task 100% of the time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>TIME ON TASK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PATHS</td>
<td>100% 75% 50% 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>100% 75% 50% 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATH</td>
<td>100% 75% 50% 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AM EXPLORE</td>
<td>100% 75% 50% 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIENCE/SOCIAL STUDIES</td>
<td>100% 75% 50% 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PM EXPLORE</td>
<td>100% 75% 50% 0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Behavior Expectations:
1. _______________________________________________________________________
2. _______________________________________________________________________
3. _______________________________________________________________________
4. _______________________________________________________________________

Privileges for meeting the conditions of the contract:
1. _______________________________________________________________________
2. _______________________________________________________________________

Consequences/Restrictions for failing to meet the conditions of the contract:
1. _______________________________________________________________________
2. _______________________________________________________________________

I understand that I must meet all Behavior Expectations listed above in order to earn both of my privileges each day. Failure to meet the Behavior Expectations listed above will result in my earning of both consequences/restrictions listed above.

Privileges and Consequences/Restrictions will be earned on the same/following day (choose one).
My Contract:

Name: ________________________________________________
____________________________________________________

Date: 
____________________________________________________

These are my goals:

1. I will follow teacher directions the first time without arguing.
2. I will not yell at my peers or adults.
3. I will not hurt myself when I am upset, frustrated or angry.

These are my consequences if I don’t meet my goals:

I will not earn my “take home snack”.
I may lose recess or art.
I will get a phone call to mom.

These are my rewards/reinforcers if I meet my goals:

1. “Take home snack”
2. Free time (Google Earth, CNN student news)
3. Extra Recess
4. Positive note home
5. Reward pencils

My contract will be reviewed on:

Signatures: ________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________
DAILY POSITIVE BEHAVIOR TRACKING FORM

Student Name: ______________________        Date:______________________

Instructions:

1. The student carries this form to selected settings each day.
2. The teacher in each selected setting completes the rating and initials the form at the end of each tracking period in the appropriate box. Indicators for each number have been attached.
3. Additional Teacher comments may be made on the back of this form.
4. The student reviews this form each day with __________________ who initials the bottom row of this form.

1 = Poor
2 = Fair
3 = Average
4 = Very Good
5 = Outstanding

My goal is 80% points for the day.

Target behavior 1: Completing and Turning in assignments on time

Target behavior 2: Staying on task for the duration of the assignment or class period with 2 or less redirections.

Target Behavior 3: Bring all appropriate materials to class (pen, pencil, paper, and planner)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st period</td>
<td>TB 1: 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TB 2: 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TB 3: 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd period</td>
<td>TB 1: 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TB 2: 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TB 3: 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd period</td>
<td>TB 1: 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TB 2: 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TB 3: 1 2 3 4 5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th period</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>TB 3: 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<td>TB 3: 1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td>TB 2</td>
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<td>6th</td>
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<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reviewed By: _____/ 105

= _____ %

MET GOAL Y/N:

________________________________________________________________________

Parent Signature and Comments: _____________________________________________
Level System
Meet your behavior goal for 5 days to move up a level.

Level 1
- Small candy
- Positive note home

Level 2
- Small candy
- Reward pencil
- Homework pass

Level 3
- Participate in "Fun Friday" activity
- Teacher helper
- 10 minutes free computer time
- Positive phone call home

Level 4
- 15 minutes of additional recess time

Level 5
- 20 minutes of “Chill Zone” time

Level 6
- Plan and teach a lesson
- Outside breakfast will be brought to you
APPENDIX S: Arlene and Bonnie’s Presentation

Introduction to Student Behavior

“Describe the student’s typical behavior in all education related settings (e.g., his/her approach to tasks, expectations, supervision, interaction, directives, etc.) Describe the events necessitating an FBA at this time."

STRENGTHS

- Behavioral strengths relevant to his/her approach to tasks, following directives, school/classroom expectations, peer & adult interactions, etc
- VERY similar to Functional PLAAFP

NEEDS

- Briefly summarize the student’s behavioral needs
- This can be one sentence... you will describe the needs in DETAIL later

Example: Student has ongoing problems with Verbal Aggression, and Non-Compliance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name:</th>
<th>ACT DATA COLLECTION REPORT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>ABILITY TO FUNCTION</th>
<th>BEHAVIOR</th>
<th>CONSEQUENCES</th>
<th>INTENSITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INTENSITY: (1) - behavior occurs but not disruptive (“not a big deal”)
(2) - behavior is disruptive to student learning & learning of others
(3) - causes injury, extreme property damage OR DURATION is VERY LONG.
### Analysis

**Hypothesis:**
Based on the data and findings, formulate a hypothesis regarding the function the target behavior serves for the student (e.g., Given (setting) and (antecedents), the student is likely to (target behavior) in order to (function)).

“This is the SUMMARY of your FINDINGS in the previous 4 sections.”

Example: In the classroom, when given directives or when asked to complete assignments, John is likely to display noncompliance and verbal aggression in order to escape/avoid work assignments.

### Analysis

**Possible Strategies to Support and Reinforce Replacement Behavior:**
Include possible replacement behavior interventions that serve to replace the negative behavior.

Example: Preferential Seating & Cues, Visual Schedule, Chunk assignments, lunch with desired staff.

**Great resources:**
- [http://interventioncentral.com](http://interventioncentral.com)
- [http://PBISWorld.com](http://PBISWorld.com)
- [http://behaviordoctor.org](http://behaviordoctor.org)

- The Teacher's Encyclopedia of Behavior Management

### Outcome

**Context Information:**
Describe expected behavior(s) for all students where problem behavior(s) occurs and describe the reinforcement(s) available to all students who participate in them successfully.

