A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF EARLY CAREER ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' SELF-EFFICACY TOWARD MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM

by

Paula Danielle Cox

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University

2024

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Abstract

This phenomenological study explored how the lived experiences of elementary school teachers contribute to their self-efficacy when making instructional decisions to support twice-exceptional students in the general education classroom in a large suburban school system in northeast Georgia. The theoretical framework for this study is Bandura's self-efficacy theory. The study participant was the elementary school (K-5) general education teachers in their first five years of service. The phenomenon was examined through surveys, personal interviews, and focus group interviews. Data collection consisted of personal interviews, a questionnaire, and a focus group session with participants. A transcendental phenomenological methodology was used to understand and synthesize the data describing the lived experiences of the participant and to determine major themes within the study. Findings revealed a need for increasing the time allowance during practicum experiences, access to targeted and specific courses during pre-service and professional development when in-field for understanding and addressing the needs of the twice-exceptional student.

Keywords: gifted, talented, twice exceptional, special education, self-efficacy, instructional decisions, phenomenology, inclusive classrooms, general education

Copyright Page

Dedication

First and foremost, I want to dedicate this dissertation to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His unfailing love and strength carried me throughout the completion of this journey. Matthew 19:26 states, …With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

To my children, Katie and Andrew, may you always know that you can achieve whatever you set your heart and mind toward.

Acknowledgments

There are many people who have taken this journey with me, and I want to take this opportunity to thank a few of them for their unwavering love and support. First, I want to thank my chair, Dr. Susan Stanley, for her guidance, love, and encouragement to persevere in the more difficult moments. Thank you, Dr. Stanley, for praying for me in those times when I wasn't sure if I would complete this journey. I also want to thank Dr. Lucinda Spaulding for serving on my committee, and for her work in the field of special education, which provided valuable support for my own research. You both have allowed me to grow throughout this process and encouraged my dream of pursuing a career in higher education.

To my family, I could not have completed any of this without each of you. Their love and understanding when I needed to focus my time and attention on research was so appreciated. It is my hope that the example of an insatiable love for learning and the pursuit to follow your dreams through whatever may come is not lost on my children and precious grandchild.

I am forever grateful for my Heavenly Father who straightened the path when I felt lost in the forest.

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List of Abbreviations

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity-Disorder (ADHD)

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)

Education for All Handicapped Children (EAHC)

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Local Education Agency (LEA)

National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES)

National Training Institute (NTI)

Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC)

Response to Intervention (RtI)

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

Students with Gifts and Talents (SWGT)

Twice exceptional (2e)

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The individual having received the sobriquet twice exceptional (2e) are those found to exhibit concomitant domain specific gifts or talents and a disability as categorized under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (IDEA, 2004; Lin & Foley-Nicpon, 2019; Maddocks, 2020). Awareness of the existence of the 2e individual first made an appearance in 1923 in *Special Talents and Defects: Their Significance for Education* by Hollingworth (Bannister-Tyrell, et al., 2018). The 2e student has gained an increasing amount of attention and recognition in the decades following the Education of All Handicapped Children (EAHC) in 1975. Although it was not until the 2004 reauthorization of the IDEA that acknowledgement of their existence was written into law (Bell, 2020; Josephson, et al., 2020). General estimates suggest 2% to 5% of the total gifted population in the United States is twice-exceptional, still others argue the actual number is closer to 9% (Bell, 2020; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013; Dare & Nowicki, 2015). However, a true measure of prevalence for this population has been difficult to obtain due to the complexities surrounding identification procedures, a lack of policy guidance for inclusion in talent development programs, and a general misconception of gifted and learning-disabled criteria across the country (Bell, 2020; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2017).

Despite acknowledgement and increased interest in this special population, there is a lack of research focused on the lived experiences of the novice teacher in the general education classroom responsible for teaching the 2e student. Further, there is sparse literature related specifically to the self-efficacy of the new in-field elementary school teacher in the general education setting for addressing the needs of the 2e student. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to understand the perceptions of novice elementary school general

education teachers regarding the factors that influence their self-efficacy toward instructional decision-making practices for the 2e student. This chapter provides background information, including theoretical perspectives, historical context, and social perspectives of special education in the United States and around the world is included. Further, the chapter includes the problem statement, purpose statement, the significance of the study, the guiding research question and sub-questions, and definitions.

Background

This section includes a background of special education in the United States and around the world. The traditional treatment of individuals with disability, a review of laws instituted within the United States to address the education of those with an identified disability, and the lack of understanding for the importance of appropriately identifying and addressing the needs of the 2e student is discussed. Furthermore, a depiction of how the 2e student and disability is viewed socially, along with the difficulties faced by this population will be provided in this chapter. Lastly, an illustration of the theoretical framework of this study linking Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy to teaching the 2e student in the general education classroom is discussed.

Historical Context

As a society evolves, its beliefs relating to the treatment of individuals with exceptional needs also evolve. For centuries prior to the early 1800s, families of children with special needs or exceptionalities were criticized, often ostracized, by society (Kauffman et al., 2021; Spaulding & Pratt, 2015; Rose, 2017; Trent, 2018). This shunning forced many families to hide their children away from public view and place their care with the state in government run institutions (Kauffman et al., 2021). By the mid 20th century societal views on exceptionalities such as

physical and intellectual disabilities had shifted. Parents began to unify and demand better treatment for their children with special needs (Carey, 2009; Dybwad, 1990; Kauffman et al., 2021; Spaulding & Pratt, 2015; Trent, 1994). While compulsory education laws first emerged in the mid-1800s, it was not until 1918 that every state within the union passed laws requiring all children to attend school (Swanson et al., 2013).

Compulsory education laws made way for the creation of separate, or self-contained, classrooms to support the needs of exceptional children within public-schools (Osgood, 2008). In the years between 1947 and 1972, children with disabilities who attended a special education program within a public school rose by 716% (Gargiulo & Bouck, 2018). Despite positive improvements for the education of those with disabilities an estimated 80% of children with special needs continued to be excluded from inclusion in public education programs. The 1972 class-action suit of the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) against the state of Pennsylvania's school system (*PARC vs. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*) led to the elimination of laws excluding exceptional children from being educated within the public school system (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015). Continuing along this trajectory came the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) signed into law in 1975 by President Gerald Ford (Kauffman et al., 2021; EAHCA, Public law 94-142). The EAHCA required public-school systems across the county to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for all students with disabilities (Baldwin et al., 2015; Kauffman et al., 2021; EAHCA, Public law 94-142). In 1978 the Gifted and Talented Children's Education Act was passed, establishing the National Training Institute (NTI) (Baldwin et al., 2015). The offices of NTI established a definition for giftedness within six areas as follows, general intellectual ability, specific aptitude, visual and performing arts, leadership, creativity, and psychomotor abilities (Baldwin et al.,

2015). Despite acknowledgement that students with gifts and talents (SWGT) require specialized services there are no federal mandates which ensure their needs within their areas of strength are addressed (Baldwin et al., 2015; Bell, 2020; Bannister-Tyrell et al., 2018; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013).

Since the institution of EAHCA much legal debate has ensued surrounding the public-school systems' responsibilities for providing FAPE to exceptional children. In the case *Board of Education of Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Rowley*, the courts held that FAPE was met when a student's educational programming enables the student to receive educational benefit (Bell, 2020). Many educational advocates and parents of special needs children, specifically those of the 2e individual, argued that this definition of FAPE was too lenient, failing to provide fully for a student's needs (Bell, 2020). The Supreme Court provided clarification in the 2017 case of *Endrew v. Douglas County School District RE-1*, placing greater emphasis on the student's individual abilities (Bell, 2020). This ruling explained that a student's educational programming should enable the child to make adequate progress appropriate to their individual circumstances (Bell, 2020). While this clarification provided a pathway, full provision of FAPE continues to be a complicated issue for the 2e student because their needs stretch along both special education law and gifted education policy areas (Bell, 2020). While this shift toward educating those with special needs improved educational experiences for individuals with special needs, isolation and stigma associated with disability continued well into the twentieth century (Dybwad, 1990; Winzer, 1993).

The changes in society's view of disability brought about the deinstitutionalization of those with exceptional needs and the implementation of inclusive practices. An extension of the laws requiring the education of all within the public-school setting led to the idea of least

restrictive environment (LRE) requiring inclusion of individuals with exceptionalities within the general education classroom population. Federal mandates require that LRE be provided to all special education students. However, this protection does not address the specific needs of the 2e student to ensure their area(s) of strength needs are met with the provision of talent development programming (Bannister-Tyrell et al., 2018; Baldwin et al., 2015; Maddocks, 2020). To qualify for special education services under IDEA and receive support in the LRE a student must demonstrate criteria within one of 13 disability categories (IDEA, 2004).

Despite acknowledgement that the gifted and talented individual requires accommodation of curriculum which is not typically provided within the general education setting, no category, or criteria for the SWGT exists within the IDEA (Bell, 2020; Bannister-Tyrell et al., 2018; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013). Federal funding has not been provided through these initiatives, although during the height of the Cold War, allocation of finances for gifted and talented programming were provided through the National Defense Education Act (Bell, 2020). However, this funding was repealed in 1981 by the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (Bell, 2020). The Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program took up the cause to ensure that research and programs were developed to use scientifically based practices were instituted across the country for the SWGT (Bell, 2020; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013). These Javits-funded research and projects continued until 2011 when the program was eliminated (Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013).

During the 2017-2018 school year, 13.7 % of all students were served through federally funded special education programs (Snyder & de Brey, 2018). In that same school year, 95% of the students receiving special education support were served in a general education classroom (Snyder & de Brey, 2018) A reported 63.4% of these students spend 80% of the school day in the general education classroom environment and 13.3% spend approximately 40% of their school

day with typical peers (Bannister-Tyrell et al., 2018; Snyder & de Brey, 2018). For students to succeed teachers must develop a specific set of skills and understanding for the varying needs inherent to teaching in the modern general educational classroom (Bannister-Tyrell et al., 2018).

Despite the acknowledgement that teachers entering the field must possess a specialized skill set, pre-service education programs continue to fail in fully preparing new educators to meet the diverse and variant demands of the 2e student in the general education classroom (Bannister-Tyrell et al., 2018; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2017; Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020). While research into the education of students with exceptional needs is plentiful, little empirical evidence exists on the lived experiences of the novice general education teacher's self-efficacy toward making instructional decisions to meet the divergent needs of the 2e student.

Social Context

Despite overwhelming progress and advances toward inclusive education to address the needs of students with disabilities in the decades following implementation of IDEA, educational outcomes remain poor (Lemons et al., 2019). Statistics on students with disabilities demonstrate 8% of eighth graders and 12% of fourth graders in the United States (U.S.) are proficient in reading (Lemons et al., 2019; U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, & National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Further, only 16% and 8% of fourth and eighth grade students with disabilities respectively are reported to be proficient in mathematics (Lemons et al., 2019; U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, & National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

Education of the gifted and talented student has historically been viewed through a civil rights lens as subtle but continued discrimination in favor of the upper-middle class white student (Gallagher, 2015; Kauffman et al., 2021; Lovett, 2013). This is supported through works by

Gallagher (2015) who posited that the education of the gifted and talented student is a civil rights issue as the context of the term itself guarantees equal opportunity for all individuals. Supporting the social stigma of elitism in gifted education is the insistence of leading educational researchers relaying the lack of diversity along the lines of sex, race, and ethnicity within gifted and talented programming (Gallagher, 2015; Lovett, 2013). Following the civil rights movement of the mid-twentieth century, researchers have extensively studied diversity within the nation's public-school systems (Gallagher, 2015; Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013). However, this research often fails to include the gifted and talented or 2e individual within the study parameters (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013).

Multiple researchers have insisted that the elimination of or scaling back of programming to meet the needs of those with domain specific gifts and talents would ultimately lead to the loss of an entire population of innovators, critical thinkers, and social activists in our future (Barnard-Brak, 2015; Gallagher, 2015; Lovett, 2013, Mills & Brody, 1999; Subotnik et al., 2020; 2021). Gagné (2004) asserted that 10% of the student population in the United States are deemed gifted and talented. Wellisch and Brown (2012) posited that 14% of all those categorized as gifted and talented also meet criteria for disability categorization under IDEA. Furthermore, researchers reported that underachieving gifted students demonstrate higher incidents of emotional problems, antisocial behavior, extreme levels of perfectionism or sloppiness, self-criticism, and low self-concept (Davis & Rimm, 2004; Peters, 2022; Zabloski & Malacci, 2012).

A foundational knowledge of exceptionality is vital for general education teachers as they traditionally hold sole responsibility for recommendation to evaluate the student with needs not adequately addressed without accommodations and supports such as gifted or special education programs (Bechard, 2019; Bianco & Leech, 2010; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2017; Foley-Nicpon &

Assouline, 2020). An estimated 25% of students with unmet needs drop out before graduating, 30% have disciplinary problems, and approximately 80% are predicted to suffer from unemployment after leaving the educational setting (Lemons et al., 2019). Research suggests that even though the SWGT spends most, if not all, of the school day in the general education classroom, teachers are not adequately prepared to identify and serve these students (Bechard, 2019; Bianco & Leech, 2010). Further, preservice programs for either special education or general education educators rarely address the unique complexities of the 2e student (Bechard, 2019). The societal implications for understanding and appropriately educating the 2e student is significant.

Theoretical Context

Bandura (1977) defined an individual's self-efficacy as one's own belief in their ability to successfully complete a task and achieve future goals. However, an individual's perceptions of ability have little to do with the level of skill they may possess to successfully accomplish a given task (Bandura, 1962; 1997). Bandura (1997) theorized that without the belief in a successful outcome an individual would have little desire to engage in an activity.

An individual with high self-efficacy may exert more effort into the task at hand than one in serious doubt of their abilities (Karimova et al., 2020). Those who believe in their problem-solving abilities are more likely to persist when faced with a challenge or obstacle to their goal than those with lower levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Karimova et al., 2020). Emotional components such as stress resistance, anxiety, and self-control are also believed to impact a person's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Karimova et al., 2020). Those with high self-efficacy are more likely to react to stressful, unpredictable, or disturbing situations in a more efficacious manner than those with low self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). When viewed as a component of a

teacher's professional identity, self-efficacy becomes a determinant of their future professional development motivation (Karimova et al., 2020).

According to Bandura the sources of information which influence the development of self-efficacy according to Bandura are mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physical or emotional states (Bandura, 1962; 1977). Bandura (1977) posited that individual's process, weigh, and integrate information from the diverse sources within their environment concerning their capabilities; they then regulate their choices, behaviors, and effort expenditures accordingly. Therefore, a person's self-efficacy beliefs determine the amount of effort, time, and persistence they exert when faced with obstacles in the pursuit of a goal or task completion. Bandura postulated that those with strong self-efficacy are more likely to try creative or inventive methods to accomplish a given task. The person with strong self-efficacy is also more willing to attempt a wider variety of tasks than the individual with lower self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

Information gleaned from each of the sources impacting self-efficacy has the potential to produce efficacious beliefs when integrated with an individual's previous experiences (Bandura, 1997). While various research has linked high teacher self-efficacy to positive student outcomes, little is known about the novice teacher's self-efficacy toward teaching the 2e student in a general education classroom (Bechard, 2019; Robinson & Young, 2019). Through deepening the understanding of the experiences teachers believe influence the development of their self-efficacy, preparatory programs and school systems can better design pre-service and professional development programs for those working with the 2e student.

Problem Statement

The problem driving this study is the lack of pre-service training and professional development specific to the awareness of, and pedagogical strategies for, teaching the 2e student provided to general education teachers within their first five years in the classroom. A lack of professional knowledge related to this population of student impacts the self-efficacy of teachers to make appropriate instructional decisions to address the unique and asymmetrical development needs of the 2e student. It is important to understand the lived experiences contributing to the development of self-efficacy of the novice general education elementary school teacher.

Although the 2e student has gained an increasing amount of attention and recognition within educational research, it was not until the 2004 recertification of IDEA that acknowledgement of their existence was written into law (Josephson, et al., 2018). Complicating the understanding of this population is the fact that a true measure of prevalence has been difficult to obtain. Researchers have attempted to provide valid numbers with most agreeing on an estimate that 2% to 5% of the total gifted population in the United States being 2e, still others argue that the actual number is closer to 9% to 14% (Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013; Dare & Nowicki, 2015; Ottone-Cross et al., 2017). Additionally, across the United States there are 7.3 million students identified as meeting criteria for one or more disabilities under IDEA (USDOE, 2022). Approximately 80% of these students spend half or more of the school day within the general education classroom (NCES, 2023; USDOE, 2022).

Due to the complexities surrounding identification procedures using both cognitive and noncognitive methods, the 2e child is at greater risk for misidentification of both their giftedness and area deficit (Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2017). Most often the academic focus for 2e students is on improving the area of identified disability, leaving their area of gift or talent undeveloped (Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; Foley-

Nicpon et al., 2013; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2017; Ottone-Cross et al., 2017). As the most widely used practice in public-school systems is dependent upon teacher recommendation for both gifted programming and evaluation for special education, it is vital that the general education teacher possess a strong knowledge base and understanding of the complex and unique characteristics of the 2e child. Therefore, it is important to better understand the lived experiences of the general education teacher tasked with making instructional decisions to address the needs of the 2e student.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe general education teachers' lived experiences impacting their self-efficacy for making instructional decisions to address the complex needs of the twice-exceptional child in a large suburban school system in northeast Georgia. For this study, the twice-exceptional student is generally defined as one who exhibits characteristics of a domain-specific gift or talent while simultaneously meeting criteria for one or more areas of disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory provides a lens to explore teacher self-efficacy and their lived experiences in relation to teaching the 2e student within the general education classroom.

Significance of the Study

This section discusses the different areas of significance in this study. There is an explanation of the theoretical significance using Bandura's1977) theory of self-efficacy. The empirical significance section relates to the self-efficacy of the general education classroom teacher making instructional decisions for the 2e student. The practical significance section generates ideas for who could benefit from the results of this study.

Theoretical

This study contributes to the literature by deepening the understanding the perceived factors impacting self-efficacy development for instructional decision-making of the novice general education elementary classroom teaching the 2e student. While Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy has been widely studied and applied within the field of education, several issues specifically related to pedagogy remain poorly developed (Karimova et al., 2020). As many studies have suggested the 2e student often have negative experiences related to their school career which have lifelong effects (Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013; Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020; Maddocks, 2020) It is important that professional knowledge of the unique needs of the 2e individual be better understood by classroom teachers so that appropriate instructional decisions are made, and programming is implemented. Further study of the self-efficacy of novice teachers in a general education classroom responsible for instructional decision making to address the needs of the 2e student is needed.

Empirical

Multiple studies show the importance of developing healthy psychosocial skills such as the formation of identity and academic self-esteem for the exceptional individual (Barber & Mueller, 2011; Chen, 2019; Cross & Cross, 2017; Stankovska & Rusi, 2014: Subotnik et al., 2018; Subotnik et al., 2018). Development of a healthy identity formation, which includes positive academic self-esteem for the exceptional student has lifelong implications (Carvalho & Veiga, 2022; Chen, 2019). It is imperative that studies are conducted within the 2e population, which have been historically marginalized, often deemed unfit to learn and institutionalized (Blatt & Kaplan, 1974; Rose, 2017; Spaulding & Pratt, 2015; Trent; 2018).

Education is viewed as a social construct which allows the individual immeasurable social and economic freedom (Cheatham & Randolph, 2020). In a country whose core values are based on the pursuit of happiness and freedom, understanding of the issues faced by the exceptional individual is vital. Through investigating the lived experiences of the elementary teacher within the first five years of service in teaching students with gifts and talents with concomitant learning disability this study will be instrumental in highlighting the unique areas where these teachers may benefit from additional support. By adding to the literature in this way, this study provides deeper understanding which policymakers, scholars, educational leaders, and educators may find useful in developing pre-service curriculum and instruction programming as well as professional development opportunities.

Practical

This study provides profound importance due to its multiple implications. There are possibilities of this study's use as a reference in the disciplines of gifted and talented education, disability education, pre-service educator program development, and educator professional development. This study is like others which have explored the multiple facets of addressing the needs of exceptional students in the public-school setting (Al-Yagon & Margalit, 2013; Barber & Mueller, 2011; Dweck 2000; Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2015; Reis, 2004; Lovett, 2013; Mills & Brody, 1999; Subotnik et al., 2017; Subotnik et al., 2021). Similarities with other studies include the use of focus groups questionnaires, and interviews, both structured and unstructured, to gain understanding of the exceptional student in the development of psychosocial skills. Unlike previous studies, this study is unique as it focuses on the development of self-efficacy for the novice general education elementary school teacher in making instructional decisions for the 2e student.

The 2e individual is purported to be one of the most misidentified and underserved sub-populations of students in public schools (Cross & Cross, 2017; Mills & Brody, 1999), which may contribute to poor identity formation (Ahmandi, 2020; Carvalho & Veiga, 2022; Chen, 2019; Erikson, 1963) leading to the suggestion of undeveloped potential and loss of opportunities throughout the lifespan for the twice-exceptional individual (Cheatham & Randolph, 2020; Subotnik et al., 2018; Subotnik et al., 2020). Therefore, the information ascertained through this study will serve as a reference point for shaping educational policies and further studies that focus on understanding and addressing the needs of the 2e child. Institutions such as colleges and universities with educator programs can use this study as a mechanism to develop curriculum and instruction for new educators entering both special education and general education fields. In addition, adding to the understanding of the needs of the 2e individual will decrease presumed barriers, maximizing the opportunities for these exceptional individuals to develop into healthy, productive adults (Kauffman et al., 2021; Gallagher, 2015; Erikson, 1963; Erikson, 1980; Lovett, 2013).

Research Questions

This research study seeks to understand the lived experiences of the early career elementary general education teacher to answer the following central research question and sub-questions to adequately address each component of this study.

Central Research Question

How do the lived experiences of elementary school teachers within the first five years of service contribute to their self-efficacy when making instructional decisions to support the needs of the twice-exceptional student in the general education classroom setting?

Sub-Question One

How do elementary school teachers within the first five years of service describe the impact of their teacher preparation program on their ability to recognize and support the complex needs of the twice-exceptional student?

Sub-Question Two

How do elementary school teachers within the first five years of service describe the impact of in-service training and support on their ability to recognize and support the complex needs of the twice-exceptional student?

Sub-Question Three

How do elementary school teachers within the first five years of service perceive the impact of lived experiences within the general education classroom on their ability to recognize and support the complex needs of the twice-exceptional student?

