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Using a professional learning community to include emotionally and behaviorally disordered students and their teachers in inclusion programs

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USING A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY TO INCLUDE EMOTIONALLY AND BEHAVIORALLY DISORDERED STUDENTS AND THEIR TEACHERS IN INCLUSION PROGRAMS

by
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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this manuscript to my wonderful family. To my husband Omar who has been my own personal cheerleader and encourager - thank you! You have stepped in when I was ready to quit and moved me along, for that, I am forever grateful! To my baby Aiden, you were truly a "dissertation baby," I hope that mommy's perseverance lets you know that you can do anything you set those pretty brown eyes to. I love you and thank you for being my sunshine at all times. My mother Margaret, you raised me on your own and have always been in my corner encouraging me, letting me know that there is not anything I can't do. You have truly inspired me to reach for the stars. Ayanna, my middle sister and force behind this research, thank you for being you and excelling even when the odds are against you. Sonya - my older sister with all the wisdom, thank you for always encouraging me and forcing me to be the best person I can be. Your advice is something I will cherish always. My in-laws - Reyna, Jesus, Natalia, and Mario, there were many days you all had to watch Aiden while I did schoolwork; thank you for supporting me and taking great care of my baby! My girls - Shakiya, Raven, Tayla, Melanie, Micah, and Kylah, I hope that you always remember that there is nothing you can't accomplish! And last but not least, my cohort buddies - we did it! I am so blessed to have you not only as cohort buddies, but true friends.

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Thank you, Lord, for directing my path before I even existed.

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Abstract

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Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD) are considered the most difficult to include within school inclusion programs, and therefore, are often excluded from inclusion programs (Yell, 2004). One of the main challenges with implementing successful inclusion programs is that teachers are not equipped with the skills to work with all students. The purpose of this mixed methods action research study is to evaluate and improve an inclusion program that is not only successful for student achievement, but one that also relies heavily on teachers' voice and input and that will encourage teachers to improve their attitudes towards emotionally behaviorally disturbed (EBD) students.

This study employed a professional learning community as a means to give the teachers a voice in the inclusion program, and allow the teachers to work together to find strategies best fitted for this population of students. The results of this study can be used to help other schools in their quest to support EBD students. This study shows that with collaboration and appropriate strategies, it is not only possible, but also beneficial to have inclusion programs for EBD students.

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Chapter I

Introduction and Problem Statement

A child with an emotional and behavioral disorder has an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors (US Department of Education, 2007). In addition, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders describe a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

- An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual sensory or health factors.
- An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
- A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

Consequently, students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) are considered the most difficult to include within school inclusion programs, and therefore, are often excluded from inclusion programs (Yell, Drasgow, Bradley, & Justesen, 2004). According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEIA, 2004), children with emotional behavioral disorders fall under the special education category of students whose behavioral or emotional responses are not typical. Students under this category generally exhibit inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.

Because of these inappropriate behaviors, there continues to be controversy as to where to best educate EBD students. Even in districts that consider themselves inclusive, some students with EBD are sent to separate schools or to out-of-state placements (MacMillan, Gresham, & Forness, 1996). These students are sent to alternative district settings due to the inability to provide services within their home districts. At Forest Middle School during the 2010-2011 school-year, we sent two students to out of district placements due to extreme behaviors. These were two students who were chronic fighters, chronically walked out of their classrooms and also the building, and who also did not respect staff members. These students were both in the same self-contained classroom and appeared to feed off of each other. Within this classroom, there were 16 students who all were diagnosed with EBD, and there were five teachers in and out of the classroom, in addition to a list of substitutes.

According to Mathur (2007), "without appropriate educational services and social interventions, children with EBD are at significant risk for failure and mental health problems" (p. 11). Mathur goes on to say, "some popular beliefs, such as segregating students with EBD in the self-contained settings without access to the general education curriculum continue without any scientific basis" (p. 11). Although there is no scientific basis for continuously segregating EBD students, as a district we continue to do so.

The number of students with special needs, including those with emotional and behavioral disorder (EBD) who are being served in the elementary classroom, is increasing rapidly (Niesyn, 2009). With the increase in special education students, there is also a push for least restrictive environments, which means more inclusive practices at the school level. In order for inclusion to be successful for these students, there are a

number of things that need to be in place; many of which I seek to explore within this study.

Teachers and students alike undergo changes in order for inclusion programs to be successfully implemented. Changes include teacher paradigm shifts, increase in teacher preparation and supports, and also an increase in student supports. This is a big change for many teachers, and therefore they will need to be thoroughly prepared for this inclusive movement. Along with preparing teachers to have students with disabilities in their classrooms comes the need to give them concrete strategies that they can use with their students classified as EBD. Parker (2006) completed a study that helped determine appropriate learning strategies to use with learning disabled students. Parker focused on six teachers and taught them two specific strategies to use with learning disabled students and then used a follow-up survey to determine their perceived effectiveness. The purpose of Parker's (2006) research was to provide general education teachers with effective strategies that they can use in their classroom with their students with disabilities. In this study, I too, worked with general education teachers (as well as special education teachers) on inclusion, but focused specifically on the inclusion of EBD students.