- The description should include:
  - (1) how successful students get attention, interact, follow procedures, respond to others, etc.; and
  - (2) specific reinforcement, acknowledgement, tokens, praise, privileges, class rewards, recognition etc. available to all students.

**NOTE:** If behaviors exist, but not to the extent that a BIP is necessary OR permission for the FBA was not provided, the following could be used to address the behaviors by adding to the IEP:
- Behavior Contract or classroom management system
- Accommodations
- Goals
- Counseling
**Behavior Intervention Plan**

**Behavior**

Describe the skills to be taught related to replacement behavior:
- Staff should include Direct Teaching Strategies (3-5 strategies)
- Example: MAINTAIN A HIGH RATIO OF POSITIVE INTERACTIONS.
  - Teacher maintains a ratio of at least three positive teacher-student interactions (e.g., greeting, positive conversation, high-five) for every negative (disciplinary) interaction (e.g., reprimand).

**Behavior**

Describe the skills to be taught related to replacement behavior:
- Staff should include Environmental Accommodations (3-5 strategies)
- Example: ROAMING THE CLASSROOM.
  - Teacher circulates through the classroom periodically, using physical proximity to increase student attention to task and general compliance. While moving about the room, teacher provides corrective academic feedback and encouragement to student, as well as reinforcing student for showing appropriate behaviors.

**Behavior**

Frequency/location/Persons Responsible for Providing Instruction EXAMPLE:

Strategies will be taught prior to the start of class, in the classroom for academic subjects, during transitions, during less structured times such as PE and during lunch. Strategies will be taught during naturally occurring times of the day. Persons responsible for providing instruction: [Redactions]
**Crisis Plan**

**Is a Crisis Plan Necessary?**
- Yes
- No

Remember that not all students will need a crisis plan. Only students whose behavior presents a safety risk will need a crisis plan.

*If YES, this will open up additional boxes to complete.

---

**Crisis Plan**

**Describe the plan and who is responsible for implementing the plan:**
- Must be specific
- Must include all relevant guidelines if physical restraint or the seclusion room is being incorporated into the BIP
  - This includes when and how the parent will be contacted
- Who Will Implement Plan?
  - Drop box appears, type in name of building administrator.

*For assistance with Crisis Plans, contact your Behavior

---

**Crisis Plan**

**Communication Provisions**

**Parents will be consistently informed by:**

How will parent/guardian be consistently informed of progress?

- Include parent preferred method
- Be specific, choose one method
  - email, phone, written report

---

**Crisis Plan**

**Crisis Plans must include:** ‘All due process rights and IDEA regulations will be provided at all times. If student’s behavior significantly interferes with his learning and/or the learning of others or becomes unsafe, the IEP team will meet to discuss all options to provide the least restrictive environment for instruction and to update the Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) if and when needed.”
Example of Level/Point Criteria - Elementary

**LEVEL 1: 0-10 Points**
- No earned privileges, staff direct all activities.
- Silent lunch.
- Advance to level 2 by earning 11-14 points for 2 consecutive days.

**LEVEL 2: 11-14 Points**
- Daily Rewards: self selected reading or staff directed instruction if make-up work is required.
- Silent lunch.
- Advance to Level 3 by earning 15-17 points for 2 consecutive days.

Example of Level/Point Criteria

**Level 3 & 4: School-wide rewards**
- Prize box (intermittent)
- Field trips
- Lunch outside
- 4-square after lunch
- Other preferred activities scheduled throughout the year
**Level System**

Immediate Level Drops
- Non-negotiable behaviors that earn a level drop
- Determined by staff in conjunction with students

**Earning Points**
- Students **NEVER** have points *taken from them*; they will either earn or not earn points.
- Students **NEVER** have a level *taken from them*; they will earn or not earn the level they are on.

By implementing this strategy it removes the teacher, other school personnel and parents as the source of success or failure.
- The STUDENT is responsible for his/her behavior.

---

**Consistency**

**A = B every single time!**

Kids are smart and they learn fast. They learn quickly that if they whine or throw a tantrum an adult will give in.

- Kids crave consistency.
- Consistency creates trust.
- Knowing what to expect if they CHOOSE a certain behavior often reduces the behavior.

---

**Strategies in the classroom**

POWER STRUGGLES...Nobody Wins!
- Gives the student attention (they win!)
- Lose the behavior behind the student
- Loss of instruction time
- YOU may lose your cool!
- Emotionally exhausting

⚠️ **DO NOT WORK HARDER THAN YOUR STUDENTS!**
Strategies in the classroom

- Think aloud - it works for behaviors too.
- Planned ignoring
- 1, 2, 3
- “I’ll wait...”
- Speak in a whisper
- Create a procedure for student processing/reflection of negative behaviors.

Individualize

- Secret, non-verbal cues for individual students
- Differentiate instruction to increase student engagement
- Self monitor points
- Task Boards

Positivity!

PRAISE! Celebrate the little successes

- Instead of -8, grade a +2
- Encouraging stickies/notes on desks in the morning
- Positive phone calls home

Rewards and Consequences

Rewards
- Wear a hat on Friday
- Field Trips
- Prize box (NO CANDY!)
- Teacher Helper
- Positive phone call home

During Lunch:
- Talk to peers
- Eat outside
- Use of i-Pad or computer

Consequences
- Level Drop
- Silent lunch
- Lunch Detention
- Teacher assigned work during lunch
- No Field Trips
- Phone call to parent
- Loss of technology privileges