Definitions

1. *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity-Disorder (ADHD)*- a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning and development which is not attributable to other mental or physical disorders (i.e., mood disorder, anxiety disorder, etc.). The symptoms are present in two or more settings such as home and school and clearly reduce or interfere with the quality of functioning in school, work, or social tasks. (DSM-5).
2. *Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)*- a developmental disability that adversely affects a student's educational performance and significantly affects developmental rates and sequences, verbal and non-verbal communication and social interaction and participation. These adverse effects are generally evident before the age of three. Further characteristics associated with ASD are unusual responses to sensory experiences, engagement in

repetitive activities, and stereotypical movements and resistance to environmental change or changes in daily routines. Students with ASD often have wide variations in ability and exhibition of behaviors. This term does not apply if there is an adverse effect on a student's educational performance from an emotional and behavioral disorder. (Ga. DOE, 34 CFR 300.7I(1)(i)).

3. *Education of Handicapped Children Act (EHCA)*- Also known as Public Law 94-142 enacted by congress in 1975 to support states and local education agencies to protect the rights of, meet the needs of and improve the educational results for infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities and their families. This law was renamed in 1990, becoming known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
4. *Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)*- under federal law FAPE must be made available to all children residing in the State who are between the ages of 3 and 21 and includes the education of children with disabilities, as well as those who have been suspended or expelled from school (IDEA, 2004; Sec. 300.101(a))
5. *Giftedness*- possession and use of spontaneous, untrained natural abilities in at least one domain specific area which places an individual in the top 10% of same aged peers (Gagné, 2004).
6. *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*- formerly known as the Education of all Handicapped Children Act, IDEA provides federal mandates related to the education of children and youth between the ages of 3 and 21 who are deemed eligible to receive special education supports and related services through their LEA (USDOE, 2022).
7. *Individualized Education Program (IEP)*- a plan of action for a student with a disability who is eligible to receive special education and/or related services. This plan describes

the student's needs, annual goals, specially designed instruction, and supplementary aids and services to address the needs of a student.

8. *Intelligence*- a term characterized by high cognitive, affective, physical, or intuitive levels of conjunction with a combination of abilities such as academic, insight, innovation, creative behavior, leadership, personal and interpersonal skill, visual and performing arts, or any combination thereof (Gardner, 1991)
9. *Local Education Agency (LEA)* – a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a given state to administratively control or direct the service functions of public-school systems (Barnard-Brak et al., 2015).
10. *Masking* – the occurrence of an individual who has developed compensatory strategies to cope with an area of academic deficit related to an unidentified gift or talent (Mills & Brody 1999; Ottone-Cross et al., 2019).
11. *Multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS)*- an approach to provide a framework for assessing and addressing the needs of all students, including those struggling academically or behaviorally and students with disabilities, integrating intervention at multiple levels to maximize student achievement and reduce problem behaviors using research-based interventions (IDEA, 2004).
12. *Other Health Impairment (OHI)*- an eligibility category in the IDEA for students to receive special education supports and related services for those who have limited strength, vitality or alertness including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment. OHI includes chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, or heart condition, hemophilia, lead

poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette Syndrome (IDEA, 2004).

13. *Referral(s)*- Referral is a variable used to measure the teacher's act of referring students for evaluation for specialized programming whether gifted or special education (Ottone-Cross et al., 2019).
14. *Response to Intervention (RtI)*- a tiered framework for schools to identify areas of need for struggling students and monitor the progress following implementation of research-based interventions (IDEA, 2004).
15. *Self-efficacy*- an individual's perceptions of their ability to complete a given task (Bandura, 1977).
16. *Specific Learning Disability (SLD)*- SLD is a disorder that adversely affects the ability to acquire, comprehend, or apply reading, mathematical, writing, reasoning, listening, or speaking skills to the extent that a specially designed instruction is required to benefit from education. The specific learning disability (SLD) may include dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, developmental aphasia, and perceptual/motor disabilities. The term does not include deficits that are the result of other primary determinant or disabling factors such as vision, hearing, motor impairment, mental disability, emotional-behavioral disability, environmental or economic disadvantaged, cultural factors, limited English proficiency, or lack of relevant research-based instruction in the deficit area (IDEA, 2004).
17. *Talent* – mastery and knowledge of systematically developed abilities in at least one field of activity which places an individual in the top 10% of same aged peers who have been or are currently active within the same field(s) (Gagné, 2004).

18. *Twice-exceptional* (2e)– an individual who exhibits simultaneous characteristics of a domain specific gift or talent and criteria of one or more disability categories in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (IDEA, 2004).

Summary

Despite decades of research, there continues to be little understanding of the perceived factors impacting the development of self-efficacy in relation to instructional decision-making to meet the needs of the 2e student for the early career elementary school teacher. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of the general education teacher and their self-efficacy in making instructional decisions to accommodate the expansive, complex, and diverse needs of the 2e student in a large suburban public school system in northern Georgia. This chapter has provided the background, historical context, theoretical context, and social context of gifted and special education to further understanding of the difficulties faced by exceptional children in public schools today. In obtaining answers to the research questions discussed in this chapter, my goal is to provide insight into the perceptions and lived experiences of the general education teacher. It is my hope that this research will garner interest for further studies to guide educational practices and policies to improve the self-efficacy of the general education teacher in making instructional decisions for addressing the needs of the 2e student.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter provides an explanation of the theoretical framework guiding this study examining the lived experiences of the elementary school teacher within the first five years of service instructing twice exceptional (2e) students in the general education classroom. This chapter illuminates a gap in the existent literature, through a phenomenological lens, related to the lived experiences of general education teachers instructing the 2e student. In addition, a description of the practices of in-field teachers within the first five years of service and how these practices effect their self-efficacy within the general education setting is provided (Bandura, 1977; Bechard, 2019; Sharp et al., 2016). Furthermore, this chapter provides a synthesis of the literature on what the elementary school teacher must know to successfully meet the complex needs of the 2e student in the general education classroom. The 2e student is purported to be more overlooked, misunderstood, misidentified, and underserved than any other student population in the public school system (Bechard, 2019; Foley-Nicpon, et al., 2011). Further, this chapter reviews the professional knowledge of teachers, educational leadership, and school staff, such as the counselor and psychologists' regarding the 2e student (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2019), as well as current and historical procedures of identification for students within the public-school setting (Bechard, 2019; Bildiren, 2018; Cross & Cross, 2017). A clear description of the twice-exceptional student is provided within this literature review, along with a detailed explanation of the history of special education in the United States and globally.

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy serves as the theoretical framework for this study. The construct of self-efficacy is anchored within the social cognitive theory (SCT) put

forth by Bandura (1977, 1997). Self-efficacy is defined as the beliefs held by an individual in their capability to organize and successfully complete a given task (Bandura, 1997).

The theory of self-efficacy suggested that efficacy is most malleable in the earliest stages of learning (Johnson, 2010). Woolfolk Hoy and Burke (2005) purported experiences during student teaching practicum and the induction year, as well as the level of support received during the first years of service, are powerful influences on teacher self-efficacy. Karimova et al. (2020) suggested that a teacher's self-efficacy is an important component of professional identity. Self-efficacy is important to ensure high levels of efficiency and reliability of a teacher's professional activities (Bandura, 1997; Karimova et al., 2020). Self-efficacy is a factor in the formation of a teacher's choices for personal and professional career path, standards, and achievement motivation (Karimova et al., 2020). These are important factors to consider as this proposed study seeks to describe the perceptions of the general education teacher within the first five years of service and their self-efficacy in making instructional decisions for the 2e student. The 2e student is purported to be more overlooked, misunderstood, misidentified, and underserved than any other student population in school systems around the world (Bannister-Tyrell et al., 2018; Foley-Nicpon, et al., 2011; Mills & Brody, 1999).

According to SCT, an individual's perceived self-efficacy is a future-oriented judgment of their competence in completing a given task rather than their actual level of skill to complete that task (Bandura, 1977). Further, it is purported the possession of a college degree and knowledge of specific skills does not ensure the successful completion of a specific task (Johnson, 2010; Shahzad & Naureen, 2017). Cho et al. (2020) posited that self-efficacy of teachers influences multiple aspects of teaching and learning, such as motivation, instructional behaviors, student outcomes, commitment to their students and the field of teaching, as well as

their own well-being. While extant research has been conducted on teacher self-efficacy, much of this has concentrated on specific domains (Cho et al., 2020), though no research has attempted to capture the lived experiences of the newly in-field teacher in the general education setting in relation to teaching the 2e student.

Human behavior stems from one's environment as people do not live within an autonomous vacuum (Bandura, 1977, 1997). While this is supported throughout the literature, it is also agreed upon that self-efficacy is shaped by four sources, these being mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, observational experiences, and verbal persuasion (Bandura 1977; Cho et al., 2020). Asirit et al. (2022) found that teacher self-efficacy is increased as experience and practice in the field are gained. Karimova et al. (2020) asserted that the beliefs of a teacher regarding their effectiveness is a strong predictor of their future behavior. Shahzad and Naureen (2017) posited that success stories of fellow teachers may generate positive thoughts for other teachers, motivating them to be creative or try a different method for instruction.

Holzberger et al. (2013) completed a longitudinal study which found cross-sectional correlations between self-efficacy, instructional characteristics, and a causal effect of self-efficacy on the quality of instructional practices. Within this study, the lived experiences and subsequent outcomes related to teacher self-efficacy are explained through the triadic reciprocal causation interaction (Bandura, 1977). This model will serve as a framework to identify and explain how personal factors, which are internal for the general education teacher, the external factors of teacher preparation programs (Sharp et al., 2016) and forms of support from various stakeholders (Woolfolk Hoy & Burke, 2005), and the environment shape perceptions of lived experiences of the novice elementary school teacher. Though previous studies have employed this model to study the self-efficacy of students (Pajares & Usher, 2008), its employment to

examine the self-efficacy and instructional practices of new in-field teachers teaching the twice-exceptional student within the general education classroom was not identified within the scope of this research.

Enactive Mastery Experiences

The purported most persuasive source of efficacious beliefs is obtained through enactive mastery experiences (Bandura, 1977). For teachers in their early years of service, mastery experiences are a vital source for efficacy belief development (Woolfolk Hoy & Burke, 2005) and may be most critical in long-term efficacy perceptions (Bandura, 2012). Confrontation with difficult obstacles, where the individual employs sustained effort and perseverance through to achievement of task goals, leads to a perception of successful performance and increased self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Usher & Pajares, 2008). Bandura (1997) posited the importance of perseverance and sustained effort for development of a strong sense of self-efficacy, as those who encountered perceived successful attainment with little effort often become frustrated and give up when faced with more difficult situations or tasks. Understanding this response to failure is furthered through the work of Carol Dweck (2000) who postulated the individual with a helpless mindset begin to denigrate their abilities, intelligence, and view the situation to be out of their control when faced with difficulties, rather than a mastery-oriented mindset in which they persevere through to attainment of the goal. Bandura (1997) suggested that by facing challenging obstacles and discovering methods to overcome them, would likely lead to long-standing efficacious behaviors. Conversely, those who experience easily obtained successes will go forward with the expectation of quick and simple results leading to frustration and possible failure when faced with more challenging situations (Bandura, 2012). Self-reflection upon

mastered experiences is suggested to help individuals when faced with increasingly difficult situations in the future (Morris et al., 2017).

According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is built upon on individual's effort and capability regardless of the successful or failed outcome of a task. Even when successful, mastering a challenging task may reveal aspects of a person which diminish rather than improve self-efficacy. Those with high self-efficacy often believe their failures are caused by external factors or a lack of effort on their part, while those with low self-efficacy attribute their failure to internal factors, such as an inability to complete a task (Morris et al., 2017). Additionally, success occurring through significant effort, which increased their efficacy, may in fact cause them to exert less effort when faced with difficult tasks in the future (Bandura, 1997). While Bandura suggested that seemingly easy tasks completed successfully yields little effect, failure at a simple task could result in a devastating effect on an individual's self-efficacy.

Shahzad and Naureen (2017) posited that self-efficacy influences effort, action, and the way the individual accomplishes tasks, which may result in an enhancement of abilities, making one more confident in obtaining desired results. Repeated successes allow for the solidification of self-efficacy, building resiliency when faced with challenges in future (Raymond-West & Snodgrass Rangel, 2020). Engin (2020) suggested that motivation can serve as a strong force in directing the actions of people, encouraging determination toward reaching a goal. However, Bandura cautioned that the simple attractiveness of a result and expectation of success are not enough to trigger an individual's motivation (Bandura, 1997; Karimova et al. 2020).

Factors, such as mental, physical, and emotional states, context, and situation, affect perception of the performance quality (Bandura, 1997). Furthermore, the way an experience is remembered will either build or diminish the perceptions of efficacy (Arcelay-Rojas, 2018).

Reflection upon successful experiences tend to raise self-efficacy (Shahzad & Naureen, 2017). Bandura (1997) suggested that efficacious growth may be stunted when poor performances are remembered more often. Experiences of failure, setbacks, successes, obstacles, and bursts of success as the individual maneuvers through mastery build efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Efficacious beliefs built through this process of mastery performance takes time.

Vicarious Experience

While mastery experiences promote attainment skills which boost efficacy, such as judgement of the amount of effort required to complete a task successfully, these attainments must be assessed in relation to that of others, as there are no concrete measures of competence (Bandura, 1997). Through this social comparison, the individual can self-assess their experiences (Bandura, 2012). According to Bandura (1977), vicarious experiences influence self-efficacy by providing opportunities to observe people like themselves perform a task, persevere, and find success. Observing successful behaviors of others has a significant effect on the enhancement or improvement of effectiveness for the observer (Shahzad & Naureen, 2017). This effect is increased when the individual views themself as having comparable levels of ability as the person they observe (Capa-Aydin et al., 2018). The more closely the observer identifies with the performer, the higher the intensity of influence the success or failure will exert on the observer's self-efficacy (Bandura 1997; McLeod, 2023).

Modeling is the most often used tool through which vicarious experiences influence self-efficacy (Saine & West, 2017). It is suggested that models with high self-efficacy engage in positive self-talk, portray confidence and determination when faced with difficult situations (Bandura, 1997). As people often actively seek models as someone whose skills they aspire to acquire, someone to look up to, these experiences have the potential to teach already highly

efficacious people to change their way of doing something (Bandura, 1997; Raymond-West & Snodgrass Rangel, 2020). While direct experiences provide a stronger influence on self-efficacy, Bandura (1997) suggested that modeling may supersede direct experiences when the vicarious experiences more fully align with the individual's self-concept. Despite personal failure at a given task, if through vicarious experiences, an individual observes another succeed, they may implement strategies learned through the modeled behavior, perceiving future success.

Self-efficacy development may be impacted by the observation of failure and upward comparison when the observer realizes skills they possess which may produce success in a similar situation (Shahzad & Naureen 2017). Observations of those viewed as incompatible with the individual's self-concept regardless of successful task completion may not produce a positive change in self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Similarly, outperforming a peer with lesser ability or being outperformed by those with greater ability have little positive or negative effect on self-efficacy (Bandura, 2012).

Development of efficacious beliefs via vicarious experiences may be accomplished through modeling mastery or coping experiences (Bandura, 1997). Mastery modeling is defined as the observation of a model who flawlessly and calmly completes a task (Bandura, 1977; 1997). A master model may institute positive self-talk as they explain each step as they work through the given situation. Coping modeling requires the observer to witness the model work through a problem, which may begin with struggle, and through the utilization of trial and error and coping strategies the task is completed successfully (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy may be built through observing mastery models complete tasks, while coping models allow for the instillation of perseverance. To build self-efficacy, people require both types of models.

Verbal or Social Persuasion

Social or verbal persuasion is another factor in the development of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). A pep talk from a colleague or specific feedback following an evaluation from a supervisor or administrator constitutes verbal persuasion (Shahzad & Naureen, 2017). Belief in one's efficacy is more easily sustained and may increase when significant others demonstrate and express faith in their ability to complete tasks (Bandura, 1977; Raymond-West & Snodgrass Rangel, 2020). A positive relationship has been reported between feedback from peers or supervisors and an individual's self-efficacy (Raymond-West & Snodgrass Rangel, 2020). However, the provision of unrealistic feedback or harsh criticism may undermine the recipient's self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997). Harsh criticism may be meted following poor performance with an absence of constructive criticism on strategies for improvement.

The potency of verbal persuasion depends on the perceptions of credibility, trust worthiness, or expertise given by the individual receiving the feedback (Bandura, 1986). Action upon the inflated perception of efficacy quickly reveal actual capabilities, while unrealistic beliefs of self-efficacy are undermined when the performer is unsuccessful in task completion (Bandura, 1997). Conversely, Bandura posited that feedback, which persuades the individual they are not capable of successful completion of a task, may stunt perseverance and impede their motivation toward attempting the task. Arcelay-Rojas (2018) found that constructive feedback after poor performances may provide a renewed sense of determination to persevere, improving self-efficacy. In a related manner to enactive mastery experiences, the perceived quality of feedback received from others is measured and assessed by the person's self-appraisal (Bandura, 1997). When an individual's self-appraisal is perceived as more accurate, the feedback received from others, whether positive or negative, is given little weight in future decisions or actions.

Physiological or Emotional States

Bandura (1977) theorized that self-efficacy is affected through multiple and diverse sources of information. Physiological or emotional states are one of these sources which affect perceived self-efficacy. Emotional and physical responses, whether positive or negative, influence self-efficacy development (Morris et al., 2017). A bidirectional influence between emotional or physical responses and behaviors is suggested as one part of the complex system of triadic reciprocity of self-efficacy development (Bandura, 1997). During stressful or taxing situations, physical responses may be perceived as the potential ability to succeed or vulnerability (Saine & West, 2017). Situational factors and the meanings ascribed influence physiological reactions (Bandura, 1997). Sweating while performing before an audience may be the result of nervousness, therefore a physiologic response; however, the room could simply be hot. Internal arousal cannot be interpreted through social labeling. This is accomplished through the combination of expressive reactions, environmental elicitors, and then social labeling.

Emotions and affective experiences, or physical responses, are interpreted and differentiated through a continuous cycle of internal arousal, which is situationally dependent (Bandura, 1997). Those with higher self-efficacy possess a stronger belief in their abilities, therefore they put forth more effort toward finding solutions to obstacles (Karimova et al., 2020). These individuals tend to have higher stress-resistance, lower anxiety levels, and increased self-control (Karimova et al., 2020). However, physiological, and affective states are less an indicator of an individual's ability as social comparison or mastery experiences (Bandura, 1986). Development of self-efficacy is achieved through a process of information integration from four sources with the corresponding unique experiences given varying weight so that choice of behavior and effort is expended accordingly (Bandura, 1977).

Related Literature

Despite decades of research, educational leaders, policy makers, and in-field professionals continue to lack an adequate understanding of appropriate programming to support the unique and complex needs of the 2e individual (Bildiren, 2018; Cross & Cross, 2017, Cross & Cross, 2017 (a); Maddocks, 2020; Olszewski-Kubilius et al., 2019). The idea that talent and giftedness are separate entities has given birth to multiple theories of best practices for identification and the development of individual talents and gifts. Baum et al. (2014) suggested talent development programs serve to meet four major needs of the 2e child; these being a means for overcoming social, emotional, or cognitive challenges within context, the need for membership in a social group with a positive identity, the opportunity for development of mentor and professional relationships that are ongoing, and the possibility to become a domain-specific expert. These assertions are supported within the works of Subotnik and colleagues within their development of the Talent Development Mega Model (TDMM) (Subotnik et al., 2011; Subotnik et al., 2018). Literature related to the influence of talent development, natural abilities, and the importance of psychosocial development for the student with dual exceptionalities is reviewed. Furthermore, a review of literature on teacher knowledge, teacher self-efficacy, pre-service preparation, and professional development related to the 2e student is reviewed in the following section.

History of Education for Exceptional Children

Prior to the early 1800s, families of children with special needs were criticized and/or shunned, forcing them to hide their children away from the view of the public (Kauffman et al., 2021; Spaulding & Pratt, 2015; Rose, 2017; Trent, 2018). Many societal leaders, including educators and philosophers, believed intellect to be an essence of being human; once lost or when

perceived as nonexistent, the individual was no longer viewed as truly human (Spaulding & Platt, 2015). In an 1843 appeal to the Massachusetts legislature, Dorothea Dix brought to the forefront the deplorable and inhuman treatment of those with intellectual disabilities (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015). As societal views shifted, educators and advocates began developing methods of training and educating people with disabilities, which are still in use today (Rose, 2017; Spaulding & Pratt, 2015; Trent, 2018). The acceptance of Darwinism in the late 19th century and its application to humanity resulted in negative repercussions for individuals with disabilities.

With a critical eye once again turned to disability, societal deviance, such as poverty, prostitution, and crime, were attributed to the *feeble-minded*. Eugenics emerged as a solution to these social and economic difficulties, resulting once again in the segregation and institutionalization of the individual with disabilities (Trent; 2018). By the early 1900s an emphasis on heredity as a factor in the expression of disability led to the practice of sterilization of those deemed unfit by society. It was during the era spanning the late 19th through the mid 20th centuries that the perception of intelligence as fixed and unaffected by training or education in any form was emphasized, further impeding the education of exceptional children (Trent, 2018). The development and use of the intelligence test led to a view of *inability* rather than its intention of measuring cognitive *ability* (Crissey, 1975; Spaulding & Pratt, 2015; Trent, 2018).

As laws governing compulsory attendance in public schools were enforced, children with disabilities were once again excluded (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015). By the mid-1940s, the view of disability in the United States shifted once again. The movement toward deinstitutionalization and inclusion gained momentum in the 1950s, as parents unified their efforts to secure better treatment and support for their children (Carey, 2009; Dybwad, 1990; Kauffman et al., 2021; Spaulding & Pratt, 2015; Trent, 2018). The efforts of Eunice Shriver in

the 1960s brought to the forefront the importance of educating those with mental and physical disabilities, leading to a paradigm shift in special education. The 1962 formation of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development brought about the passing of bills to fund teacher preparation programs and conduct research in the education of those with disability (Spaulding & Pratt, 2015).