As a special education teacher leader within a large urban school district (over 150,000 students), I see first hand the exclusion of EBD students when inclusion programs are created. Within the two middle schools I have worked at, both implemented exclusionary programs for EBD students, having self-contained classes specifically for EBD students. In these self-contained settings, the EBD students had very little interaction with regular education students besides walking to and from school, and in both instances these self-contained classrooms had multiple teachers throughout the year

and struggled with teacher retention. These very EBD students were the same students who were involved in multiple bullying instances, due to their lack of positive interactions with their peers. Seeing the number of suspensions for bullying and other aggressive acts, moved me to want to find a way to positively include these EBD students with their peers.

Challenges to Inclusion

"Difficulties in implementing inclusion programs have not necessarily resulted from opposition to the concept on inclusion; rather, lack of skill in implementing inclusive programs has often been the problem" (Smith, Frey, & Tollefson, 2003, p. 55). The challenge with implementing successful inclusion programs is that teachers are not equipped with the skills to work with all students. Niesyn (2009) notes the challenges faced by general education teachers when they have EBD students in their classrooms, and therefore makes several practical suggestions to help make inclusion work for them. She describes praise, scaffolding of student independent work, peer tutoring, and student choice as keys to successful inclusion practices for EBD students. These strategies noted by Niesyn are just a few of the tenets of this study.

Lohrmann and Bambara (2006) specifically did a study to find out what teachers believe constitutes a successful inclusion program and what supports and strategies are needed when including students with challenging behaviors. Lohrmann and Bambara found that "the extent that teachers perceive themselves as being open to and successful with inclusion may be related to the extent that their inclusion efforts are supported by members of the school community" (p. 157). They found that teachers who were more open to inclusion and who shared a more positive attitude towards inclusion received the

most help; their enthusiasm for inclusion worked out in their favor because more people were willing to help them.

A school-wide vision for inclusion, a collegial atmosphere, and collaborative opportunities were all key factors found in Lohrmann and Bambara (2009). According to Lohrmann and Bambara, what teachers perceive to be essential in terms of support needs tends to be individualized to their own unique situation. To ensure that teachers receive what they need, structured and responsive support mechanisms need to be in place to facilitate both access and individualization of supports.

Regular education teachers often struggle with knowing which strategies and interventions to use on special education students within their inclusion classes. It is hoped that through the process of identifying effective strategies and supports used in this study, regular education teachers participating in my program will find that having an EBD student in their classroom is no different than having a regular education student in their classroom. The study will also allow teachers to reflect on their current attitudes in regards to EBD students, and allow them to self-reflect on how their attitudes may impact their interactions with EBD students.

Students with EBD often require strategic interventions and supports (such as social skills training, specific de-escalation strategies, and also replacement behaviors), something most districts are not willing to undertake and/or are not equipped to provide. Due to the rising costs to educate these students elsewhere, there is a need for appropriate education for EBD students. An appropriate education for EBD students is one that focuses on their academic and their behavioral needs and ensures that progress is being made in both areas. Due to the specialized services and needs required for EBD students,

Heflin and Bullock (1999) found that the inclusion of students with EBD must be carefully planned and individually determined.

A strategic planning process will ensure that EBD students receive an appropriate education with their peers to the greatest extent possible. According to IDEA (2004), an appropriate education is one that includes education services designed to meet the individual education needs of students with disabilities and the education of each student with a disability with non-disabled students. EBD students will be not only educated in inclusive environments with their non-disabled peers, but they will also be taught specific strategies needed to improve their behavior and academics. It will be crucial for us to focus on supports individualized for EBD students, in order for us to see academic and behavioral improvements.

Mathur (2007) refers to general educators as reporting "they are not well versed in dealing with problem behaviors and report insufficient training in behavior management strategies" (p. 18). This reference is something I hope to further develop within my research, so that in creating an inclusion program, I can also implement resources for the teachers to utilize that will promote positive learning and behavior.

Positive Learning and Behavior

One way to promote positive learning and behavior is through a school-wide positive behavior support system. According to Lohrmann and Bambara (2006),

> Future research will need to explore the implications of training and fluency in Positive Behavior Supports on teachers' need for their own support and their attitudes about including students with severe behavioral challenges. Additionally, future research should explore what contributes to developing a teacher's confidence to include students with the most significant behavioral needs. (p. 172).

In doing the research, and through our professional learning community, there is a chance that positive behavior supports may be included in the needed supports.