According to statistics by the U.S. office of education, more than 7.5 million children with disabilities receive services to meet their needs within public school systems across the country (Kauffman et al., 2021). Inclusive education of the child with special needs has been addressed worldwide as a human rights issue over the last several decades (Kurth et al., 2018). A position statement by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) originally published in 1948, and updated in 2015, reaffirmed the right to receive an education for all children. Federal laws instituted for children with special needs intend to ensure the provision of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) (IDEA, 2004; Lemons et al., 2019; U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, & National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

Investigations initiated by the federal government, such as the 1972 Marland Report, laws like section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975, intended to provide a FAPE. However, these early initiatives were disconnected in their provisions and definitions for all student populations (Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013). Further, these initiatives failed to acknowledge the existence of students with a learning disability with the simultaneous demonstration of a significant domain-specific strength (Gagne, 2013; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013; Ottone-Cross et al., 2019; Steenburgen-Hu et al., 2020). In fact, no recognition of this exceptional population was made until the 2004 recertification of the

IDEA (Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; Barber & Mueller, 2011; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013; IDEA, 2004; Kurth et al., 2018; Morrison & Rizza, 2007).

The Gifted and Talented Individual

A definition for the gifted and talented individual first appeared in The Education Amendment of 1969 (Crepeau-Hobson & Bianco, 2011). Since that time, extensive research and debate has ensued on what this classification means for the individual student, and education systems at large. The SWGT was further defined within the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002, as one who demonstrates high achievement capabilities in creativity, artistic or intellectual abilities, leadership capacity, or academic fields who require additional services to develop these abilities, which are not ordinarily a part of the curriculum within the public-school setting (P.L. 107-110; Title IX, Part A, Definition 22).

Educational researchers and leaders have defined giftedness as the possession, and subsequent use, of natural abilities in at least one specific domain, which places an individual in the highest 10 percent for same-aged peers (Gagne, 2004; Olszewski-Kubilius et al., 2019; Subotnik et al., 2021; Subotnik et al., 2018; Subotnik et al., 2011). Subotnik et al. (2021) suggest that giftedness is a developmental construct in which, at the earliest stages, potential is the key variable of identification. At the higher levels, demonstration of domain-specific achievement is a key indicator of giftedness (Gagné, 2004; Gagné 2011; Subotnik et al., 2011; Subotnik et al., 2018; Subotnik et al., 2021). While talent is defined as a malleable developmental construct which, with the provision of the appropriate supports, opportunities, and guidance from domain-specific in-field professionals, can be developed to the level of eminence (Subotnik et al., 2021; Subotnik et al., 2011; Subotnik et al., 2018; Olszewski-Kubilius et al., 2019).

Mastery of domain-specific skills and knowledge place the individual within the top 10 percent for same-aged peers (Gagné, 2004; Gagné, 2011; Subotnik et al., 2021; Subotnik et al., 2011; Subotnik et al., 2018; Olszewski-Kubilius et al., 2019). However, continued debate within educational research communities revolves around what it truly means to be gifted and talented. Multiple studies report that categorizing gifts and talents as separate entities to be addressed through talent development programs to the level of eminence as the best course of action for educating the SWGT (Maddocks, 2020; Subotnik et al., 2021). Other leading researchers posited that gifts and talents are inherent traits (Gagne, 2011; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013; Subotnik et al., 2021; Subotnik et al., 2017). Still further contradictions exist in the suggestion that giftedness is a social construct (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020). Through the evolution of society recognition of education as a valuable entity emerged, finding it important to measure and understand how some individuals performed at exceptional levels in comparison to what was considered average (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020). This continued discourse provides contradicting suggestions for best practices related to interventional strategies to address the unique needs presented by this population and further complicates the processes for identification and inclusion in specialized programming (Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013; Maddocks, 2018; Maddocks, 2020).

The Twice Exceptional Individual

Acknowledgement of the 2e individual first appeared in 1923 with the work of Hollingsworth in *Special Talents and Defects: Their Significance for Education* (Bannister-Tyrell et al., 2018). The 2e individual is described as one who demonstrates potential for domain specific creative productivity or high academic achievement while simultaneously manifesting one or more disability criteria under the IDEA (Klingner, 2022). The first *Diagnostic and*

Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) was published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 1952. Revision of this manual provide detailed symptoms of mental disorders, specifying criteria of diagnoses related to the presence or absence of known symptomatology (Jitsuki et al., 2016). This manual has become one of the most influential publications in the diagnoses and treatment of psychiatric and biological issues through the 20th century (APA, 2013).

Although acknowledged in federal law, it was not until 2013 that a definition for 2e appeared within the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The DSM-5 defined 2e individuals as those who may sustain adequate academic function using extraordinarily high effort, support, or use of compensatory strategies until the point when the demands of learning or procedures of assessment pose a barrier to their continued successful demonstration of learning and accomplishing given academic tasks. While the 2004 reauthorization of the IDEA recognized the possibility of the 2e student in the nation's schools, mandates only provided federal funds toward identifying and addressing areas of eligibility criteria under one of 13 disability categories (Bechard, 2019; Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020).

Identification of the 2e Child

It is suggested that within all the underserved groups, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender, in public school systems across the United States, the 2e student is the most disproportionately underrepresented (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020). There are multiple examples of notable individuals throughout history who struggled to conform to the expressive and creative restraints inherent in the brick-and-mortar school environment; Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and Winston Churchill are a just few (Ottone-Cross et al., 2019). This raises the question of what wonders may be discovered if the complex spectrum

of needs for the 2e student are fully identified and met within public education systems across the country.

Education Policy Issues

Despite acknowledgement that the SWGT student requires curriculum modification, these students are not protected under IDEA or section 504 to ensure their unique academic and psychosocial needs are met (Crepeau-Hobson & Bianco, 2011; Lin & Foley-Nicpon, 2019; Maddocks, 2020; Olszewski-Kubilius et al., 2019). No federal funds are provided for gifted and talented development programs, leaving this provision up to local school districts and state education agencies (Bannister-Tyrrell et al., 2018; Barnard-Brak et al, 2015; Crepeau-Hobson & Bianco, 2010). Foley-Nicpon & Assouline (2020) posited a lack of promotion for the maximization of education in federal mandates.

Of the states across the country who provide specific services for SWGT, only 58% have policies specific to teacher preparation for the SWGT (Robinson & Dietz, 2022). Still fewer, 28%, require a gifted education coordinator, administrator, or teacher within each LEA (Robinson & Dietz, 2022). Statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported 6.7% of all students in United States public schools were identified as SWGT (NCES, 2023). Additionally, 10.5% of students in Georgia receive supports through gifted and talented programs (NCES, 2023). Though an exact prevalence rate of the 2e student has not been reliably obtained, estimates range from 2% to 5% of the total gifted and talented population (Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013; Dare & Nowicki, 2015). This suggests the existence of a significant number of 2e students within public school systems across the country, and specifically in Georgia, who may not be receiving the appropriate accommodations for their needs.

IDEA Difficulties for the 2e Student

Under the recertification of IDEA in 2004, a student may be found eligible for special education services through demonstrating characteristics of a deficit within 13 various categories (IDEA, 2004; Foley-Nicpon, 2013). The 2e student meeting criteria for a qualifying disability within the IDEA is at most risk of being misidentified with a singular eligibility (Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; Bannister-Tyrrell et al., 2018; Bianco & Leech, 2010; Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021; Mills & Brody, 1999). The 2e student is not easily categorized within any area of deficit nor gifted and talented. Complicating the identification conundrum presented by the 2e individual is that there is no standardized manner of assessment (Maddocks, 2020; Reis et al., 2014).

The Marland report suggested that identification of the SWGT be completed by a qualified professional (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020; Marland, 1972). Unfortunately, no specifics of what constituted a *qualified professional* for this task was provided in the report (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020). More information is needed on how and to what extent the 2e student is being identified and served through the RtI process (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014; Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020). However, it is suggested that the school psychologist is the ideal professional equipped with the comprehensive understanding and skills to interpret the unique profile presented by the 2e student (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020).

Most often the 2e student is found eligible under the IDEA, receiving remedial services for their area of deficit, while their area of gift or talent remains unidentified and underdeveloped (Ottone-Cross et al., 2019; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2017). Under the provision of the IDEA, a student found eligible to receive special education services would have an Individual Education Program (IEP) developed (IDEA, 2004). An IEP provides a detailed description of instructional accommodations, specific goals and objectives, and level of special education supportive services are developed to ensure the student's area of weakness is appropriately supported

(Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; Maddocks, 2020). However, this provision of accommodation or services for talent development is not extended to the SWGT under the IDEA or section 504 (Bannister-Tyrell et al., 2018; Barnard-Brak et al, 2015; Maddocks, 2020). This further complicates the situation for the 2e student and leads to a lack of an appropriate level of support within public-school settings across the country.

As a result of the noted contradictions between perceived ability in a specific domain and learning difficulties in another, it is suggested that the 2e student is at the highest risk of having unmet needs for both their areas of strengths and weaknesses (Ottone-Cross et al., 2019). Studies indicate an SLD alone may negatively impact a student's performance on standardized tests (Bell, Taylor, McCallum, Coles, & Hayes, 2015; Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020; Reis, Baum, & Burke, 2014). For the 2e student with ADHD, traditional methods of assessment may be less sensitive (Gomez et al., 2019).

The provision of services to address a deficit area is more probable when a FSIQ score rather than a GAI is used as the primary measure for identification (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2019; Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021). However, this measure provides no such avenue toward meeting the needs of the same student in their area of strength (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2019; Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021). The use of ability test scores as a primary measure is also problematic for identification of the 2e student with ADHD, as they historically perform poorly on individual ability tests when compared to the SWGT without ADHD (Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; Crepeau-Hobson & Bianco, 2011; Morrison & Rizza, 2007; Wellisch and Brown, 2012; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2009). Clearly a combination of absolute performance criteria, discrepancy models, and core deficits, such as processing, is the most effective manner for

identifying both low achievement and high ability in the same individual (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020; Maddocks, 2018).

Underrepresentation and Prevalence

The *Condition of Education Report* demonstrated 14% of all students in the United States qualify in at least one area of eligibility under the IDEA (McFarland et al., 2019). Peters, Gentry, Whiting, and McBean (2019) found that students served under the IDEA are extremely underrepresented in gifted and talented development programs. This is supported by statistics, which report 0.21% of students who have an IEP also receive services to address their area of giftedness (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020). Furthermore, the *Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study* reported that, of the students with disabilities nationwide who scored above the 90th percentile on Woodcock-Johnson-3rd edition Test of Achievement, approximately 1% were placed within gifted and talented programing (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020). These statistics suggested a staggeringly small number of 2e students who receive an appropriate level of services to address both their talent development and area of needed growth.

Traditional assessment practices for gifted and talented development programs and eligibility criteria detailed under the IDEA are often mutually exclusive (Bannister-Tyrrell et al., 2018; Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; Bianco & Leech, 2010). However, Foley-Nicpon and Assouline (2020) posited the broad fields of gifted education and special education are not mutually exclusive, but possess related concepts characterized within the 2e student. Professionals from both fields could learn from one another, as special and gifted education are exceptionalities which share commonalities at varying ends of the developmental and educational spectrum (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020; Maddocks, 2020).

Assessment Procedures

Despite decades of research and developments in understanding, many education systems continue to define the gifted individual along terms stemming from a stereotypical belief that an intelligence quotient of 130 or above, high motivation, and high academic achievement are the primary indicators for inclusion in SWGT programming (Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2009). Still other systems implement screening methods utilizing teacher nomination or referrals and observations as the primary means for admission to gifted programming (Bianco & Leech, 2010). There also continues to be an underlying assumption that the SWGT student will succeed no matter the classroom environment or provision of services (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020; Maddocks, 2018). For the SWGT and 2e student, providing a challenge within their area of gift or talent is just as important, if not more so, than the remediation of content to address their area of growth (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2015; Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020; Maddocks, 2018). Reliance on such narrow measures and antiquated stereotypes of gifted and talented presentation further complicates the issue of identification, presenting an even larger roadblock for the 2e student.

Subotnik et al. (2018) suggested that a reliance on general intelligence for identification purposes presents a mismatch between prediction, product, and performance of the 2e student. Through proper acknowledgement of strengths and subsequent inclusion in talent development programming, it is suggested that the 2e student will have the best possibility of strong identity and academic self-esteem development (Subotnik et al., 2018). Cross and Cross (2017) supported the importance of domain-specific cultural membership in that the individual incorporates a belief that they belong to this community and sees themselves as successful within their domain of choice. It is through persistence and resiliency that the individual achieves a sense of belonging, which in turn leads to movement forward along a trajectory of further

development of skills toward the achievement of eminence within a specific domain (Bandura, 1977; Subotnik et al., 2018; Subotnik et al., 2021). In the absence of appropriate domain specific challenge, the 2e individual is not provided a FAPE as mandated by federal law. The 2e who is not receiving appropriate supports for both ends of their spectrum of need is also at a higher risk of high school dropout (Elhoweris et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2022; Rinn et al., 2020).

Ottone-Cross et al. (2019) posited the possible existence of a SLD impacting a student's performance necessitates the use of more sophisticated and comprehensive measures of assessment. The idea of using a pattern of student's strengths and weaknesses as best practices for identification of the twice-exceptional child is supported throughout the literature (Ottone-Cross et al., 2019; Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; Bildiren, 2018; Cross & Cross, 2017; Cross & Cross, 2017; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013). It is also important that multiple measures of cognitive processing, achievement in the creative arts and academics, individual IQ, and a full achievement battery are used to eliminate the potential for the existence of masking in the identification of the 2e child (Ottone-Cross et al., 2019; Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; Cross & Cross, 2017; Cross & Cross, 2017(a); Wellisch & Brown, 2012).

Masking

Complicating the identification process for the 2e student is the phenomenon of masking (Ottone-Cross et al., 2019; Wormald, 2011). Masking is defined as the incidence of a gift or talent dampening the effects of an academic deficit (Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2017; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013; Ottone-Cross et al., 2019). Barnard-Brak et al. (2015) purported that the level of masking for the 2e student is dependent on their area of weakness. Findings from multiple studies indicate that on measures used for identification, the 2e student demonstrates scores which regress close to the mean (Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; Baum et al.,

2014; Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2017; Nagro et al., 2019; Ottone-Cross et al., 2019). Ottone-Cross et al. (2019) cautioned educators and educational leaders to remain aware of the unique expression of SLD symptomatology by 2e students as they transition into the secondary and post-secondary stages of their academic careers when they can no longer successfully use compensatory strategies from their domain-specific strength. When these compensatory strategies are no longer successful, the 2e student may demonstrate scores on universal screening or other assessments which warrant intervention. Elhoweris et al. (2021) explained that the high cognitive abilities of the 2e student allows for this compensation of a deficit, however, they are usually more successful in the primary grades. This suggestion is supported throughout the literature and furthers the possibility that a multitude of 2e students are not identified until much later in their educational career (Bannister-Tyrell et al., 2018; Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021; Mills & Brody, 1999).

Response to Intervention (RtI)

The research supports a suggestion that a high incidence of underrepresentation of 2e students exists due to inadequate assessment measures, such as the heavy reliance on Full-scale Intelligence Quotient FSIQ versus the General Ability Index GAI (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2019) and a lack of professional knowledge for those most closely involved in the provision of services for these students (Subotnik et al., 2021). With the reauthorization of IDEA (2004) came the institution of Response to Intervention (RtI) as an alternative to traditional identification procedures using discrepancy models (Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013; Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021; Maddocks, 2020; Nagro et al., 2019). The institution of RtI brought about a focus on data-driven decisions for intervention and progress monitoring through a tiered framework (Grapin et al., 2019). At the initial tier, all students are provided evidence-based

instruction within the general education classroom. Each subsequent tier requires an increase of instructional supports with more intensive progress monitoring (Dare & Nowicki, 2015; Grapin et al., 2019). Unfortunately, RtI presupposes failure prior to implementation of supportive instruction (Dare & Nowicki, 2015). The 2e student rarely demonstrates this level need, more often presenting closer to the mean, continuing to remain unidentified for either a deficit or area of strength (Dare & Nowicki, 2015; Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020).

The RtI model proposed an opportunity to provide high-quality instruction at an appropriate level to meet student needs by instituting progress monitoring (Dare &Nowicki, 2015) and connecting general, gifted, compensatory, and special education (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021; Nagro et al., 2019). The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) supported the implementation of RtI to diminish the prevalence of misidentification (CEC, 2008). Further, RtI encourages targeted professional development related to the various presentations of deficits and gifts or talents and then provide opportunities to better address methods of acceleration and remediation for the 2e student (CEC, 2008; Nagro et al., 2019). The concept of RtI intended to implement systematic progress monitoring based on research-based interventions within a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) (Nagro et al., 2019).

Despite more than a decade after its implementation, confusion surrounding RtI continues related to the misconception that it is only a special education issue. There are multiple reasons suggested for this continued ambiguity, including the synonymous use of the terms RtI and Multi-Tiered System of Supports MTSS (Nagro et al., 2019). Opportunity for misinterpretation further exists due to the absence of any standardized model designed or recommended by the IDEA (Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; Nagro et al., 2019). This allows each state to develop and implement their own version of RtI, leading to little continuity across the nation for identification

procedures (Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021; Nagro et al., 2019). A reliance purely on the RtI model is not likely to identify 2e students with SLD, as they do not perform low enough on curriculum-based assessments to warrant intervention (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020). Conversely, unilateral use of discrepancy models is insufficient in appropriately identifying 2e students, as this method disproportionately identifies these students as having a SLD without gifts and talents (Maddocks, 2018).

Additionally, the only mention in federal law of RtI is within the IDEA (IDEA, 2004; Nagro et al., 2019). This adds to misunderstandings and a lack of clarity between roles of the special education and general education teachers (Nagro et al, 2019). Although the Marland (1972) report provided definition for the SWGT and recommended identification be completed by a professional, no description for what constituted this professional was provided (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020). Foley-Nicpon and Assouline (2020) suggested the school psychologist as the ideal professional for interpreting the unique profile presented by the 2e student.

Similar difficulties with the assessment procedures for inclusion in gifted and talented programming are noted throughout the literature (Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; Bianco & Leech, 2010; Crepeau-Hobson and Bianco, 2011; Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021; Nagro et al., 2019; Wellisch & Brown, 2012). Multiple comprehensive assessments from a multitude of sources are suggested as the best way forward to reduce the risk of misinterpreting data from a single test in identifying the 2e student (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020; Maddocks, 2018). Collaboration among gifted education, special education, and general education teachers, along with administration and the school psychologist, must be the norm for making the best possible

decisions regarding talent development and accommodation for the 2e student (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020; Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021).

General Education Teacher and the 2e Student

The role of the general education teacher is critical to the inclusion of students within specialized programming for both gifted and special education (Lee et al., 2022). As traditional processes for entrance to specialized gifted and talented programming begins with nomination, the classroom teacher serves as a gatekeeper for the SWGT (Lee et al., 2022). In addition, the historically used forms of assessment have limited potential in the appropriate identification of under identified talent (Lee et al., 2022). There is also purported a lack of alignment between the assessments used for identification and the intended program goals and services for the 2e student (NAGC, 2008; Lee et al., 2022).

An essential key to creating and maintaining learning environments favorable to the success of 2e students is the classroom teacher (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021; Lee et al., 2022). It is critical that the general education teacher have some knowledge of the unique presentation of characteristics for the 2e student, as they may not otherwise be able to recognize them in an area of weakness (McAllister, 2021). The 2e student requires understanding and flexibility from the classroom teacher, as they often demonstrate asynchronous development, appearing less mature or more impulsive that their typical peers (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021; Lee et al., 2022; McAllister, 2021). Demonstration of behaviors, such as arguing with authority, trouble following directions, or difficulty with maintaining on-task or task completion behaviors, may lead to the application of a label of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (McAllister, 2021). Through building knowledge of the various unique characteristics, the general education teacher may be able to gain understanding and acceptance for the challenges of teaching the 2e student.

Pre-Service Teacher Preparation

Multiple studies purport a lack of preparation from teacher pre-service programs in understanding the variable characteristics of the 2e student and knowledge of identification procedures and models through RtI (Bernard-Brak et al., 2015; Elhoweris et al., 2021; Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020; Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021; Lee et al., 2022). It is suggested that this often leads to the continued underrepresentation of these students and a lack of appropriate supports for both domain-specific strengths and areas of deficit (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021; Lee et al., 2022). Factors, such as teacher bias, low academic expectations for learners with disabilities, and misunderstanding of the characteristics of the 2e student, may lead to a misinterpretation of assessment results, skewing the ability of the general education teacher to notice academic talents (Gentry et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2022). A study of primary school teachers across the country reported an insufficient amount of content and professional knowledge of the exceptional child within their pre-service programs (Bildiren, 2018).

Field experiences for pre-service educators provides mastery experiences and allows an opportunity to reflect on the application of theory from coursework (Raymond-West & Snodgrass Rangel, 2020). Through positive praise and feedback from others, the novice teacher begins to build self-efficacy through what is described as verbal persuasion (Bandura, 1962; 1977). Supporting the needs of 2e students requires the development and delivery of learning plans to address the area of need while simultaneously challenging them in their area of gift or talent (Metelski, 2022). An unfortunate supposition existing throughout the literature is that the 2e individual is particularly susceptible to negative school outcomes when all their needs remain unmet (Bandura-Brak et al, 2015; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2017; Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2022; Metelski, 2020). It is vital that pre-service programs institute courses to address the lacking

knowledge of characteristics and pedagogy related to the 2e individual to better prepare educators entering general education classrooms today.

Professional Development

With the growing understanding of the 2e child and the implementation of RtI, the level of expected professional knowledge for addressing the various and unique needs of this population increased exponentially. Bannister-Tyrrell et al. (2018) reported international research clearly indicated a high level of teacher awareness, knowledge, and skill is required to make appropriate alterations to curriculum, differentiating for the needs of individual students' areas of strengths and weaknesses. An understanding by all education professionals of the unique challenges expressed by the 2e student is important to ensure the most effective supports are designed and implemented to address the whole child (Bildiren, 2018). This burden of responsibility most heavily weighs on the general education classroom teacher, as national statistics report 80% of students eligible for services under IDEA spend, at minimum, half of the school day in the general education setting (USDOE, 2017). This continues to be true for those students who receive specialized programming in the pull-out service model (Bildiren, 2018).

Research supports the importance of professional knowledge of the complex needs of the 2e student to design and implement learning experiences that support the whole child. However, a complementary program for providing meaningful experiences to pre-service and in-field teachers to acquire these necessary skills, knowledge, and dispositions for differentiating instructional frameworks for this special population is lacking in practice (Brownell et al., 2020). Weber and Mofield (2023) posited that professional development related to SWGT is minimal at best. A survey of 1500 schools showed an average of 15 minutes was allocated toward professional development of general education teachers related to services or instructional

strategies for gifted and talented (Callahan et al., 2014; Weber & Mofield, 2023). Such scant attention to the needs of the SWGT may result in no sustainable change to the services or classroom supports provided to students on a regular basis.

In a 2013 study, Foley-Nicpon et al. reported a survey of 300 school psychologists returned a mere 39.86% with moderate to considerable familiarity with the concept of the twice-exceptional student, an additional 60.14% had little to no familiarity with this population. It is suggested that the divide between the fields of special education and gifted education are broad but related concepts which characterize the 2e student (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2019). The awareness and understanding of educators, educational leaders, and professionals in the field related to the complexities presented by the 2e student are important as they relate to the ability to recognize, assess, and design appropriate programming to best meet the needs of these students in the general education setting (Cross & Cross, 2017; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013; Ottone-Cross et al., 2019; Subotnik et al., 2021).

For the best possible student outcomes, school personnel must have a secure knowledge and understanding of both disabilities and abilities to identify 2e in any of its forms (Dimitriadis et al., 2021). Teachers must have a deep understanding of content to design learning experiences and differentiate instruction, which comes with experience and time in the classroom (Metelski, 2022; Weber & Mofield, 2023). Without training, educational professionals are more likely to focus on the characteristics of a deficit rather than that of an area of strength (Dimitriadis et al., 2021; Robinson & Dietz, 2022). Teachers with understanding and knowledge of the variety of traits of the 2e, both gifted and disability, are more accepting of the unique challenges they present (McAllister, 2021). These teachers are more likely to accommodate instructional

practices to address the more challenging behaviors and academic needs of the 2e student (Foley-Nicpon et al., 2017; Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2022; Lee et al., 2022).

Studies conducted on teacher attitudes in Australia, England, and Scotland demonstrated negative teacher feelings toward the SWGT (Elhoweris et al., 2021). This negativity was correlated with the perceptions of non-compliance and social skills difficulties expressed by the SWGT or 2e student (Elhoweris et al., 2021). A joint study completed by the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) and the Council of State Directors of Programs for the Gifted (CSDPG) reported that a lack of data across states, limited public accountability, and the decentralization of decision-making processes inhibit the identification of under-represented student populations, such as the 2e individual (Lee et al., 2022; Rinn et al., 2020). The lack of professional development to improve the knowledge base of the general education teacher leads to a continuation of misjudging or overlooking these students. This places the 2e student in jeopardy of underachievement, dissatisfaction with their educational experience, and increased potential for high school drop-out (Elhoweris et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2022; Rinn et al., 2020). Negative educational experiences for the 2e student have lifelong ramifications affecting their self-worth and self-esteem (Metelski, 2022).

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) argues that human functioning results from the dynamic interplay of personal beliefs, environmental influences, and behaviors (Bandura, 1962; 1997; 2012). The working environment in the educational setting is referred to as *school climate*. School climate incorporates the institutional beliefs regarding interpersonal relationships within the school, organizational norms and values, and teaching practices (Wilson et al., 2020). Factors, such as interaction with colleagues, administrative feedback, and support from

instructional coaches and mentor teachers, influence the formation of self-efficacy for the novice in-field teacher (Bandura, 2012). Self-efficacy confronts the question of an individual's belief in their ability to perform an activity in relation to their prior performance experiences (Lin & Foley-Nicpon, 2019). Self-efficacy supposes that an individual's beliefs in their abilities influences their choices, persistence, effort toward the completion of a task, and achievement levels (Bandura, 1997).

For the teacher, self-efficacy is a perception of their ability to effectively meet the needs of all students in their classroom, increasing engagement and student learning (Karimova et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2020). Those with higher self-efficacy are reportedly more open to new methods and a belief that they may increase student achievement through manipulating the classroom environment, using positive feedback especially with those who have learning differences (Bandura, 1997; Johnson, 2020; Karimova et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2019). Caution must be taken regarding the novice teacher who enters the field with a high self-efficacy as they may harbor a false sense of confidence (Raymond-West & Snodgrass Rangel, 2020). These teachers may become disillusioned once faced with the realities of the classroom, running the risk of recalibrating their definition of good teaching and subsequently lowering their standard out a need for self-preservation (Raymond-West & Snodgrass Rangel, 2020).

Bandura (1962) suggested that self-efficacy is most malleable in the early years. Therefore, it is important that pre-service and new to the field teachers experience repeated successes during their practicum and first year in the classroom (Raymond-West & Snodgrass Rangel, 2020). Student teaching allows for the development of confidence in abilities as an instructor within the safety of support from professors, mentor teacher, and classmates to provide reflection and constructive feedback (Bandura, 1997; Raymond-West & Snodgrass Rangel,

2020; Wilson et al., 2020). Self-efficacy is solidified with these successes, making the teacher more resilient when faced with challenges and failures in the future (Bandura, 1997; Raymond-West & Snodgrass Rangel, 2020). Multiple studies convey support for the idea that self-efficacy is solidified for elementary teachers as they are exposed to more pedagogy courses during pre-service preparation experienced higher levels of self-efficacy upon entering the field (Clark, 2016; Raymond-West & Snodgrass, 2020).

Teachers with instructional strategies self-efficacy believe in their ability to design and implement learning activities which will aid in successful student achievement (Wilson et al., 2020). These teachers are also more likely to be less critical of student mistakes, use positive classroom management techniques, and work longer with a struggling student (Johnson, 2010; Raymond-West & Snodgrass Rangel, 2020; Wilson et al., 2020). Self-efficacy of teachers in the general education classroom wields influence over the likelihood they will make essential classroom decisions related to modifying content or altering instruction methods to meet the need of the 2e student (Wilson et al., 2020). Teachers who believe their school fosters the institution of differentiated instruction and observe colleagues actively pursuing ways to improve instructional strategies report higher levels of self-efficacy (Wilson et al., 2020).

Summary

Research supports the suggestion that psychosocial skills, such as self-esteem and identity, are important in the development of a healthy, productive individual regardless of categorization of cognitive abilities. This is reiterated within the literature surrounding talent development for those with high ability or suspected potential for success. For those students who are categorized as twice exceptional, or 2e, possessing a strong sense of self, or identity, and self-esteem related to academics is vitally important for positive future outcomes (Subotnik et

al., 2017; 2021). Whereas negative school experiences have lifelong ramifications including a continued sense of insecurity, feeling as though they do not belong, and undervalued as an individual (Metelski, 2022). The 2e student presents a complex situation for educational systems, school administrators, and school personnel, such as the classroom teacher and school psychologist (Barnard-Brak et al., 2015; Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2022). Traditional measures of assessment, misinterpretation of assessment results, misunderstanding and stereotypical mindsets have led to the exclusion of the 2e from both talent development and remediation services (Elhoweris et al., 2021; Metelski, 2022). The implementation of multiple measures has reportedly improved this situation. However, in the instance of those who do not fit the stereotypical mold, these students may remain at risk for being unidentified and subsequently underserved for both their talents and their needs, potentially leading to abnormal psychosocial development of identity and academic self-esteem contributing to the low-achieving adult.

In recent decades, the 2e student has gained attention in educational research communities around the world. Unfortunately, a large portion of this research has focused on supporting the student's weaknesses, leaving very little attention to address their strengths and develop underlying talents. Although researchers have begun to recognize and explore the importance of self-efficacy for teachers, little empirical data exists on the lived experiences of the general education teacher within the first five years of service and their perceptions of self-efficacy related to instructional decisions for teaching the 2e student.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This transcendental phenomenological study aims to discover the lived experiences of the novice elementary school general education teacher in making instructional decisions for the 2e student. This qualitative study addresses the perceptions of the general education classroom teacher of factors impacting the development of their self-efficacy teaching the 2e student. The twice-exceptional child is defined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) as anyone who exhibits an identifiable area of gift or talent while simultaneously meeting criteria for an eligibility of special education. For this study, the target participants are elementary school teachers within the first five years of service in a general education classroom setting. This chapter includes a presentation of the research design, research questions, and procedures for this transcendental phenomenological study. The setting and participants, as well as the researcher's role are discussed. Finally, the data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations are addressed.

Research Design

Although the twice exceptional or 2e child has gained a great deal of attention in recent decades, scant research has focused on the lived experiences of the general education teacher responsible for making instructional decisions for this population. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to gain understanding of the lived experiences of the novice elementary school teacher within the first five years of service in a general education setting. This chapter includes an explanation of research design methods deemed appropriate for use in this transcendental phenomenological study. The research data collection methods for this study include a survey questionnaire, phenomenological interview, and a focus group interview.

Transcendental phenomenology is based on the works of Edmund Husserl; found in the pursuit of knowledge gained through the commonalities of lived experiences in relation to a given phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). These experiences are shaped through the perceptions, sensations, emotions, and ideations of the "self" when focused on a specific object or event (Gall et al., 2007). Moustakas (1994) purported the basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce the experiences of individual(s) with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence. Arrival at the essence, or meaning, of an experience with a specific phenomenon is achieved from the participant's descriptions through the reflective process by visiting and revisiting those experiences each time stripping away extraneous information (Moustakas, 1994). van Manen (2014) suggested that phenomenology is a study of lived experiences with the intent of developing a detailed description of those experiences, not an explanation of the why. This study developed a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the early career elementary school teacher in relation to teaching the 2e child. Specifically, this study sought to understand the commonalities within the lived experiences of these teachers and the factors they attribute to the development of self-efficacy toward teaching the 2e student. As this is the intent of this study, the transcendental phenomenology design is an appropriate method.

Data collected in the human sciences such as phenomenology is accomplished primarily through personal interviews of study participants (Moustakas, 1994). This interview is conducted using open-ended questions which intend to facilitate a feeling of social conversation between the researcher and the participant (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2014). The researcher seeks to create a relaxing and trusting environment for the participants, so they willingly provide full, honest disclosure of their experiences with the phenomenon being studied

(Moustakas, 1994). Interviews were conducted as a first step in gathering a first-hand detailing of the experiences with the identified phenomenon from the participants.

Observation of the participant's experiences is an indirect method for collecting data relative to the topic phenomenon (van Manen, 2014). van Manen described close observation as a valid method for data collection in situations where it may be difficult to obtain written descriptions or engage in conversation. Researchers using this method are cautioned to ensure epoché as to accomplish close observations, especially with young children, there is an assumption of a relationship between the subject and observer (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014). Further caution is posited that it is vital for the phenomenological researcher to acknowledge the existence of an ever-present relationship between external perceptions and the memories, internal perceptions, or judgments of a given phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Conversations with the participants were recorded to allow the researcher to ensure information is not inadvertently eliminated from interview notes (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Poth, 2018). These recordings can be transcribed which then are read repeatedly, allowing for thorough reflection, identification of themes, and further bracketing of their own perceptions (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Phenomenological data may also be collected through journal writing, poetry, music, or other forms of art if appropriate to the phenomena being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These methods for data collection are not deemed to be beneficial to returning the most impactful information related to the study focus. Questionnaires are suggested as a method of data collection valid for phenomenological research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this method of data collection, the researcher develops open-ended questions appropriate to the topic of study arranged in a form which is then provided to the participants. Data collected from this method is

collated and reviewed in the same manner as that of the interview, deriving commonalities and themes among the participant's responses.

An additional method of data collection in phenomenological research is the focus group. The focus group allows for a collective awareness created through the opportunity for multiple participants to share and discuss their story, emotions, and experiences with the phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This provides valuable information contributing to the knowledge gained of the shared experiences of the participants of a study. Rabiee (2004) suggested that information gained from focus group participants is often richer and deeper than that obtained from the one-to-one interview. In my proposed study, the focus group is an appropriate method for data collection of the lived experiences of the novice elementary school teacher within the general education setting.

Throughout the research it is purported the methods of data collection from transcendental phenomenology tend to generate an overwhelming amount of information. Due to the amount of data possible, it is suggested that analysis be completed in systematic stages using a combination of approaches to reduce the data (Rabiee, 2004). Horizonalizing of the data allows the researcher to study each *horizon* or relevant statement, giving it equal value (Moustakas, 1994). Rabiee (2004) suggested the use of margin notes when reading through the transcripts from interviews and focus-groups to assist in thematic development. Meaning is then derived from the commonalities which are clustered into themes (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014). Through this process the researcher can consider with singularity a participant's experiences, capturing a complete description through examination of the variations of thoughts, feelings, sounds, and perceptions of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). At this point, the researcher can develop a textural description of the lived experiences related to the topic of study, arriving at the

essence of the targeted phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Following the development of textural description, the researcher engages in imaginative variation for generation of structural descriptions of the participant's experiences to present a complete picture of conditions and experiences prior to the phenomenon. By integrating the textural and structural essences of participant's experiences a synthesis of the meanings being investigated is generated (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Questions

Central Research Question

How do the lived experiences of elementary school teachers within the first five years of service contribute to their self-efficacy when making instructional decisions to support the needs of the twice-exceptional student in the general education classroom setting?

Sub-Question One

How do elementary school teachers within the first five years of service describe the impact of their teacher preparation program on their ability to recognize and support the complex needs of the twice-exceptional student?

Sub-Question Two

How do elementary school teachers within the first five years of service describe the impact of in-service training and support on their ability to recognize and support the complex needs of the twice-exceptional student?

Sub-Question Three

How do elementary school teachers within the first five years of service perceive the impact of lived experiences within the general education classroom on their ability to recognize and support the complex needs of the twice-exceptional student?

Setting and Participants

Moustakas (1994) emphasized the importance of all participants who have experience with the phenomenon of study. The setting chosen is also imperative to qualitative research and should be given intentional consideration to ensure a match with the research design (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This section describes the sites selected for this study as well as a profile of the anticipated participants. Pseudonyms for the study sites and participants were used to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of all parties involved with this study.

Setting

The setting for this study is a public-school district situated in northeast Georgia. This district is one of the largest public-school districts in Georgia with a student population during the 2023-2024 school year of over 55,000 students between the ages of 5 - 18. Specific schools within the district chosen for this study are two elementary (K-5) schools within the Fortified School System in northeast Georgia. Pseudonyms for the schools are provided as follows, Alpha Elementary School and Omega Elementary School. These elementary schools are suburban schools within the fifth largest public-school district within the state of Georgia.

Alpha Elementary School (AES) serves students in kindergarten through fifth grade. In addition to the general education setting, there are six specialized instruction classrooms serving students in self-contained special education classrooms for modified curriculum autism, skills-based autism, moderate intellectual disability, and severe and profound intellectual disability programs. AES has a total enrollment of 765 students, 20% are identified as students with disabilities, 11% English Language Learners (ELL), and 20% economically disadvantaged. The student population diversity is reported as follows, 9% American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander or Multi-racial, 17% Hispanic, 8% Black, and 65% White. At AES,

19.53% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch. There are a total of 66 certified and classified staff who work in various settings with students daily.

Omega Elementary School (OES) serves students in pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade. OES has a total enrollment of 1,141 students. Of the students at OES, 16.55% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch and 24% are identified as students with disabilities. Demographics for students at OES are as follows, 9% multi-racial, American Indian or Alaskan Native, or Asian or Pacific Islander, 12% Hispanic, 4% Black, and 75% white. 6% are English Language Learners and 16% are economically disadvantaged. A total of 82 certified and classified staff at OES work with students across multiple settings daily.

These elementary schools in the Fortified Schools district were chosen for their ability to provide an anticipated adequate number of participants who meet the criteria of the identified target population for this proposed study. It is anticipated that between 15 and 20 teachers from the two identified elementary schools will meet the criteria for this proposed study. This potential participant pool will provide a minimum of 10 general education elementary school teachers within the first five years of service who will then be recruited as active participants in this study.

Participants

I used purposeful sampling for this study. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select individuals and sites which purposefully inform the understanding of a research problem and the related central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Patton (2002) purported purposeful sampling is a powerful method in qualitative research as it leads to the gathering of rich data and a deeper understanding rather than pragmatic generalizations. A purposeful sampling procedure was appropriate for this study because the study focused solely on the general education

elementary school teacher within their first five years of service. The participant sampling pool was limited to those participants falling within the criterion of general education elementary school teacher and having been in-field between 1and 5 years. An informed consent form (see Appendix C) was required for each participant prior to participating. Ten early career educators participated in this study which ensured appropriate saturation.

Researcher Positionality

The motivation for this transcendental phenomenological study stems from a desire to give voice to the lived experiences of the new in-field elementary school teacher in developing self-efficacy for teaching the 2e student in the general education classroom. In my years as an educator, I have observed the frustrations of children with exceptionalities of gifts and talents with subsequent learning deficits in the general education setting. I have also experienced the difficulties of the general education teacher to meet the needs of each student within the classroom. As a researcher, I want to give voice to their lived experiences and perceptions of teaching the 2e student in a general educational environment on the development of self-efficacy of the novice elementary school teacher. I articulate my philosophical assumptions within this section. This information is discussed so others are able to gather a more detailed understanding of my positionality as a researcher.

Interpretive Framework

The lens through which I conducted this study is social constructivism. Social constructivism puts forth the possibility of multiple realities which are constructed through the lived experiences of the individual (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through this interpretive framework it is understood that though two people live within the same world or environment their experiences and perceptions can be contextually very different (Patton, 2002). Vygotsky

(1978) posited that learning and growth occur because of social interaction when individuals develop social skills and academic knowledge (Isaacs & Spencer, 2022). As I studied the experiences of elementary school teachers working with exceptional children, such as the 2e, I believed their lived experiences with, and perceptions of, the phenomenon would have many similarities and differences which were important and deserved attention. This interpretive framework allowed me to have the maximum amount of contact with teachers in the general education setting through individual interviews and focus group interviews to analyze and discover the diffident realities of the participants without articulating a bias toward which one is right or truer (Patton, 2002). It was my belief that the framework of social constructivism aligned with phenomenological research since historically researchers have held that the primary purpose is to understand the meaningful relationships connecting individual's experiences with a given phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). In addition, this study intended to explore the lived experiences of novice in-field teachers working with a purportedly misunderstood, misidentified, and marginalized population of special education students, and this interpretive framework allowed me to give them a voice (Foley-Nicpon & Assouline, 2020; Mills & Brody, 1999).

Philosophical Assumptions

My philosophical assumptions are discussed in this section to give others a clear and concise understanding of my positionality and the way in which I approached the research for this study. My ontological assumptions are guided by my deep belief in a singular supreme being through the trinity of God the father, God the son, and God the spirit. My epistemological assumptions are explained through the lens of the ideology of phenomenology, in which exploring knowledge is derived through the subjective experiences and perceptions of the individual. Finally, I discuss my axiological assumptions which are based on my experiences as

both an elementary general education classroom and special education teacher working with the twice-exceptional student.

Ontological Assumption

Creswell and Poth (2018) posited that ontological assumptions recognize that multiple realities exist in relation to a given phenomenon. My ontological assumptions as a researcher are based upon a belief in the existence of a reality resulting from an individual's own experiences.

Epistemological Assumption

Epistemological assumptions are defined as the how behind knowledge and the way we acquire that knowledge (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002). My epistemological assumptions are based on my experiences as a special education teacher but also as a mother to two children who have learning disabilities simultaneous with individual gifts and talents. The challenges experienced by both my children during their educational careers led me to pursue my own career toward becoming a teacher of special education. My personal experiences with parenting my children through their educational experiences within the general education environment present an area of bias which I acknowledge and will bracket out as a researcher when conducting this study. It is through these experiences with the phenomenon in which a connection with the participants exists. By memoing during interview sessions, I set aside any preconceived notions or prejudices to approach the topic of study with openness and fresh view of the participant's experiences transcendentally.

Axiological Assumption

Axiological assumptions are characterized by a researcher making their position and values obvious within the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a researcher, I acknowledged the value-laden nature of the information collected and actively report values and biases (Creswell &

Poth, 2018). As a human instrument within this study, I was attentive and intentional with bracketing out my biases whenever presumptions are evident within my consciousness to ensure the interpretations and analysis of the lived experiences remain open (Moustakas, 1994).

Researcher's Role

As a researcher within this transcendental phenomenological study, I accurately depicted the lived experiences of the novice elementary school teacher in the general education setting. A qualitative researcher's work differs from that of the quantitative researcher due to the nature of the role of the researcher in each method (Creswell, 2015). As a qualitative researcher, I assumed a role of both participant and observer during the in-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews and online survey (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). I directly contacted study participants recruited for this study through phone calls, emails, and online interviews (Saldaña, 2016). My role as a human instrument during this study allowed me to be involved in a sustained and intensive experience with the participants, connecting me with observed difficulties of the twice-exceptional student. It is suggested that a researcher should include statements related to past experiences which provide background knowledge so that the audience understands the topic of study better (Creswell, 2009). Acknowledging any potential biases or prejudices I may have brought into the role of researcher were bracketed out so that I accurately describe the lived experiences of the novice elementary general education teacher and their perceived experiences impacting the development of self-efficacy toward meeting the needs of the 2e student.

Procedures

Procedures for this transcendental phenomenological study are detailed within this section. Required procedures for obtaining the necessary permissions for research conducted within this study were completed. A copy of all permission letters completed by participants was

placed in the appropriate appendices. Site approval and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained. In addition, the recruitment plan is discussed.

Permissions

Prior to gaining approval from the IRB, necessary permissions to conduct the study from Fortified School System was obtained (see Appendix A). Additional permission was obtained from the administration of Alpha Elementary School and Omega Elementary School where this study took place (see Appendix B). Following site approval, a written approval letter from the IRB for permission to conduct the study was secured (see Appendix C). Once IRB approval was given, I met with the administrators from the study sites for assistance in recruiting potential participants who met study criterion. A recruitment letter was sent to identified potential participants (see Appendix D) which allowed for a response and indication of interest. Consent letters were provided to all through a link to a Google document so that participants who expressed interest and meet the study criterion may access (see Appendix E). All potentially identifiable data was kept confidential and concealed within the documents.

Recruitment Plan

The sample pool for this proposed transcendental phenomenological research study is 102 which will be screened using criterion sampling to identify 10 to 12 potential participants who meet the study criteria. Moustakas (1994) suggests that study participants meet certain essential criteria such as having a lived experience with the phenomenon and are interested in understanding the nature and meaning of the phenomenon. Criterion sampling is proposed for the identification of potential study participants. This method of sampling is appropriate as this allowed for assurances that each potential participant met the criteria of holding a current state

teaching certificate, was currently teaching in a general education classroom, and had 1-5 years teaching experience.

Data Collection Plan

Data collection for this transcendental phenomenological study included a variety of methods to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and allowed for data triangulation. The methods for this study included a survey, personal interview, and focus groups. The survey took 5 – 10 minutes to complete and will be delivered via Google Forms. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in a one-on-one format at a time convenient for the identified participants. Questions for the interview were open-ended and developed to gather important information related to the participants' lived experiences within the general education environment, support classes or advanced content classes attended. Online focus groups were the final method of data collection for this study. The focus group provided an opportunity for the relative homogenous grouping of participants to offer potential extension of insights and themes uncovered during the interview phase related to the phenomenon. This method of data collection also lead to participants divulging information related to the phenomenon which they did not share in other settings.

Survey

Moustakas (1994) emphasized the importance of surveys as a critical component for data collection in qualitative research. When creating surveys, questions may range from a small number of focused questions to targeted, profound questions directly connected to the research topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Surveys should seek relevant and honest data from the participants, respect the study participants' time, and be easy to understand (Clary et al., 2021).

Survey Questions

1. Describe the current stage of your educational career (i.e., years of service). (Demographic information)
2. Do you work in an Elementary school? (Demographics & CRQ)
3. Do you have a renewable or provisional certificate of education? (Demographics & SQ1)
4. Are you a teacher in a general classroom setting? (Demographic information)
5. Describe the level of your degree (i.e. bachelors, etc.)
6. In what area(s) of education is your degree? (All questions)
7. Do you hold any additional endorsements? (i.e., Reading, Gifted, Math, Science, ESOL, etc.). (SQ1)

Survey/Questionnaire Data Analysis Plan

Surveys enable the researcher to collect data relevant to demographics and various items of information pertinent to the participants' experiences with the phenomenon. Survey data analysis was conducted upon completion of the survey by study participants. The modification by Moustakas (1994) of Van Kaam's method of phenomenological data analysis was employed to analyze survey data. All gathered information was considered on a similar level with significant statements which reveal or give understanding of the lived experiences of the phenomenon listed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This is identified as horizonalization in phenomenological research analysis as detailed by Moustakas (1994). I employed epoché, phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation. A composite essence of participants' previous experiences with the phenomenon was developed. The utilization of ATLAS.ti Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Q-DAS) was used. This software was used to compile and organize the large amounts of data expected from completion of the survey by study participants.

Vital structure and order of data was provided through use of this software for identification of common themes essential to understanding the phenomenon.

Participant information was compiled into a spreadsheet using ATLAS.ti Q-DAS. This spreadsheet included participant's pseudonym names, the questions, and participant answers. Reduction and elimination were conducted at this stage to determine invariant constituents, the exclusive or unique qualities of the lived experiences of the study participants. Analysis of the data was conducted with intentionality to bracket in and out what is not essential to understanding the participant's experience. This analysis required intricate attention for each experience to be tested according to specific requirements related to the phenomenon; did it provide details that explain the experience and can a label be assigned to decipher it (Moustakas, 1994). To delineate this information, a column for bracket in and bracket out was added to the spreadsheet. Coding then occurred through color-coding so that information was easily deciphered, and emerging themes identified; these themes will be noted in a separate column within the spreadsheet. This process will allow the me to evaluate the experiences of each participant while looking for common themes among the teachers related to the phenomenon. Identified themes were used to develop textural descriptions of the participants' experience with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Individual Interviews

The interview is a principle means of data collection for phenomenological research (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2014). I conducted a pilot interview with a small group of teachers who meet the criteria of general education teacher but did not participate in the study. This data was not used in the actual study. Interviews were conducted at a time convenient for the study participants and lasted 45 to 70 minutes. The setting for the

interviews was in a conference room or classroom on the school campus to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Permission and arrangements for the use of this room were obtained from the school administration prior to the scheduling of personal interviews with participants. Arrangements for a virtual option was offered when proved more convenient for participants' schedules.

Table 1

Individual Interview Questions

1. Could you please tell me about yourself and your current position? (Icebreaker)
2. Could you please describe your teacher preparation program and/or any training you have received related to teaching exceptional children? (SQ1)
3. Please describe your perceptions or knowledge of the twice-exceptional student. (All research questions)
4. What did you feel most prepared for when entering the classroom as a new teacher and at this point in your career? (CRQ & SQ1)
5. Self-efficacy is an individual's belief that they have ability to perform an action that will result in a desired outcome. What does self-efficacy mean to you as a teacher? How do you feel self-efficacy impacts your instructional decision-making processes? (CRQ, SQ1, & SQ3)
6. What do you believe are your strengths as a teacher of exceptional students? What are your challenges? (CRQ & SQ2)

7. Thinking back about your observations of other teachers when teaching exceptional students who may be 2e, what has influenced your development as a teacher of these students? (CRQ & SQ2)

8. In regard to personal feedback, you have received related to your instructional practices, what stands out to you as particularly impactful or important? (CRQ & SQ2)

9. Describe how you feel about your ability to plan and implement curricula to support students' academic needs (i.e. SPED, Gifted and Talented, 2e, etc.) ? (CRQ & SQ2)

10. What feelings do you experience when you engage in teacher activities with gifted students? Students with disabilities or those who may be 2e? (CRQ, SQ2 & SQ3)
11. Describe your experiences for providing differentiated instruction based on a student's learning needs. (CRQ)

12. Describe your experiences providing opportunities for gifted students to explore an area of interest or talent. (CRQ)

13. How do you communicate expectations to your students? (CRQ)

14. Please describe your experiences teaching gifted and talented students and special education students in the general education classroom. How are these experiences similar and/or different? (CRQ & SQ2)

15. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences or feelings related to making instructional decisions to support students' academic needs in your classroom? (All research questions)

The questions posed in the interview section allowed for gaining understanding of the participant's lived experiences of teaching the twice-exceptional child in the general education classroom (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The phenomenological interview allowed for the development of themes regarding the phenomenon being studied and then to bracket them to find meaning (Moustakas, 1994).

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

Moustakas's (1994) modification of Van Kaam's method of analyzing phenomenological data was used to analyze information collected during individual interviews. Interviews with each participant was recorded using two separate voice recording devices, as well as video recording technology ensured complete and full details of the participants' lived experiences in relation to the phenomenon was captured. The use of multiple methods for voice and video recording was used as a safeguard against unforeseen technical difficulties which may arise during the interview. All voice recordings, video recordings, and field notes completed during the personal interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Word software. Each participant was provided a copy of their transcribed documents to ensure accuracy and obtain any necessary clarification.

After obtaining participant approval of accuracy and clarification, the transcribed documents were uploaded into the ATLAS.ti software which was used to organize, analyze, and interpret the data. Horizonalization was conducted to identify statements, words, or phrases which emerged as significant in relation to the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Intentional and

purposeful coding was conducted following horizonalization to establish themes from the participants' lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Emergent themes from the research were used to develop textural descriptions of the participant's experiences with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; van Manan, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Textural descriptions are derived from the participant's verbatim examples and feelings obtained through the interview, survey, and focus group sessions for this proposed study. Data analysis from the individual interview will include verbatim recordings with applicable interpretations to provide structural descriptions. Structural description involves the reimagining, recollecting, and judging of collected data (Moustakas, 1994). This information assisted in the deeper understanding of the essence of the participants' lived experiences with attached meanings in relation to the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; van Manan, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The use of ATLAS.ti Q-DAS allowed for the connecting of common themes and a synthesis of the phenomenological data gathered for this study. ATLAS.ti software allowed for the uploading of video, audio, and textual data. This capability was essential to the structure, organization, and triangulation of data for this study.

Focus Groups

As an important step toward understanding the lived experiences of the twice-exceptional student, focus group interviews were implemented. Focus groups are purported to create an atmosphere of synergy, a group dynamic, among participants which potentially lead to richer detail of the lived experiences related to the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Poth, 2018, van Manen, 2014). Analysis of the individual interview data was completed prior to the focus group sessions, allowing for a member check of preliminary themes and findings. This also allowed for participant feedback on the thoroughness of representation for their lived experiences

with the phenomenon. The use of focus group interviews is valid for this study as it provided the potential for uncovering details and emergent themes as participants recognized and discussed common experiences leading to deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Questions for this phase of data collection were developed accordingly to address areas of clarification necessary following the individual interviews.

Focus Group Questions

1. How do you feel when you think about teaching students with disabilities? (CRQ & SQ2)
2. How do feel about your ability to manage/resolve issues related to gifted students who are performing below their perceived abilities? (CRQ & SQ2)
3. What factors do you believe have contributed to those feelings? (CRQ & SQ2)
4. Describe any past experiences that influenced your ability to make instructional decisions to support gifted students' academic needs. (CRQ, SQ1, & SQ2)
5. Describe any past experiences that influenced your ability to make instructional decisions to support struggling or special education students' academic needs. (CRQ, SQ1, & SQ2)

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

Like with the survey and individual interview data analysis plan, Moustakas's (1994) modification of Van Kaam's method for phenomenological data analysis was used to decipher the focus group data. Focus group interviews were recorded using voice and video recording technology that ensured complete and full details of the participants' lived experiences in relation to the phenomenon were captured. All voice recordings, video recordings, and field

notes completed during the focus group interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Word software. A member check of the transcribed recordings was completed to ensure accuracy of the data (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Poth, 2018). This step in the process allowed for the clarification of information gathered deemed necessary by the study participant or researcher.

After obtaining participants' approval of transcript correctness, all data from the focus group interviews was uploaded into the ATLAS.ti software. Every statement was viewed as relevant through the process of horizonalization, looking for significant words or phrases which emerged as important in relation to the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Reduction and elimination was completed using the ATLAS.ti software to code data through the process of bracketing important information. This coded information was imported into a spreadsheet where color-coding was used to facilitate clustering and thematizing. Each theme was noted individually on the spreadsheet with the addition of individual textural descriptions along with verbatim individual information from the focus group interview was documented. Textual descriptions helped to facilitate individual structural descriptions. The textual structural description followed the before-mentioned process and helped provide a composite or essence of the individual experience with the phenomenon.

Data Synthesis

The process of data synthesis followed the analysis of data. Synthesis of the data was simplified due to the extensive detail followed within the analysis stage of this study. I followed the methods and procedures for qualitative data analysis detailed by Moustakas (1994). These steps include horizonalization, reduction and elimination, and the development of textual descriptions leading to structural descriptions. Each step of the analysis and synthesis of data was completed with intentionality and *epoché*. Knafl and Breitmayer (1991) defined triangulation in

research as a metaphoric term focused on the measurement of discrete variables. Triangulation increases the validation, enhancing credibility with the cross-checking and cross-referencing of the expected findings. Substantiating of evidence was achieved through multiple data collection methods. In this study, triangulation of the qualitative methods, data collection methods and sources, and theories were used to discover the lived experiences of the elementary school general education teacher who is within the first five years of service. As the researcher, I facilitated data triangulation through the cross-referencing of data sources which are the questionnaire, personal interviews, focus groups, and memoing completed during the individual interviews and focus group sessions for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Coding of the gathered information from surveys, individual interviews and focus groups will be completed as part of the process of data synthesis (Appendix I). Spreadsheets were created specifically for the synthesis process and were used to further organize, read, and code the data according to commonalities (Appendix J). Information was color coded to ease identification of emergent sub-themes. These sub-themes were listed on the spreadsheet and used in ascertaining textual structural descriptions to form a unified statement of the essence of participants' experiences related to the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). As the intention of the synthesis of data from this study was to develop from the perspective of the study participant, all biases and preconceived notions were set aside to allow for an authentic synthesis of the phenomenon as it emanates from the participants.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is defined in qualitative research as the degree to which a researcher's information is conceptually sound and perceived valuable to other researchers (Carcary, 2020).

In response to criticism of positivists toward the rigor, reliability, and objectivity of qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) conceived foundational characteristics by which to test the trustworthiness of a study. These characteristics are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This section describes measures to be taken in assurance that this study is rigorous through the lens first prescribed by Lincoln and Guba.

Credibility

To achieve credibility, a study must accurately relate the reality as described through the perceptual lens of study participants in relation to the phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility in qualitative research requires high quality data collection and analyses. In this study, I achieved credibility using research methods as outlined by the seminal works of such qualitative researchers as Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Moustakas (1994). Triangulation, peer debriefing, and member-checking will be employed to ensure the credibility of this study. Through the processes of cross-referencing the data collected from each of the sources completed during this study triangulation of data was achieved. Member-checking was employed during the focus group interview sessions, allowing participants to review and ensure a thorough and appropriate depiction of their individual experiences were depicted. Further, peer debriefing for this study was employed as a measure to assure credibility. Peer debriefing allows the researcher to review and discuss emergent findings with colleagues to ensure the analysis is grounded within the data. This peer debriefing was accomplished through discussions with members of my dissertation committee to include the chair and committee members. I also employed the assistance of additional peers within my circle of fellow educators who hold doctoral degrees in education and were familiar with my research to provide important perspectives to elucidate my findings.

Transferability

To ensure transferability according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) a study must show applicability in other contexts. This is achieved by developing thick, rich descriptions of the participant's lived experiences in relation to the phenomenon being studied. Transferability is a necessary characteristic of qualitative research. In this study, the descriptions provided are robust to paint a clear picture of how the novice elementary school teacher perceives factors impacting the development of self-efficacy toward making instructional decisions for the 2e student in a general education setting. These descriptions demonstrate the generalizability of the proposed study through provision of a reflective sample of the desired population of participants. The literature does not offer insights into the specifics of the lived experiences of the general education teacher within the first five years of service who are responsible for making instructional decisions for meeting the needs of exceptional students such as the 2e. This study offers an important and valid first step toward a better understanding of this phenomenon within the study's population.

Dependability

Dependability is defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as demonstrating consistent and repeatable findings. Barr (2014) purported dependability of qualitative research to be the consistency and reliability of data and findings from the study. Descriptions of the procedures undertaken in this study are detailed enough to ensure that the study could be replicated by other researchers. Use of an audit trail helps to ensure consistency throughout the research and data analysis process. Dependability and confirmability of this research is obtained through triangulation, memoing and reflective journaling, the audit trail, and member checks (Clautier &

Ravasi, 2021). Through audio and video recording and verbatim transcription, dependability of this study was established (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Confirmability

Confirmability is defined as the extent to which a study's findings are shaped by the participants and are based on the researcher's desires, self-interest, and biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Poth, 2018). A first component of ensuring confirmability within this study was the use of bracketing. I used techniques such as triangulation, reflexivity, and an audit trail. Reflexivity is an important piece of qualitative research (Carcary, 2020). I used a reflective journal in which thoughts and opinions will be recorded to assist with bracketing my own biases, prejudgments, or preconceived ideas within this study (Moustakas, 1994). van Manen (1990) emphasized the importance of keeping a reflective journal as a means for discerning patterns, recording insights, and reflection on previous thoughts as the work progresses. Individual interviews and focus group interviews were recorded through audio and video which was then transcribed verbatim to increase the level of dependability (Creswell & Poth, 2018). An audit trail aided in confirmation of credibility, dependability, and confirmability for this study (Carcary, 2020). Creswell and Poth (2018) purported that the audit trail is a method to trace how decisions are reached and increases the confirmability of a study. To further increase the credibility of this study an external auditor reviewed the research to ensure that the findings were grounded in the data and not my personal interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This auditor was familiar with the target population and the research topic but had no relationship with the study participants. In addition, each participant was given an opportunity to review the transcribed interviews and the summary of results (van Manen, 1990).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are nonnegotiable, imperative characteristic of all types of research. Creswell and Poth (2018) purport that considerations pertaining to ethical practices occur at each stage of a study. Prior to beginning this study, IRB approval was obtained. Site permission from each of the schools involved with this study was obtained prior to soliciting study participants. In addition, each participant signed a letter of informed consent that thoroughly explains the purpose of the study and that participation is voluntary. It was explained that the study poses no physical or mental risk to the participant. To ensure that confidentiality and privacy of both study participants and study sites was respected, pseudonyms were assigned. Study participants were informed of the purpose for this study. Participants were informed that they may withdraw from the study at any point. Any data collected pertaining to a participant who has withdrawn from the study was destroyed and not used within the study findings. Digital data collected during this study was saved in password protected files, stored on an external hard drive, and kept in a locked, fire-resistant cabinet. These data sources will be kept for a minimum of three years prior to being destroyed. Hard copies of collected data such as interview and focus group transcripts along with signed consent forms will also be stored in a locked, fire-resistant cabinet for a minimum of three years and then will be destroyed.

Summary

This qualitative research study was designed to understand the phenomenon of the development of self-efficacy through the perceptions of the novice elementary school teacher in their instructional decision making for the 2e student. This chapter began with a description of the proposed study and research design, the research questions, and description of the intended setting and participants. A list of the procedures and researcher's role are detailed. Information on the data collection methods and data analysis are discussed. The chapter ends with a

discussion of trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and a summary. Information provided in this chapter of the qualitative study is intended to ensure the research can be replicated and confirmed in future studies.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences impacting the self-efficacy of the early career elementary teachers toward meeting the needs of the twice-exceptional students in the general education classroom. Phenomenology is focused on the lived experiences of individuals as they experience a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This research approach allowed me to deepen my understanding of the phenomenon and how it influenced the lived experiences of participants. This chapter illustrates the results of the data analysis. The current chapter provides demographics for each of the participants. The lived experiences with exceptional children in the general education classroom, themes, and judgements regarding the phenomenon, while interpreting the participants' lived experiences (van Manen, 1990). The key findings obtained from surveys, personal interviews, and focus group discussions are presented.

Participants

Of the 24 candidates who completed the six-question screening survey, 10 participants met the study requirements. These 10 participants were from two public elementary schools located in the southeastern United States. Participants must have been working directly with students as the teacher of record in a K-5 public school. The requirements for this study limited the sample to elementary school teachers having one to five years of experience in the general education setting. The qualifications were set to focus solely on the lived experiences of early career teachers for meeting the needs of twice-exceptional students in the general education classroom environment. All 10 participants completed a self-efficacy inventory and participated in personal interviews. Six of these participants participated in the focus group interview. The

table below shows the participant's demographic data breakdown by the following factors: gender, age, ethnicity, grade level taught, years of teaching experience, and degree and additional endorsements earned.

Table 1

Teacher Participants

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Years of Experience	Grade Level	Degree(s) & Endorsements
Allison	Female	26	Caucasian	4	4	Bachelor's Elementary Education K-5
Carla	Female	23	Caucasian	1	4	Bachelor's Early Childhood Education PK – 5, Special Education (General Curriculum K-12), Reading Endorsement
Sandy	Female	25	Caucasian	1	4	Bachelor's Early Childhood Education PK – 5, Special Education (General Curriculum K-12), Reading Endorsement
Karyn	Female	26	Caucasian	2	5	Bachelor's Early Childhood Education PK – 5, Special Education (General Curriculum K-12), Reading Endorsement

Wendy	Female	25	Caucasian	3	3	Bachelor's Early Childhood Education PK – 5, Reading Endorsement
Emery	Female	25	Caucasian	2	4	Bachelor's Early Childhood Education PK – 5, Special Education (General Curriculum K-12), Reading Endorsement
Gwen	Female	24	Caucasian	3	3	Bachelor's Early Childhood Education PK – 5, Special Education (General Curriculum K-12)
Tanya	Female	27	Caucasian	5	K	Bachelor's Early Childhood Education PK – 5, Special Education (General Curriculum K-12), Reading Endorsement
Melissa	Female	28	Caucasian	5	4	Bachelor's Early Childhood Education PK – 5, Reading Endorsement
Susan	Female	26	Caucasian	4	1	Bachelor's Early Childhood Education PK – 5, Special

						Education (General Curriculum K-12)

Allison

Allison was a 26-year-old female who worked as a fourth-grade teacher. She held a renewable license in the state of Georgia. Allison had a Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education for grades pre-K-5. She was in the fourth year of her career. Allison has taught pre-kindergarten and fourth grade in the public elementary school setting.

Carla

Carla was a 23-year-old female who worked as a fourth-grade teacher. She held a renewable teacher's license in the state of Georgia, a Bachelor of Science degree in early childhood education pre-K-5, and certification in K-12 general curriculum special education. In addition, she also has an endorsement in reading instruction. Carla had one year of experience as the teacher of record within a general education classroom.

Sandy

Sandy was a 25-year-old female who worked as a fourth-grade teacher. She held a renewable teaching license in the state of Georgia. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in early childhood education pre-K-5, and certification in K-12 general curriculum special education. In addition, she had an endorsement in reading instruction. Sandy had one year of experience as a general education classroom teacher. Through the interview process, Sandy shared that she participated in a work-study program in high school which allowed her to engage in activities with elementary teachers and students.

Karyn

Karyn was a 26-year-old female who worked as a fifth-grade teacher. She held a renewable teaching license in the state of Georgia. She had a Bachelor of Science degree in early childhood education pre-K - 5 and certification in general curriculum special education K-12. In addition, she had an endorsement in reading instruction. Karyn had two years of experience as a general education teacher. She completed her student teaching at the same school in which she worked at the time of her participation in this study.

Wendy

Wendy was a 25-year-old female who worked as a third-grade teacher. She held a renewable teaching license in the state of Georgia. She had a Bachelor of Science degree in early childhood education pre-K – 5 and an endorsement in reading instruction. Wendy was in her third year as a general education teacher. She has taught third grade for the entirety of her career. Prior to entering the classroom, Wendy worked as a long and short-term substitute in multiple grade levels and within the gifted program at the elementary level.

Emery

Emery was a 25-year-old female who worked as a fourth-grade teacher. She held a renewable teaching license in the state of Georgia. She had a Bachelor of Science degree in early childhood education pre-K - 5, certification in general curriculum special education pre-K - 12, and an endorsement in reading instruction. During the interview process, Emery expressed an intention to pursue a master's degree in curriculum and instruction, as well as to obtain an endorsement in gifted and talented education. Emery was in her second year as a general education teacher. She has taught fourth grade each of the two years of her career.

Gwen

Gwen was a 24-year-old female who worked as a third-grade teacher. She held a renewable teaching license in the state of Georgia. She had a Bachelor of Science degree in early childhood education pre-K - 5, certification in general curriculum special education K - 12, and an endorsement in reading instruction. Gwen was in her third year as a general education teacher and has taught third grade for her entire career.

Tanya

Tanya was a 27-year-old female who worked as a kindergarten teacher. She held a renewable teaching license in the state of Georgia. She had a Bachelor of Science degree in early childhood education pre-K - 5, certification in general education special education K - 12, and an endorsement in reading instruction. Tanya was in her fifth year as a general education teacher. She has taught kindergarten for the entirety of her career.

Melissa

Melissa was a 28-year-old female who worked as a fourth-grade teacher. She held a renewable teaching license in the state of Georgia. She had a Bachelor of Science degree in early childhood education pre-K – 5 and an endorsement in reading instruction. Melissa was in her fifth year as a general education teacher. She has taught first and fifth grades during her career. During the interview process, Melissa shared that she would pursue an advanced degree in curriculum and instruction within the next year or so.

Susan

Susan was a 26-year-old female who worked as a first-grade teacher. She held a renewable teaching license in the state of Georgia. Susan had a Bachelor of Science degree in early childhood education pre-K - 5 and certification in general curriculum special education K -

12. She was in her fourth year as a general education teacher. Susan has taught first grade for the entirety of her career.

Results

This phenomenological study aimed to investigate and understand the lived experiences of early career elementary school teachers' self-efficacy for meeting the complex needs of the twice-exceptional student in the general education classroom. Results for this transcendental phenomenological study were derived from analysis and triangulation of data collected through a qualitative inventory, semi-structured individual interviews, and focus groups. Individual interviews and focus groups were videorecorded using Microsoft TEAMs and transcribed on Microsoft Word. All transcriptions were provided to participants to check for accuracy with identifiable information altered or removed to ensure confidentiality. To ensure security of all data, I stored the recordings, documents, and transcriptions in a password-protected file. Research was conducted from an interpretive perspective as I brought my own experiences to the dialogue with the interview and focus group participants.

Qualitative data derived from the interviews and focus groups were transcribed verbatim. Transcripts from both the individual interview and focus group interviews, along with survey data were uploaded into the Atlas.ti software. The transcripts were then read, re-read, and analyzed for word and phrase frequencies, allowing for the generation of codes and incidences of similarities across the data. Triangulation and horizonalization was completed to develop codes, which were used to continue analysis of the data. Using the Atlas.ti software, I completed a manual coding session to analyze the data and then to further identify patterns leading to the discovery of themes following the initial round of manual coding. Thorough analysis of the compiled data, two major themes and five sub-themes emerged as factors impacting the self-

efficacy of early career elementary school teachers for meeting the complex needs of the twice-exceptional student in the general education classroom. Outlier information was also uncovered during the analysis and is included within this chapter. The themes and subthemes are listed below in Table 2.

Table 2

Themes & Subthemes

Theme 1	
Practicum Field Experiences	
Subthemes	
Lesson Planning	Broad but Superficial Experiences
Theme 2	
Infield Experiences	
Subthemes	
Multi-Tiered Student Support Professional Development	Instructional Decision-Making Perception and Knowledge of Exceptional Students

Practicum Field Experiences

Through the extensive analysis of the collected data, a major theme emerged as practicum field experiences as a shared experience. As education majors, each participant had shared experiences with various placements during the practicum portions of their preparation program. The analysis also uncovered two subthemes for participants' experiences. During both the

individual interviews and focus group interviews, the subthemes of broad but superficial experiences and lesson planning emerged as important to the shared lived experiences of the participants.

Broad but Superficial Experiences

Broad experiences through various placements in multiple schools and classroom settings during their practicum was described by most of the participants. Carla shared "…my experiences were so broad that I feel like I was able to see that every child thinks and learns in a completely different way…" A sentiment of appreciation for the experiences gained during their practicum was shared among all participants. Gwen shared, "I was very confident in my experience with EBI kids…" It was clear that the wide range of experiences in specialized instruction classrooms, general education, co-taught general education, and interrelated-resource settings was felt to be beneficial to each of the participants. Emery explained "…I was able to student teach in self-contained classes and IRR classes from kindergarten to fifth…it was very beneficial." Gwen explained her experiences in the dual-certification program "…prepared me very well to be in an inclusion classroom."

While all participants shared a similar appreciation of their practicum experiences, a feeling became clear that the vast range of those experiences did not allow for a full understanding of being a classroom teacher. This sentiment was evident in a statement by Karyn, "It was nice to see the wide variety but then I feel you don't ever really get to know the terminology--you don't get to fully plug in…" Karyn further shared,

> …a lot of times it felt like worse-case scenario if we were going over academic challenges…they had a severe learning disability, but then we

> didn't ever really talk about if they're just inconsistent or if they're struggling in one area but not all the areas. What do you do with that?

Allison described her experiences in pre-field classroom placements as "…the classes that I was in had students who were either extremely high or extremely low…I didn't have any students who were middle of the road." Emery stated, "I wasn't the most prepared for coming into a fourth-grade classroom where grades and academics are so heavy."

Wendy and Sandy expressed a high level of comfortability with meeting the needs of all students within their classes. In contrast, Carla, Karyn, Gwen and Susan expressed lower self-efficacy, which they contributed to their experiences of working with lower performing students during student teaching placements, as they hold additional special education certification. Allison and Susan noted that they had no experience during student teaching placements for working with high achieving students. Karyn, Carla, and Sandy explained that while their student teaching placements allowed for beneficial time spent in different specialized instruction classrooms, they did not feel as prepared to address the often-contradictory needs of multiple students within the general education classroom setting. Carla described this as "…there's so many all-in-one pot and stirred together. They don't really prepare you for that." Susan explained her experiences with having multiple gifted students within a general education classroom and the difficulty of adequately meeting their needs as, "oh my gosh… I don't have any idea what to do with you." Allison also shared this concern as she recounted an experience with a gifted pre-K student and her lack of strategies for addressing this student's needs.

Lesson Planning

Each of the participants completed teacher preparation programs at various universities across the state of Georgia and expressed similar feelings of preparedness for developing lesson

plans. At the time of completing the respective programs, graduates were required to participate and pass the Education Teachers Preparation Assessment (edTPA) to obtain certification leading to licensure in Georgia. A component of this requirement is writing extensive, scripted lesson plans. Allison described her experiences by stating, "...we learned how to write a really good, scripted lesson plan." This was further supported by Sandy, "...I felt very prepared in terms of understanding—actually planning lessons." Sandy also shared that during the senior year of her preparation program classes focused primarily on the "…preparation side of things… really looked into the planning and craft."

Carla explained that the process of writing lesson plans was deeply ingrained into her program. During the interview she shared, "…that process of content, process, product, …really following that framework to meet the needs of students…" was explicitly taught and an expectation for inclusion in all lesson planning assignments. Sandy shared that she felt "most prepared for planning lessons…I felt very prepared with instructional strategies."

In-Field Experiences

The shared experiences of participants since entering the teaching career emerged as a major theme of in-field experiences. Participants discussed the various components which they felt important from their in-field experiences, such as professional development, instructional decision making, and perceptions and knowledge of exceptional students. While each of the participants are all general education teachers at the elementary level and are within the first five years of entering the field, they did not experience the same pre-service training due to different pathways to certification and curriculum requirements at their respective universities.

Professional Development

Support from administrators during professional development sessions was revealed as an important factor in building participant's self-efficacy for working with students in the

classroom. Emery divulged that at her school, administration often facilitated discussions related to curriculum implementation and classroom improvements. During the individual interview, she described herself as a "yellow personality who thrives on approval". It was clear from the multiple statements she made that her self-efficacy for successfully meeting the needs of her students was dependent on the support of those in leadership positions whether that be administration, a lead teacher, or a mentor.

Each participant also credited participation in a professional learning community (PLC) with increasing their self-efficacy for meeting the varied and extensive needs of students in their classrooms. Participants described the PLCs as a time when their respective grade level teams come together, along with an administrator to discuss curriculum and student data. Emery stated, "…my reading lessons are so much better because I'm really digging into the standard and the success criteria and really planning the unit." She went on to say that during PLCs

> ... we talk about, Okay, this lesson was awful. What did you do? Just getting those strategies... there's math strategies I'd never heard of, but I'm hearing now…people are saying, Oh, my kids struggled on that too. This is what I found. That has been so very beneficial.

This was supported by Susan who said, "I feel I've learned a lot of other strategies for helping …" Despite having a degree in special education as a second-year teacher, Karyn did not feel as though she had the experience to make the most appropriate or effective decisions to support her struggling students. Due to this feeling of unpreparedness, she felt working within the PLCs was very helpful in building her toolbox and knowledge to address similar situations in the future. Other participants shared this same feeling that having the support of more seasoned teachers to ask questions and guide them toward interventions and instructional supports that

have been successful in the past was beneficial to their overall development of self-efficacy as a classroom teacher.

This sentiment was also true for the support described by participants while gaining an understanding of the MTSS process. Each participant described how helpful they felt it was to have a dedicated coordinator guiding data discussions and explaining the, at times, convoluted movement practices within the MTSS tier system. Sandy stated, "I'm sure I still don't understand what all the tiers mean, but having *the MTSS coordinator* explain it was helpful." Karyn echoed this in her interview stating, "I struggle with knowing is this somebody who needs to be in the MTSS process or is this just somebody who needs something extra in the classroom?" She went on to say, "It can be really frustrating because I'm always afraid I'm like recommending the wrong student or recommending the wrong thing for them." This sentiment was repeated throughout all participants' interviews and focus group discussions. Tanya shared that she did not feel comfortable with the MTSS process until "at least my third year." One participant felt that a difficulty for her personally with learning the process was the terminology. She noted that her experiences during student teaching placements were at a different school within the same system, but the terms used for various components of MTSS were different than what was used at her current school.

An additional area participants discussed as beneficial was observations of other teachers within their respective school buildings since entering the field. This was referred to as *admire and inquire* and provided opportunities to visit the classroom of teachers of their choice to observe an academic lesson for a given period. Each of the participants described this as impactful for their decision-making processes within their individual classrooms as they took the experiences from these observations back to adjust to meet the needs of their students. Emery

detailed her experiences with observing a fifth-grade teacher and the ways in which she addressed differentiation for book clubs as extremely helpful for her own classroom. Emery stated,

> I didn't think I could do book clubs before watching her. I have kids reading at a kindergarten level and some reading on like an eighth-grade level. But she did a great job differentiating …the kids couldn't tell what groups they were in… I really enjoyed that and noticed that it's important to make groups that really help the students.

Wendy shared that seeing other teachers participate in strategies, such as thinking spaces and various uses of technology, has been very impactful for her practices. She also expressed that working more closely with her school's Educational Technology Coach (ETC) had helped her to build technology options for students into her everyday practice.

Conversely, while participants shared a sentiment that these professional development measures and administrative support had provided a positive impact on their overall self-efficacy as an educator, they had received little to no targeted training for meeting the needs of gifted or twice-exceptional students since entering the field. Tanya stated, "Since being in the classroom I feel I haven't really received a lot of direct instruction..." Susan furthered this, sharing she had no experiences with the twice-exceptional child prior to entering the classroom and that despite being a teacher in an inclusion setting, she had no experience or professional development to identify or address the needs of this population of students. Karyn explained that an area of meeting the needs of high achieving students was setting high expectations and being consistent with holding students accountable for meeting that expectation. This is noted in her statement,

> …that's something I had to learn that if you set the expectation more times than not, they will rise to meet that expectation. I think that motivates that group…It's okay to expect more out of them because they want to rise to that.

Instructional Decision Making. While all participants demonstrated high self-efficacy for writing lesson plans, that did not carry over into their confidence level for the differentiation of instructional practices once they entered the classroom. Allison described this as "I didn't get a differentiation game" prior to entering the classroom, explaining she had been "called out" by a co-teacher during her first year of teaching for not making activities and lessons accessible to all learners. Allison continued to explain "I think that since working with (*current special education co-teacher*) just differentiation in general has gotten a lot easier…understanding how to embed the differentiation across the board is easier."

Karyn shared a similar feeling of low efficacy for instructional decision making upon entering the classroom; however, as a second-year teacher she stated, "I feel like that has gotten a lot better for me this year…" This was also evidenced in Wendy's statements of

> …the hardest thing for me …was teaching on a level that they would understand because I'm given the 3rd grade standards and I'm a brand-new teacher with no curriculum…. It was hard for me to just adapt that to their level and group kids…

Michelle shared that "…this year I've been paying attention to certain ways of teaching that aren't getting the desired result. I feel that's something I've worked on this year and reflecting on my practices." Gwen commented, "…it's probably something obvious to others, but it wasn't to me was to do pre-tests." This instructional strategy was used by Gwen and her

co-teacher to make instructional decisions for students, allowing those who needed remediation to receive it and provide extension activities to those who were ready. This practice was echoed in decisions made by Wendy in her classroom for addressing high achievers in designing “math menus” which contained various extension activities students could choose to complete as the class worked through a unit. Tanya, Allison, Gwen, and Carla described having “early finishers” folders or digital activities which students understood to be available when they had completed given required assignments.

Allsion shared a difficulty with meeting the needs of high achieving and gifted students saying, “It’s a big struggle of mine in teaching—adapting to the gifted kids…” Tanya agreed that “It’s harder than with the lower ones.” During the individual interview, Carla shared, "...doing that extension piece for the gifted students is a challenge that I'm facing, but I think some of that isn't necessarily a challenge but rather a lack of knowledge." Michelle expressed her level of confidence in working with high achieving students as a definite weakness. She commented, “I don’t think one of my strengths is working with the highflyers. I found it really hard.” Carla shared, “That is one thing I will say I felt I did not get a lot of experience in college was working with gifted kids."

Many of the participants also shared that a difficulty they faced was matching the *best* instructional strategy or intervention with the identified student need. There were multiple factors attributed to this difficulty by the participants, such as an abundance of resources to filter through, a lack of knowledge for matching those resources to a specific need, and a lack of knowledge regarding the assessments used for data collection. Carla stated, “…I think that the data piece was one of the biggest things for me … that can get frustrating when you feel professionally—you observe a gap, but then you look at the data and it doesn’t line up.” Karyn

shared this sentiment and explained “I do get frustrated when I bring up a student *(during data talks)* and then they show me the data and why it doesn’t support a certain intervention or whatever, I can understand.” She also felt that “…doing some of our own screening helps because we get more familiar with the test and with the components…being familiar with what we give is helping to know who needs it and who doesn’t.”

Perceptions and Knowledge of Exceptional Children

Carla, Sandy, Karyn, Emery, Gwen, Tanya, and Susan held simultaneous certifications in early childhood education and special education. In accordance with this duality of certification, participants demonstrated an understanding of the multiple possible exceptionalities exhibited by children in a general education setting. Tanya shared her understanding of the 2e child as

> ...a student that has a specific learning disability or learning differences and then also who has some other area of strength whether it's creativity or whether it's a student who really struggles but you know is a Gifted Kid.

Allison and Karyn had direct experiences since entering the classroom with 2e students. One participant stated that prior to entering her teacher preparation program, she had never heard the term *twice exceptional*.

Allsion described her experiences with a specific 2e student as simultaneously wonderful and frustrating. She also shared that this student “had a lot of passions” and wanted to talk about those passions often; however, they had difficulty expressing themself and focusing on academic areas not of interest. While Emery was clear that prior to entering the classroom she had little experience with 2e students, she found the concept fascinating. She shared that she was currently working on a master’s degree and recently completed a paper investigating the prevalence of students who have been overlooked for their giftedness within the general education classroom.

Emery explained her frustration with the current state of the system as she has experienced it stating, “we seem to prioritize behavior issues over academics.” She went on to say, “I wish we helped those twice-exceptional babies because I think they’re overlooked …they’re bored and then because they’re bored there are behaviors.” It was clear in her fervency during the interview that Emery felt passionate about the needs of exceptional students and that they “need room for creativity.” She described one project-based learning activity in which students were given parameters for building any object of their choice from cans. One student requested to build a guitar and was given permission to do so. According to Emery’s descriptions, “She made a fully functional guitar out of cans and string. It was amazing!” Despite her own admissions that addressing the needs of the higher achieving students is an area of weakness, Allison expressed an understanding that “those gifted kiddos need more supports than what we’re giving them in the classroom.”

Outlier Data and Findings

An outlier in qualitative data is described as an unexpected theme or finding that represents a variation in the participants being studied (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). The research collected for this study explores the lived experiences of early career elementary teachers for meeting the needs of the 2e student within the general education classroom setting. Outlier data described in the following section emerged as unexpected information from seven of the participants.

Classroom Management

All participants reported moderate to high self-efficacy in their self-report for questions related to setting routines and expectations in the classroom. However, as the participants engaged in both the individual and focus group interviews contradictory data was revealed for

seven of the participants. Factors that emerged as having a negative impact were the dichotomy of addressing student needs, behavior management, the pressures of academic rigor in a general education classroom, and a lack of experiences with being fully responsible for setting up and holding students accountable for following routines. Carla shared,

> I feel I wasn't prepared to manage a classroom, or more manage the different behaviors that come from having a diverse group of students. It's one thing to have good behavior management or classroom management, but it's another thing to have good behavior and classroom management with such a variety of different needs. It doesn't matter whether those needs are from a low or a high or an average student. When you put it all together in one pot, everybody needs something different, and learning to manage all of that—all of those different needs and differentiate for all the students rather than just some of the lower students … it's a lot.

Karyn expressed similar concerns with her abilities to manage her classroom effectively. She stated, "…classroom management was also something I didn't feel as prepared for… we didn't focus on that a lot." During the individual interview, Karyn recounted an experience of receiving feedback from administration after a classroom observation in which she had continued to teach although several students were not engaged within the lesson. While she noted that this was upsetting because she admittedly had not noticed the disengaged students, she felt the feedback was provided in a way that allowed her to grow and develop better management skills.

> I feel with classroom management I've grown. I've definitely figured out that consistency is important. I realized that sometimes I wasn't always consistent with expectations and things like that… that did not help,

> especially with those students who struggled. So I think this year I've learned to be more consistent and follow through. That's very important.

Participants expressed the importance of building relationships with students as a measure of classroom management. Meeting the social and emotional needs of students as a way of building relationships with students emerged as a component. During her individual interview, Wendy shared, "…a strength I've noticed is that I am able to meet those kids where they are, maybe not academically but personally and socially and then working on those skills with them." Allison's statements reflected shared experiences with the importance of building relationships with students. She said, "I always knew I could talk to kids but I feel when a kid likes you they trust you, they respect what you have to say a lot more."

Research Question Responses

This transcendental phenomenological study was designed to explore the lived experiences of early career elementary school teachers through their lived experiences. Throughout this study, I explored the lived experiences of elementary school teachers within the first five years of their career. These lived experiences were investigated to identify factors impacting participants' self-efficacy development toward meeting the needs of the 2e student within the general education setting. In this section, direct answers to the central research question and sub-questions are provided.

Central Research Question

How do the lived experiences of elementary school teachers within the first five years of service contribute to their self-efficacy when making instructional decisions to support the needs of the twice-exceptional student in the general education classroom setting? Participants discussed their shared experiences with meeting the extant needs of twice-exceptional students

within the general education setting. Each participant relayed the events that elicited their self-efficacy for making instructional decisions, as well as factors that contributed to their lack of experience. Many participants completed dual certification programs which led to licensure in both early childhood education and special education. While all participants described a theoretical understanding of the 2e student, most admitted to having almost no experiences with this population prior to entering the classroom. Gwen said in her interview that prior to entering her program, "I had never even heard the term twice-exceptional." Further still, only Allison and Karyn had direct experiences with 2e students since entering the classroom. While Sandy, Wendy, Emery, and Gwen expressed confidence in identifying and addressing the needs of the higher achieving students, they admitted that remediating for those who were lower performing was difficult. Allison, Melissa, Tanya, and Susan expressed their experiences had not prepared them to appropriately address the needs of students at the higher end of the achievement spectrum. Allison described this during her interview as "…the gifted kids honestly scared me."

Sub-Question One

How do elementary school teachers within the first five years of service describe the impact of their teacher preparation on their ability to recognize and support the complex needs of the twice-exceptional student? Practicum experiences developed as a theme addressing sub-question one with sub-themes of broad but superficial experiences and lesson planning. Participants discussed their shared experiences related to education courses and student teaching placements, which resulted in the themes and subthemes. Many participants shared the experiences that the various placements in special education settings during their respective programs was beneficial for viewing a student as a whole child and not a label or profile. Participants agreed that they felt prepared to write detailed, extensive lesson plans. Most

participants also agreed that their respective programs prepared them for identifying and addressing the needs of the low performing student. Carla described her experiences as "…I felt most prepared to differentiate for my low learners …I feel like I have a strength for those instructional strategies." This same self-efficacy did not transfer to the participants' abilities to address the competing and often contradictory needs of students along with the academic rigor of a general education classroom. Emery explained that she was not prepared to enter the classroom "…where grades and academics are so heavy." Other participants discussed that their programs did not provide many opportunities to work with gifted students. Multiple participants' described their experiences during pre-field training as "worst-case scenario" with little attention provided to strategies addressing possible 2e students or those simply struggling in a specific area but not all academic areas.

Sub-Question Two

How do elementary school teachers within the first five years of service describe the impact of in-service training and support on their ability to recognize and support the complex needs of the twice-exceptional student? In-field experiences developed as a theme with sub-themes of professional development, instructional decision making, and perceptions and knowledge of exceptional children as answers to sub-question two. Participants discussed their experiences with support and in-field training which they have received since entering the classroom. All participants shared the importance of participating in PLCs with their respective grade levels. These opportunities were credited with providing a deeper understanding of the MTSS process, as well as curriculum requirements and standards which must be addressed in the classroom. Participants also agreed that district level curriculum trainings had been beneficial for gaining an understanding of what they were required to teach. Emery shared, "…I feel pretty

confident in going from the standard and the success criteria to really planning a unit." These shared experiences were felt by participants to be important factors for their overall development of self-efficacy as a teacher. However, that was not the case with specifics related to the twice-exceptional student. Tonya stated, "Since being in the classroom I feel I haven't really received a lot of direct instruction…" related to the 2e population.

Sub-Question Three

How do elementary school teachers within the first five years of service perceive the impact of lived experiences within the general education classroom on their ability to recognize and support the complex needs of the twice-exceptional student? The overarching themes and subthemes which emerged provided answers to sub-question three. Participants discussed all lived experiences as factors which have impacted their ability to support the 2e student in a general education setting. Overwhelmingly participants shared their lack of knowledge and experiences with students who were identified as 2e. Only Karyn and Allison reported prior experiences with 2e students. Tanya, Carla, Emery, and Melissa described students in their classrooms who may meet criteria of the 2e student, such as having a vastly divergent profile of strengths and weaknesses. However, according to the participants, none of these students held an official categorization of 2e.

Many participants discussed a feeling of being prepared to adequately meet either the low performing or high achieving needs of the exceptional children in the general education setting. For Wendy, Sandy, and Emery, this revealed itself in being most able to address the needs of the more advanced students in their classroom. Wendy attributed her confidence for working with these students to lived experiences from her time serving as a substitute teacher in a gifted and

talented classroom prior to completing her preparation program. She also shared her success since entering the classroom with strategies such as

> …using random grouping, thinking spaces, and teaching the students to communicate with kids who might not be on their same level…I've seen so much growth with the gifted students having patience and being able to teach their classmates and show them new ways to problem solve.

Tanya discussed her success when working with a gifted student who was not working at their perceived potential. Susan, Gwen, and Carla shared that their self-efficacy lay in their abilities to identify and adequately meet the needs of the low-performing student.

Summary

This chapter outlined the results from data collected from individual interviews, a self-assessment survey, and focus-group interviews. Participants described their lived experiences as they develop self-efficacy for meeting the needs of 2e students in the general education elementary classroom setting. Two major themes and five subthemes were uncovered through analysis of the collected data. The first major theme identified was practicum field experiences, which included participant's lived experiences while completing their teacher preparation program. The second theme identified was in-field experiences which included the lived experiences of each participant since entering the classroom as a general education teacher.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of general education teachers who are in the first five years of service impacting their self-efficacy for making instructional decisions to address needs of the twice-exceptional child in a large suburban school system in northeast Georgia. This study examined early career elementary school teacher's self-efficacy for meeting the needs of the 2e student through individual interviews, a focus group interview, and a self-assessment of self-efficacy. Using Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological approach, I analyzed the collected data to uncover themes derived from codes which resonated from the information gathered. Corroboration of the findings of this study is provided through literature evidence from both empirical research and theoretical frameworks. Chapter Five clarifies the study's findings by providing detailed explanations of the interpretations. The discussion section of this chapter is constructed of five subsections, including (a) Interpretation of Findings; (b) Implications for Policy and Practice; (c) Theoretical and Empirical Implications; (d) Limitations and Delimitations; (e) Recommendations for Future Research. Finally, chapter five concludes with a summary of the interpretation of the study findings.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal the lived experiences of ten early career elementary school teachers who share the same phenomenon of factors impacting the development of self-efficacy for meeting the needs of 2e students in a general education classroom. This section discusses the study's thematic findings viewed through the lens of the conceptual framework. Interpretations of the findings are discussed first, followed by the implications for policy and

procedure. Theoretical and empirical implications and limitations and delimitations are then discussed. This section concludes with recommendations for future research.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The first major theme identified was practicum experiences. Two subthemes were identified for the first major theme that included (a) lesson planning and (b) broad but superficial field experiences. This theme directly related to sub-question one, as it revealed teacher experiences during their preparation program for recognizing and supporting the needs of the 2e student in a general education setting. Collectively, each of the ten participants shared they felt most prepared for writing extensive, detailed lesson plans upon completing their program and entering the classroom. In addition, the participants discussed their experiences with various classroom settings, including self-contained and co-taught classrooms, during their practicum placements. While participants overall expressed an appreciation for the wide variety of experiences during their practicum, they also shared that there was little to no time allowed for the development of a deeper understanding of any one classroom setting.

The theme of in-field experiences emerged as the second major theme of this study. Three subthemes were identified for the second major theme that included (a) professional development, (b) instructional decision making, and (c) perceptions of knowledge of exceptional children. This theme and sub-themes directly relate to sub-questions two and three, as it revealed teacher experiences since entering the classroom for recognizing and supporting the needs of the 2e student. Participants discussed their shared experiences, including challenges and areas of perceived success with meeting the needs of all students. The themes and subthemes expound upon the lived experiences of early career elementary school teachers' development of self-efficacy toward meeting the needs of the 2e student.

Interpretation of Findings

This section discusses the interpretation of the findings of this study. One central question and three sub-questions were used to guide the research. The qualitative data collected through individual interviews, qualitative questionnaire, and focus group interviews went through a thorough thematic analysis manually and with Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software. Through open coding, the analysis extracted a total of two themes and five sub-themes were identified. The two major themes found were (a) practicum experiences and (b) in-field experiences. The following interpretation results from considerations given to the data collected, research questions, and the purpose of the study.

A Need for Effective and Targeted Training

A thorough synthesis of the data from this study revealed that early career elementary general education teachers shared a common lack of effective and targeted training specific to meeting the needs of the 2e student. Regardless of their respect pre-service program, participants in this study reported a lack of training specific to the needs of the 2e or students with gifts and talents (SWGT) students. This aligns with the research of Bildiren (2018) which posited that primary school teachers across the country are not adequately prepared to identify and address the 2e student's needs in the general education classroom due to a lack of training during pre-service education programs and the absence of professional development for in-field teachers. Tracy stated, "I can't remember getting any actual training for those type students since I've been in the classroom."

To be effective, teachers must receive appropriate training both during pre-service programs, including active experiences in practicum, and through in-field professional development courses specific to the unique academic, social, and emotional development of the

2e student. By providing professional development opportunities which include evidence-based theory and practices related to this student population, teachers will be better prepared when faced with these complex students in the general education classroom. In addition, expanding the courses required during teacher preparation programs will provide experiences that will improve the self-efficacy of future teachers. This is supported by the extant research which suggests that without proper training and development of understanding of the characteristics of the 2e student, educators are more likely to focus on the area of deficit rather than the strengths (Dimitriadis et al., 2021; Metelski, 2022; Robinson & Dietz, 2022; Weber & Mofield, 2023).

Teacher Self-Efficacy May Effect Student Engagement and Outcomes.

An interesting finding of this study involved participants report of low self-efficacy for their ability to promote the learning of those students who may be 2e within the general education classroom. Through the individual interviews and focus groups, this was apparent in the recounted experiences for all ten participants and aligned with the data of the self-assessment questionnaire. This is an important result of this study, as the general education teacher's ability to create and maintain a positive learning environment is purported to be an essential key to the success of the 2e student (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021; Lee et al., 2022). Without professional knowledge and high self-efficacy to implement effective strategies, the asynchronous development of the 2e student may be misunderstood, resulting in a misalignment of interventions and needs.

McAllister (2021) suggested that the general education teacher must have a foundational knowledge and understanding of the unique presentation of characteristics of the 2e student, otherwise they will be unable to recognize and then address their needs whether in an area of strength or weakness. The extant literature also showed that without flexible thinking and

understanding from the general education, the 2e student runs the risk of a singular label for the area of deficit, such as ADHD, due to behaviors (Gierczyk & Hornby, 2021; Lee et al., 2022; McAllister, 2021). Metelski (2022) suggested that the 2e student requires the general education teacher to design and implement learning experiences that simultaneously challenge the area of strength and support the area of deficit. Collectively, participants of this study expressed high self-efficacy for designing detailed lesson plans; however, participants, such as Karyn and Carla, expressed frustration and self-doubt when faced with implementation of those plans. Both Karyn and Carla discussed how they experienced self-reflection that initially found them questioning their practices and abilities to implement effective strategies to meet the needs of the students in their respective classrooms.

Efficacious Classroom Experiences Take Time to Develop.

A major underlying finding which emerged during this study was that efficacious classroom experiences take time to develop. An individual's self-efficacy is most malleable at its earliest stages (Bandura, 1962; Johnson, 2010). For early career educators, experiences during pre-service practicum placements, as well as throughout the induction year, are vitally important to the development of self-efficacy. Participants from this study described how their perceived self-efficacy continued to grow as they faced challenges and found successes within the classroom. Gwen spoke about her experiences with handling difficult behaviors in the classroom and how important it was for her self-efficacy to trust her ability to handle the situation. She described how with each successful outcome her confidence level grew and that she felt more equipped to implement strategies with subsequent challenges.

Other participants, like Susan, Wendy, and Allison, described shared experiences for meeting the needs of academically challenging students. These scenarios ranged from those

students who exhibited an area of deficit to the advanced student who required extension in specific areas. Over time and with more experiences with challenges, the participants detailed how their self-efficacy grew so that they perceived themselves to be better prepared for similar situations in the future. This is supported by the works of the researchers Metelski (2021) and Webert and Mofield (2023) who suggested that teachers must have a clear and deep understanding of the content they are teaching to develop differentiated learning opportunities which comes with experience and time in the classroom.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings from this study and the current literature offer various entities implications for change of policy and practice. Policy implications include policies to ensure educators receive proper time, training, and support to develop a better understanding of the general education classroom prior to leaving their program and during the induction year of service. These implications may improve the practices of elementary school teachers as they leave their preparation programs and enter the general education classroom. Practice implications mirror those of the policy implications in a focus on improved training opportunities and support for educators in the first five years of their career.

Implications for Policy

All participants of this study described positive experiences stemming from the variety of practicum classroom placements. Seven participants held certifications for both early childhood education and special education. These participants shared their experiences related to placements in a wide range of classrooms, including self-contained specialized instruction and co-taught general education classes. Regardless of this fact, all participants described similar

confidence levels upon entering the field and meeting the various and often divergent needs of the students in their classroom.

Most participants voiced a lack of experiences with SWGT and 2e students during their practicum placements. By updating current university standards and curriculum to include courses which provide practical strategies for identifying strengths and weaknesses of 2e students, pre-service educators have a better prospect for recognizing and then meeting the needs of these students upon entering the classroom. The extant literature supports this policy implication by suggesting that teachers understand the characteristics of, are prepared to differentiate instruction and curriculum, and can provide accommodations for both the 2e and SWGT child (Cross & Cross, 2017, Foley-Nicpon et al., 2013; Metelski, 2021; Subotnik et al., 2021).

Policies from the school district in which this study was conducted require teachers to attend a series of trainings throughout the school year. These professional development opportunities are most often related to content and curriculum being implemented across the district. This policy holds true for many school districts across the state of Georgia. Within the state of Georgia, educators are required to acquire a specific number of professional development credit hours over each five-year period to renew their licensure. Implementing a policy in which a given number of hours are dedicated to developing the understanding and needed skills related to the SWGT and the 2e students would ensure teachers are better prepared for meeting the needs of these students in the general education classroom. In addition, policies are needed to implement professional development, providing collaboration between general education teachers and talented and gifted (TAG) program teachers. By providing these professional development opportunities, we may better prepare teachers to meet the needs of 2e and SWGT

students and also develop collaborative teaching skills and instructional practices in the general education classroom setting.

Implications for Practice

Colleges and Universities

All participants recounted the positive impact of field experiences, both in-field and during their practicum, for developing their self-efficacy for making instructional decisions for meeting the needs of students in their general education classrooms. Most traditional pre-service programs require a semester of classroom internship often referred to as *student teaching*. Prior to this semester, teacher candidates may have placements in multiple classroom settings for short periods of one to three weeks. During these placements, pre-service teachers observe but do not have an active role within the classroom.

To provide mastery experiences for pre-service teacher candidates, colleges and universities with teacher preparation programs should implement a practice which increases the amount of time required for student teaching. Rather than only spending the final semester in this role of intern teacher where they are provided further opportunities for reflection and feedback or social persuasion from mentor teachers and professors. These experiences are purported throughout the literature and supported through the findings of this study as a vital component for improving a teacher's self-efficacy. Providing additional opportunities in this pre-field setting would also allow the prospective educator ample time to gain a deeper understanding of the general education setting. The findings of this study have shown that self-efficacy takes time to develop. Given the provision of additional time in an environment of support from professors and in-field mentor teachers, prospective educators will be better prepared to enter the classroom at the completion of their program.

Local School Systems

A further implication of practice from this study is for building administration and school districts regarding professional development opportunities for newly in-field educators. These professional development offerings should provide a focus for understanding the characteristics of the 2e and SWGT student. In addition, training opportunities which provide various research based instructional strategies for meeting the needs of the 2e and SWGT students should be provided.

At the school district level, stakeholders responsible for designing the overall fiscal year budget for disbursement of public funds should consider the long-term benefits of allocating those funds toward paying for targeted and specific professional development related to 2e and SWGT students. Provision of access to state or district-led professional development courses, college courses, and conferences or webinars could encourage teachers to engage in activities, which will increase their self-efficacy and may lead to more positive student outcomes.

Building Administration

Individual school administration should explore options for tapping into the skill, knowledge, and expertise of in-field teachers within their buildings to lead professional development for the early career educator. There is a wealth of current in-field teachers who would be able to provide years of experience with the SWGT student and those who are possibly 2e. Creating professional learning communities led by experienced in-field teachers such as the TAG teacher and special education teachers would provide an ideal mixture of extension strategies and avenues along with supportive instructional strategies to meet the often complex and divergent needs of the 2e student. Professional development of this type could increase

teacher self-efficacy and preparedness for more effectively meeting the needs of these exceptional students in a general education classroom.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

The findings of this study will be discussed in this section and examined, alongside the theoretical and empirical framework of this study, which is outlined in chapter two. The lived experiences of the participants supported the extant literature mentioned in the literature review. Participants' lived experiences further supported self-efficacy theory in that as they perceived their abilities to address the needs of students in their classrooms increased their self-efficacy increased.

Theoretical Implications

Bandura's (2006) social cognitive theory provided the theoretical framework for this study. This theory suggested people actively contribute to their life circumstances. According to Bandura (2001), human beings are proactive and self-reflective individuals who act intentionally upon their beliefs. An individual's self-efficacy plays an important role in the choices they make, what they do, and how well they do it. There are four sources of self-efficacy according to Bandura (2001), which are mastery experiences, affective states, vicarious experiences, and social persuasion. Through various classroom and professional situations teachers experience each of these four sources which contribute to the development of early career educator's self-efficacy.

Participants articulated experiences supporting Bandura's source of mastery experiences through positive student outcomes which increased their self-efficacy. Wendy shared how explicitly teaching SWGT students in her classroom to collaborate with students who may have an exceptionality, such as a learning disability, had improved her self-efficacy for meeting those

student's needs. Overall participants of the study relayed how their self-efficacy for meeting student's needs had increased over the time since they entered the classroom.

Participants shared experiences of self-reflection and the measures they took to proactively address their lack of knowledge or preparedness to meet the needs of exceptional students in their classroom, supporting the theory for affective states. Carla reflected on moments when she was unsure and questioning her abilities to meet so many divergent needs in one classroom; however, after self-reflection, she was able to refocus her intentions and make note of student successes, thereby strengthening her self-efficacy. Gwen shared how reminding herself of her abilities and trusting herself to be successful in challenging situations helped to increase her self-efficacy both in the classroom and professionally.

Participants discussed their vicarious experiences through both their years in-field and during their practicum placements. All participants shared various professional development experiences in which they had opportunities to observe teaching strategies, teaching skills, and ask questions of more experienced in-field teachers in various classroom settings. These shared experiences were also discussed across all participants shared practicum placements. Each participant spoke positively of their practicum experiences for the variety of classroom settings they were able to observe. Emily shared that her self-efficacy for a specific teaching strategy had been shaped by the opportunity to observe and then question a seasoned classroom teacher after implementing the strategy. Gwen relayed that she felt her self-efficacy for addressing challenging behaviors within her classroom had improved due to her observations within a specialized instruction Emotional-Behavioral Disorder (EBD) classroom.

All participants discussed the importance of social persuasion as a source of self-efficacy. Participants shared the positive outcomes they had experienced through opportunities to

collaborate with teachers on their same grade level teams, as well as vertically at district collaborations. Karyn also shared how her classroom management skills had improved after receiving constructive feedback following an administrator's observation. Emery articulated how important it was for building her self-efficacy to receive positive reinforcements, even when facing a challenging situation, from administrators. In addition, all participants expressed the importance of having a mentor teacher to develop their self-efficacy.

Empirical Implications

Previous research focused mostly on specific domains of self-efficacy development for teachers (Cho et al., 2020). This study described the lived experiences of early career elementary school teachers' self-efficacy for teaching the 2e student in the general education classroom. Findings of this study supported the work of Asirit et al. (2022), which posited teacher self-efficacy increases as experience and practice are attained over time. The results of the current study are consistent with a prior longitudinal study by Holzberger et al. (2013), which found causal effects of self-efficacy on the quality of instructional practices. Additionally, the finding of this study provides support for the suggestions made by Woolfolk Hoy and Burke (2005) that the self-efficacy of teachers is impacted by the experiences gained from practicum placements and the support given during the early years of in-field service.

In this study, it is noted that only two teachers had direct experience with students who were identified as 2e. While all participants in this study revealed their fascination with the concept of the 2e student, they did not express a feeling of preparedness for identifying and addressing this student population's needs. This aligns with the extant literature which suggests that the 2e student is possibly the most overlooked and underserved population within schools (Bannister-Tyrell et al., 2018; Foley-Nicpon et al., 2011; Mills & Brody, 1999). The information gained

from this study can help future researchers develop programs and support resources to further develop the self-efficacy of early career educators relating to the exceptional circumstances presented by the 2e student in the general education classroom.

Limitations

As is true with any research, it is essential to acknowledge and consider the study's limitations. In the following section there are several limitations for consideration related to this study's qualitative research design for future practice and research. According to Horga et al. (2014), limitations are defined as weaknesses or pitfalls that researchers identify and disclose to the audience of the study. Creswell and Poth (2018) defined limitations as potential problems that may arise from the chosen research design or method that may impact outcomes of the study. There are potential weaknesses within a study; however, it must be noted that certain limitations are out of the researcher's control due to the influence of what may be considered typical human behavior. Three primary limitations were identified and are discussed in the following subsections: 1) sample method and size, 2) gender and cultural identity, and 3) participant response biases.

Criterion sampling was used for this study instead of random sampling, limiting its results only to be suggestive and rejecting its ability to be generalized to the entire population of general education elementary teachers across the state of Georgia. In addition, the sample size in the study was not large enough to generalize the findings to all early career elementary school teachers. Given the sample size of only ten general education early career elementary school teachers, the findings in the study on early career elementary teachers' self-efficacy toward meeting the needs of the 2e student in a general education classroom setting do not accurately reflect all early career elementary teachers in the State of Georgia. A second limitation of this

study is that all participants identified as female, limiting the generalization of the study's findings to only those who also identify as female. When data was collected for this study, there were no early career elementary school teachers at either of the study sites who identified as male. In addition, there is a limitation culturally as all participants of the study were Caucasian.

This study is also limited by the responses given by participants. Some of the participants were former and current co-workers for the researcher, as they taught at the same school, as well as a different school in the same district. Therefore, it is possible that some of the participants in the study could have replied to the open-ended questions in a way they thought would be pleasing to the researcher instead of being fully truthful. As a limitation it must be noted that it is possible the early career teachers in this study may not have shared honestly concerning their perceived self-efficacy towards meeting the needs of the 2e student during the individual or focus group interviews, thus skewing the data. A comfortable rapport with participants was constructed and the use of open-ended questions was implemented during individual and focus group interviews to elicit as much honest information as possible.

Delimitations

Delimitations in research are defined as the boundaries or intentional parameters set by the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure that research produces valuable results that are manageable and relevant and may be utilized in practical situations, it is imperative to establish boundaries and delimit the scope of the study. The following delimitations were presented in this study: research methodology, participant criteria, and geographical location.

This study employed a transcendental phenomenological methodology designed to fill the gap in the literature by describing the lived experiences and perceptions of factors impacting the self-efficacy toward meeting the needs of the 2e student in a general education classroom for the

early career elementary school teacher. Transcendental phenomenology was utilized because of a desire to extract the voice of participants and bracket out any bias of the researcher. Each of the participants in this study also had experiences with the phenomenon, which is required for phenomenological research (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). The delimitations also included limiting the study to elementary grades (K – 5) using criterion sampling. To be considered for this study, all participants must have met the following criteria: (a) hold a current, renewable teaching certificate in the state of Georgia, (b) currently teach as a general education classroom in a public elementary school, and (c) have one to five years of teaching experience. These delimiting factors were needed to ensure that the shared experiences of the study population (early career elementary general education teachers) being investigated reflected an accurate portrait of their self-efficacy toward meeting the needs of the 2e child in the general education classroom.

Participants of this study taught at two different elementary schools in a large suburban public school district in northeast Georgia. This geographic delimitation was derived to ensure that the researcher had access and convenience to the study population sample. The population targeted for this study was limited to early career general education teachers in northeast Georgia public schools only. This geographical location was chosen to fill the gap in the literature on the self-efficacy of early career general education teachers for meeting the needs of the 2e student.

Recommendations for Future Research

The proposed recommendations are provided to advance future research concerning the self-efficacy of early career teachers for meeting the needs of the 2e student. Several areas upon which to build future research are provided within the limitations of this study. This study recruited participants within the elementary school setting. Further expansion of study may include recruiting participants from secondary school environments and from the private school

sector may provide beneficial information. Expansion of this study to include a wider range of diversity of gender and ethnicity would provide vital generalization of information. As this study focused on a large suburban school district in northeast Georgia, conducting research in other regions and district types across the state and country would provide a more thorough picture of self-efficacy development for early career educators.

Further recommendations for future research is to change the qualitative method used to explore self-efficacy development. Conducting a longitudinal study in which the researcher followed a teacher candidate from pre-service through their induction year of service could provide invaluable information over a period of time. This type of study could provide an exploration of the individual's experiences throughout a given time period, leading to a rich detailing about self-efficacy development. A case study methodology could also provide important information regarding an in-service teacher's development of self-efficacy and experiences in the general education classroom.

Conclusion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of early career elementary school teachers' self-efficacy for meeting the needs of the 2e student in a general education classroom. Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory (SCT) provided a theoretical basis for this study. Within SCT resides the construct of self-efficacy which explains an individual's belief that they can complete a task with a successful outcome regardless of their actual abilities. Self-efficacy was the foundational construct for which the central research question and sub-questions were established and guided this study.

Ten participants with one to five-years' experience in a general education elementary classroom contributed to the study. Analysis of data collected through individual interviews,

qualitative survey, and focus group interviews revealed two major themes. Following further analysis, three thematic themes emerged. The thematic findings were used to develop policy and practical implications, theoretical and empirical implications, and implications for further research.

This study revealed teacher self-efficacy impacts student outcomes and that adequately prepared teachers may have more student engagement and positive student outcomes. This study also suggests that self-efficacy within the classroom develops over time. Teacher candidates need more time with classroom experiences to develop effective instructional strategies and understanding for the 2e student to adequately meet the complex needs of these students. Finally, this study revealed a need for more strategic and targeted professional development for in-field teachers related to the SWGT and 2e student.

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Appendix A:

SCHOOL SYSTEM STUDY PERMISSION

[redacted]

A Safe, Connected, and Thriving Community for All

[redacted]

August 21, 2023

Ms. Danielle Cox
[redacted]

Re: Research Study Request: "*A phenomenological study of the lived experiences impacting early career elementary teachers' self-efficacy toward meeting the needs of the twice-exceptional student in the general education classroom*"

Dear Danielle:

This letter provides written approval for your research study. As stated in your documentation, participation should be considered voluntary and no students, staff members or schools will be identified in your report of the study and is limited to students at Coal Mountain and Silver City Elementary schools. Your study sounds very interesting, and I applaud your efforts of continued education.

If I can provide additional information to support this approval, please be encouraged to contact me.

Sincerely,
[redacted]

/vlh

[redacted] Superintendent for Teaching & Learning

Appendix B:
IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 29, 2023

Danielle Cox
[redacted]

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-153 A phenomenological study of the lived experiences impacting early career elementary teachers' self-efficacy toward meeting the needs of the twice-exceptional student in the general education classroom.

Dear Danielle Cox,[redacted]

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

For a PDF of your exemption letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

Appendix C:

Site Permission Letter

Permission Request

October 6, 2023

[redacted]

Dear [redacted],

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is A Phenomenological Study of the Lived Experiences Impacting Early Career Elementary Teachers' self-efficacy toward meeting the needs of the twice-exceptional student in the general education classroom. The purpose of my research is to describe general education teachers' lived experiences impacting their self-efficacy for making instructional decisions to address the complex needs of the twice-exceptional student in the general education classroom.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at [redacted] School and contact members of your staff to invite them to participate in my research study. Participants will be asked to complete the attached survey. Participants will also be asked to participate in an audio- and video-recorded interview and focus group. Participants will be given the option to participate virtually or in person. 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. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Danielle Cox
Doctoral Candidate at Liberty University
School of Education

October 6, 2023

[redacted]

Dear [redacted],

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is A Phenomenological Study of the Lived Experiences Impacting Early Career Elementary Teachers' self-efficacy toward meeting the needs of the twice-exceptional student in the general education classroom. The purpose of my research is to describe general education teachers' lived experiences impacting their self-efficacy for making instructional decisions to address the complex needs of the twice-exceptional student in the general education classroom.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at [redacted] School and contact members of your staff to invite them to participate in my research study. Participants will be asked to complete the attached survey. Participants will also be asked to participate in an audio- and video-recorded interview and focus group. Participants will be given the option to participate virtually or in person. 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. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Danielle Cox
Doctoral Candidate at Liberty University
School of Education

Appendix D
Recruitment Letter

Dear Potential Participant,

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to describe the lived experiences of general education teachers which they perceive to have an impact on the development of self-efficacy for making instructional decisions to address the needs of the twice-exceptional student, and I am writing to invite you to join my study.

Participants must hold a current, renewable or provisional, teaching certificate, be within one to five years of service, and work as an elementary classroom teacher in the general education setting. Participants will be asked to complete a brief online survey and self-efficacy inventory, take part in a one-on-one, audio/video-recorded interview (in person or virtually), and take part in an audio/video recorded focus group. Participation in the focus group will be offered both virtually and in a face-to-face format. As a participant, you will be free to choose the format which is most convenient. It should take approximately two hours total combined time to complete the procedures listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

To participate, please click here to complete the online survey. If you meet my participant criteria, I will contact you to schedule an interview. A consent document will be emailed to you if you meet the study criteria. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,
Danielle Cox
Doctoral Candidate at Liberty University
[redacted]

Appendix E:

Consent Letter

Consent

Title of the Project: A Phenomenological Study of the Lived Experiences Impacting Early Career Elementary Teachers' Self-Efficacy Toward Meeting the needs of the Twice-Exceptional Student in the General Education Classroom
Principal Investigator: Danielle Cox, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a general education classroom teacher, hold a renewable or provisional certificate for education, and be within one to five years of service as an elementary school teacher. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to describe the lived experiences of general education teachers which impact the development of self-efficacy for making instructional decisions to address the complex needs of twice-exceptional students in the general education classroom. The results of this study have the potential to be used in improving professional development for in-field teachers as well as to improve pre-service programming to best prepare educators for entering the classroom in the future.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. Participants will complete a self-efficacy inventory related to meeting the needs of the twice-exceptional student within a general education setting. Estimated time to complete this inventory is 10 minutes.
2. Participants will be asked to engage in a one-on-one interview with the researcher which will be audio and video recorded. The interview will be offered as an in person or virtual format from which you are free to choose your preference. This interview session is estimated to take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. All documents and recordings will be password protected and stored for three years following the end of the study, and then destroyed.
3. Finally, focus group will be conducted in which participants will review transcripts from their personal interview session and engage in group discussion related to the study topic. Focus groups will be offered in a virtual and/or face-to-face format from which you will

be free to choose the best fit for your schedule and comfort level. The focus group session is estimated to take approximately 45 minutes and will be audio/video recorded. All documents and recordings will be stored in password protected files and stored for three years following the end of the study, and then destroyed.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include the potential for improvement in pre-service education programming to best prepare teachers upon entering the field to recognize and address the complexities of the twice-exceptional student within a general education classroom. The information gained through this study also has the potential to be used for design of professional development opportunities to increase the implementation of best practices for in-field educators to identify and address the complex needs of the twice-exceptional student within the general education classroom.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports 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.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Data collected from you may be used in future research studies and/or shared with other researchers. If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed beforehand.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a locked file cabinet. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. The researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or [redacted] School Systems. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address or phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Danielle Cox. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [redacted] or [redacted]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, [redacted] at [redacted]

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

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 IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

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

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

Appendix F:

Individual Interview Questions

1. Could you please tell me about yourself and your current position? (Icebreaker)
2. Could you please describe your teacher preparation program and/or any training you have received since entering the classroom related to teaching exceptional children? (All research questions)
3. Please describe your perceptions or knowledge of the twice-exceptional student. (All research questions)
4. What did you feel most prepared for when entering the classroom as a new teacher and at this point in your career? (CRQ & SQ1& SQ3)
5. Self-efficacy is an individual's belief that they have the ability to perform an action that will result in a desired outcome. What does self-efficacy mean to you as a teacher? How do you feel self-efficacy impacts your instructional decision-making processes? (CRQ, SQ1, & SQ3)
6. What do you believe are your strengths as a teacher of exceptional students? What are your challenges? (CRQ & SQ2)
7. Thinking back about your observations of other teachers when teaching exceptional students who may be 2e, what has influenced your development as a teacher of these students? (CRQ & SQ2)
8. In regard to personal feedback you have received related to your instructional practices, what stands out to you as particularly impactful or important? (CRQ & SQ2)

Appendix G

Screening Survey Questions

1. First Name
2. Last Name
3. Describe the current stage of your educational career (i.e.. years of service).
4. Do you work in an Elementary school? Yes/No
5. Do you have a renewable or provisional certificate for education?
6. Are you a teacher in a general classroom setting? Yes/No
7. Describe the level of your degree (i.e. bachelors.).
8. In what area(s) of education is your degree?
9. Do you hold any additional endorsements (i.e. reading, gifted, ESOL, etc.)

Appendix H

Focus Group Questions

1. How do you feel when you think about teaching students with disabilities? (CRQ & SQ2)
2. How do feel about your ability to manage/resolve issues related to gifted students who are performing below their perceived abilities? (CRQ & SQ2)
3. What factors do you believe have contributed to those feelings? (CRQ & SQ2)
4. Describe any past experiences that influenced your ability to make instructional decisions to support gifted students' academic needs. (CRQ, SQ1, & SQ2)
5. Describe any past experiences that influenced your ability to make instructional decisions to support struggling or special education students' academic needs. (CRQ, SQ1, & SQ2)

Appendix I

Coding

Code			**Comment**
○ Engagement			
Engagement	○ Engagement		
Engagement	○ Engaging teaching style		
Engagement	○ Student Engagement		
○ Importance of Mentors			
Importance of Mentors	○ Mentor Teacher Importance		6/19/2024 10:48:25 AM, merged with phenomenal mentor teachers 6/19/2024 10:49:20 AM, merged with Positive Mentors
Importance of Mentors	○ very good mentor teachers,		
○ Instructional Practices			
Instructional Practices	○ Differentiation (2)		
Instructional Practices	Differentiation (2)	○ Choice	
Instructional Practices	Differentiation (2)	○ Classroom preparation	

Instructional Practices	Differentiation (2)	○ Different learning styles	6/9/2024 6:11:56 PM, merged with Different thinking styles 6/9/2024 6:12:00 PM, merged with Different thinking and learning styles
Instructional Practices	Differentiation (2)	○ Differentiated instruction	
Instructional Practices	Differentiation (2)	○ Differentiated learning environment	
Instructional Practices	Differentiation (2)	○ Differentiation	
Instructional Practices	Differentiation (2)	○ Differentiation in teaching	
Instructional Practices	○ Inclusive Practices		6/19/2024 10:43:09 AM, merged with Inclusivity 6/19/2024 10:43:19 AM, merged with Inclusive perspective 6/19/2024 10:43:19 AM, merged with Inclusive environment 6/19/2024 10:43:19 AM, merged with Inclusion
Instructional Practices	○ Instructional methods		

Instructional Practices	○ Lesson Planning		
Instructional Practices	Lesson Planning	○ classes my senior year looked more into lesson planning and more of a	
Instructional Practices	Lesson Planning	○ Lesson planning	
Instructional Practices	○ Project-based learning		6/19/2024 10:49:41 AM, merged with Project Based Learning
○ Lived Experiences			
Lived Experiences	○ Classroom Experiences		
Lived Experiences	Classroom Experiences	○ Adequate or inadequate	6/13/2024 9:32:17 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Adequacy 6/13/2024 9:32:17 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Adequate 6/13/2024 9:32:17 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Adequate preparation

Lived Experiences	Classroom Experiences	○ Challenges	6/13/2024 9:32:40 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Challenges faced 6/13/2024 9:32:40 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Challenges in expressing passions and emotions
Lived Experiences	Classroom Experiences	○ Classroom experiences	
Lived Experiences	Classroom Experiences	○ Classroom Management	
Lived Experiences	Classroom Experiences	○ Commonalities	6/13/2024 9:33:14 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Common traits
Lived Experiences	Classroom Experiences	○ Complexities	6/13/2024 9:33:28 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Complex needs

Lived Experiences	Classroom Experiences	○ Diverse student populations	6/13/2024 9:34:36 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Gifted and special education
Lived Experiences	Classroom Experiences	○ Emotions	
Lived Experiences	Classroom Experiences	○ Guidance	
Lived Experiences	Classroom Experiences	○ Passions and strengths	6/13/2024 9:35:33 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Passions
Lived Experiences	Classroom Experiences	○ Recognizing needs	6/13/2024 9:37:19 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Identifying 6/13/2024 9:37:19 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Specific needs 6/13/2024 9:37:19 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Unique needs
Lived Experiences	Classroom Experiences	○ Self-efficacy	

Lived Experiences	Classroom Experiences	○ Supporting students	6/13/2024 9:37:40 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Support 6/13/2024 9:37:40 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Supporting 6/13/2024 9:37:40 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Supporting twice-exceptional students 6/13/2024 9:40:56 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Strategies

Lived Experiences	Classroom Experiences	○ Teacher preparation program	6/13/2024 9:38:17 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Preparation program 6/13/2024 9:38:17 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Training 6/13/2024 9:40:34 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Inadequate 6/13/2024 9:35:12 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Inadequacy 6/13/2024 9:35:12 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Inadequate preparation 6/13/2024 9:35:12 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Inadequately prepared 6/13/2024 9:40:34 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Lack of Training 6/13/2024 9:41:25 AM, merged with Classroom Experiences: Dual certified teachers

Lived Experiences	Classroom Experiences	○ Twice-exceptional students	
Lived Experiences	○ Experience		
Lived Experiences	Experience	● classroom	
Lived Experiences	Experience	○ Experience (2)	
Lived Experiences	Experience	● student teaching	
Lived Experiences	Experience	● Twice-exceptional	
Lived Experiences	○ Teacher Prep Program		6/20/2024 11:47:14 AM, merged with Teacher Preparation Program
Lived Experiences	Teacher Prep Program	○ Commonalities	6/13/2024 9:29:34 AM, merged with Teacher Preparation Program: Common traits

Lived Experiences	Teacher Prep Program	○ Complexity of needs	6/13/2024 9:31:42 AM, merged with Teacher Preparation Program: Complex needs 6/13/2024 9:31:42 AM, merged with Teacher Preparation Program: Passions and strengths 6/13/2024 9:31:11 AM, merged with Teacher Preparation Program: Passions
Lived Experiences	Teacher Prep Program	○ Dual certification	6/13/2024 9:29:59 AM, merged with Teacher Preparation Program: Dual certification classes 6/13/2024 9:29:59 AM, merged with Teacher Preparation Program: Dual certification programs

Lived Experiences	Teacher Prep Program	○ Impactful	6/13/2024 9:30:17 AM, merged with Teacher Preparation Program: Impactful experiences
Lived Experiences	Teacher Prep Program	○ Inadequate Preparation	
Lived Experiences	Teacher Prep Program	○ Lack of Training	
Lived Experiences	Teacher Prep Program	● negative	
Lived Experiences	Teacher Prep Program	● Positive	
Lived Experiences	Teacher Prep Program	○ Self-efficacy	
Lived Experiences	Teacher Prep Program	○ Specialized training	
Lived Experiences	Teacher Prep Program	○ Specific experiences	
Lived Experiences	Teacher Prep Program	○ Student teaching	

Lived Experiences	Teacher Prep Program	○ Supporting students	
Lived Experiences	Teacher Prep Program	○ Supporting twice-exceptional students	
Lived Experiences	Teacher Prep Program	○ Twice-exceptional students	
Lived Experiences	Teacher Prep Program	○ Understanding complexity	6/20/2024 11:48:50 AM, merged with Teacher Prep Program: Unique needs
○ Outlier Information			
Outlier Information	○ Admin support		
Outlier Information	○ advocating for myself		
Outlier Information	○ And I just think that the everyday learner can benefit a lot from the		
Outlier Information	○ great administration		
○ Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children			

Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	Gifted Education	○ Enrichment program	
Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	Gifted Education	○ Gifted Education	
Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	Gifted Education	○ Gifted education (2)	
Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	Gifted Education	○ Gifted students	
Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	Gifted Education	○ Importance of fostering gifts and talents	
Perceptions & Knowlege of	Gifted Education	○ Interest in gifted children	

Exceptional Children			
Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	Gifted Education	○ Working with gifted children	
Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	○ Perception & Knowledge		6/20/2024 11:46:28 AM, merged with Special education (2)
Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	Perception & Knowledge	○ Dual exceptionality	
Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	Perception & Knowledge	● Perceptions & Knowledge: 2e	
Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	Perception & Knowledge	● Perceptions & Knowledge: Gifted	

Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	Perception & Knowledge	○ Pre-K education	
Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	Perception & Knowledge	○ Pre-K testing	
Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	Perception & Knowledge	○ Productive struggle	
Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	Perception & Knowledge	○ Special education	
Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	Perception & Knowledge	○ Special needs education	
Perceptions & Knowlege of	Perception & Knowledge	○ SPED students	

Exceptional Children			
Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	○ Student identification		
Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	○ Support Student Needs		
Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	Support Student Needs	○ Recognize and support Average performing students	
Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	Support Student Needs	○ Recognize and Support Gifted Student needs	
Perceptions & Knowlege of Exceptional Children	Support Student Needs	○ Recognize and Support Low Performing Student needs	

○ Professional Development			
Professional Development	○ In-Service Training		
Professional Development	In-Service Training	○ Complex needs	

Professional Development	In-Service Training	○ Recognize and support	6/13/2024 9:44:12 AM, merged with In-Service Training: Recognize 6/13/2024 9:44:12 AM, merged with In-Service Training: Recognize complex needs 6/13/2024 9:44:12 AM, merged with In-Service Training: Recognize needs 6/13/2024 9:44:28 AM, merged with In-Service Training: Recognize 6/13/2024 9:44:28 AM, merged with In-Service Training: Recognize complex needs 6/13/2024 9:44:28 AM, merged with In-Service Training: Recognize needs 6/13/2024 9:44:48 AM, merged with In-Service Training: Support 6/13/2024 9:44:48 AM, merged with In-Service Training: Support strategies

Professional Development	○ MTSS Process	
Professional Development	○ Professional Development	6/19/2024 10:49:36 AM, merged with Professional experience
○ Teacher Self-Efficacy		
Teacher Self-Efficacy	○ Reflection of practice	
Teacher Self-Efficacy	○ Relationship building or rapport with students	

Appendix J

Analysis Document

Themes	Sub-theme1	Sub-theme 2
Practicum Experiences	Lesson Planning	Broad but Superficial Experiences
	High self-efficacy for writing "strong" lesson plans w/ understanding of what term differentiation means, little understanding of how to put that into practice, "...I feel that has definitely gotten better this year... I feel I had more practice this year ... with I can use this to drive where I'm going with instruction." (Karyn)	Multiple school settings
	superficial understanding of differentiation, "I don't want to say we didn't ... try to do it in school, but I did not have the experience." (Allison)	Multiple classroom settings
	"...I felt very prepared with instructional strategies, and I felt very prepared in terms of understanding of actually planning lessons." (Susan)	Little to no experiences with gifted students

	"...I always knew I could teach a good lesson..." (Allison)	Little understanding for choosing and implementing interventions
	"...classes my senior year looked more into lesson planning and more ...lesson preparation side of things...really into planning and craft..." (Susan)	"...my experience was so broad that I feel like I was able to see that every child thinks and learns in a completely different way..." (Carla)
	"...we learned how to write a really good scripted lesson plan." (Allison)	"...a lot of times felt worse case scenario (during the prep courses), if we were going over academic challenges ...they had a severe learning disability... but then we didn't really ever talk about ... they're inconsistent or if they're struggling in one area but not all of the areas. What do you do then?" (Karyn)

In-Field Experiences	Sub-theme 1	Sub-theme 2	Sub-theme 3
	Professional Development	Instructional Decision Making	Perceptions and Knowledge of Exceptional Children

	Mentor teachers who were readily available for guidance very important	Overwhelming number of resources, little knowledge of resource to deficit matching	Difficulty remediating for low performing students, "...being the push-in class ... for EIP, that has taught me so much this year...just getting to work with them and work with that population has been different for me, but I've enjoyed it." (Susan), "...this kid was such a mystery..." (Susan),
	Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), "... we talk about, Okay, this lesson was awful. What did you do? Just getting those strategies... there's math strategies I'd never heard of, but I'm hearing now because people are saying, Oh, my kids struggled	Differentiation, "I didn't have a differentiation game..." (Allison), "...I think that since working with you (current SPED co-teacher) just differentiating in	"...random grouping, thinking spaces, ... students are having to communicate with kids who might not be on their same level...I've seen so much growth with

	on that too. This is what I found. That has been so very beneficial." (Emery),	general has gotten a lot easier for me..." (Allison), "...I think I learned how to differentiate from that. And this year has been completely different." "...entering the classroom, I felt most prepared to differentiate for my lower lerners." (Carla),	the gifted students having patience and being able to teach their classmates and show them new ways to problem solve." (Wendy)
	Curriculum dive/understanding, Math strategies, Writing strategies. "...curriculum trainings have been very beneficial...having our admin be very supportive and come in to lead those conversations." (Emery) "I'm on a planning team where I'm creating all the assessments and making the majority of the plans ...my reading lessons are so much better because I'm really digging	"I feel like I have a good strength in those... just those instructional strategies." (Carla)	overwhelming amount of resources but little understanding of "what's best" to meet student needs

	into the standards and I actually know what I'm teaching." (Emery) "...I feel pretty confident in going from the standard and the success criteria and really planning on the unit." (Emery)		
	"I feel I've learned a lot of other strategies for helping them." (Susan)	Differentiation, Pre-tests "...I know it's like kind of obvious, but for me it wasn't... everyone gets a pretest and if they pass the pretest then they don't need to sit in a small group..." (Gwen)	Difficulty addressing the needs of gifted students, "That is one thing I will say I felt I did not get a lot of experience in college was working with gifted kids." (Carla)
	"Since being in the classroom I feel I haven't really received a lot of direct instruction..." (Tanya)	PBL, "...it challenges them ...pushes them beyond what they would typically be doing... also giving	"What do I do with this kid?" (Susan)

		them the real world skills." (Karyn)	
	MTSS process (lack of understanding/experiences)	Implementation of lesson plans in the field was difficult: lower self-efficacy with the realities of the classroom. "I wasn't the most prepared for that coming into a fourth grade clasroom where grades and academics are so heavy." (Emma)	"...the gifted kids honestly scared me..." (Allison)
	What do the tiers mean? "...I'm sure I don't understand all these tiers, and all of those things, and all these interventions. That's just a lot." (Sandy) "...I wasn't really confident with the movement of tiers until really my third year." (Tanya)	Student Engagement, "I was completely bought into it, so I made a huge deal and made it so exciting... I knew they were gonna get excited about it." (Allison), "...using peer facilitation to an	Extension activities, Early Finishers Activities

		advantage has been very helpful." (Gwen),	
	How do I decide on what the student needs? "...knowing when an intervention is working and when it's not and when it's time to increase that support or decrease that support. That's has been huge." (Susan)	Interventions, Extension Activities, Student Choice	Understanding that Special Education is both gifted and students with disabilities (SWD)
	Are they really struggling and need MTSS OR do they just need classroom level support? "...have to work backwards and make sure they have that (foundational skills) first before you can help them meet grade level standards." (Karyn) "...it's just making those adjustments to the curriculum or making those adjustments to anything and acommodating for those students is definitely a	Reflective teaching practices, "...it helps me determine what decisions I need to make to better my instruction or my practice for the different groups of students..." (Carla), "...this year I've been paying attention to certain ways of	"Honestly, I don't think one of my strengths is working with the high flyer. I found it really hard." (Allison from focus group)

	struggle for me." (Wendy) "Sometimes I struggle with knowing... is this somebody who needs to be in the MTSS process or is this just somebody who needs something extra in the classroom?" (Karyn from focus group) "...that's something I struggled with and still feel ...I'm familiarizing myself with what it looks like when they do need to start that process." (Sandy from focus group)	teaching that aren't getting the desired results. I feel that's something that I've worked on this year and reflecting on this." (Karyn),	
	Kid Talks (data discussions as a grade level for MTSS decisions), "...we'd go into those Kid Talks with admin and were just kind of expected to pick up and understand; it wasn't really clearly defined." (Tanya from focus group), "...it's better now... with a MTSS coordinator and the way it's being structured...it's better." (Karyn from focus group) "...it was		"It's harder than the lower." (Tanya from focus group)

	honestly kind of frustrating because it didn't feel the process was working..." (Allison from focus group), "I always am afraid I'm like recommending the wrong student or recommending the wrong thing for them." (Karyn from focus group)		