In their research, Heflin and Bullock (1999) found that there was an overall improvement in behavior for the majority of students with EBD while they were in the general education classes. The presumption that EBD students will improve more in the general education classes is that they are receiving an appropriate education, with their non-disabled peers with necessary supports. When services and supports are brought to the students within a general education setting, instead of pulling the students out of that setting to deliver services, students perform better overall academically and behaviorally. Understanding this and how students react to an appropriate educational setting shows the possibility of implementing successful inclusion programs for students with EBD.

Implementation of Inclusion Programs

In order to implement a successful inclusion program, it is very important to include teachers and their voice, as they are major contributors to its success. Not only should teachers be solicited for their ideas and opinions, their comfort level is also extremely important to know and understand. Teachers' comfort levels are important in the planning and implementation of EBD inclusion programs because they are the ones who will be carrying out the programs (Chmiliar, 2009). In the research, many general education teachers were open to inclusion as long as they had sufficient support, according to Heflin and Bullock (1999).

Teachers expressed negative attitudes toward teaching students with severe disabilities – "students who were traditionally not assumed to benefit from inclusion because of their extremely atypical characteristics, behaviors, and needs" (Cook, 2001,

p. 203) – by practicing exclusionary practices within their classrooms. These practices include segregating the students, ignoring the students, and having a generally negative attitude towards their students with disabilities; however, these attitudes can change as a result of experience and/or training (Martin, Johnson, Ireland, & Claxton, 2003). Within these classrooms, where students with disabilities are placed with teachers lacking the expertise in handling them, the students tend to be lonely and rejected, therefore further promoting negative behaviors (Cullinan, Sabornie, & Crossland, 1992; Gresham, 1982; Sale & Carey, 1995).

Students with EBD can be considered to have a severe disability, according to Cook (2001), due to some of their extreme behaviors, making it very important to work with potential teachers in getting them to understand and work with EBD students. It is also important to note that with experience and training, teacher attitudes can be changed. According to Niesyn (2009),

> Unlike special education teacher preparation that focuses on preparing teachers to work with students with learning and behavior differences, general education teacher preparation concentrates on preparing teachers to work with groups of students across content domains, with little attention paid to individual differences or specialized needs. (p. 227)

It is important to properly train all teachers – regular education and special education – to work with their population of students they serve. Students come with individual needs and differences, and it is up to the teachers to meet those needs. Working within the parameters of a school, it is possible to train all teachers to practice inclusive measures that will allow all students to have their needs met: academically, behaviorally, and emotionally.

Equipping Teachers to be Inclusive

This study is about finding what tools teachers need to carry out a successful inclusion program by relying on teachers' perceptions and also looking at students' test scores for academic improvements. Through this study, I chose to work with teachers to find the necessary teaching and classroom management tools necessary to fully implement an inclusive program for EBD students. The questions from regular and special education teachers that remain unanswered are based around the supports that EBD students will receive while in inclusive programs, and what is still needed to better support teachers in these inclusive settings. This will take into account supports given to regular education students as well as supports outlined in Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for EBD students. The assumptions that I made when looking into these questions was that the idea of inclusion for EBD students would be accepted and implemented, but the focus was on supports available.

Purpose

The purpose of this mixed methods action research study is to evaluate and improve an inclusion program that is not only successful for student achievement, but one that also relies heavily on teachers' voice and input and that encourages teachers to improve their attitudes towards Emotionally Behaviorally Disturbed (EBD) students. Currently my school district is working on an Action Plan called "Imagine 2014,"[1] where they are working to have more inclusive schools. This study falls along the lines of Imagine 2014, by creating an inclusion program that includes some of the most difficult students to include. Without "Imagine 2014," EBD students at my school would not be included, because there would not be a mandate to include them. These are students who

are classified as EBD, and have a history of aggression, bullying, and other negative behaviors that challenge the rules of a school. The research design that I have chosen is a mixed methods action research study, as I work to support teachers and students in an inclusion program that meets the needs of emotionally disturbed students, and provides teachers and staff members with appropriate supports.

Scope of this Study

This study focused on regular and special education teachers' perceived effectiveness of inclusion programs as a starting point. Then a professional learning community was developed to work to find the supports to best support EBD students, while also including the teacher perceptions, comfort levels, and feedback. I chose to use teacher interviews, a professional learning community, and also observations to gauge teacher perceptions. This study also reviewed student academic and behavioral data to determine improvements from the inclusion program.

The research was conducted in a large middle school, which has a total population of 700 students, 150 special education students, and 15 EBD students. The school is unique in the sense that it is one of approximately three schools out of 86 (middle and high schools throughout the city), and the only middle school that has attempted to have some inclusion for EBD students. There are currently only three schools attempting inclusion for EBD students (my middle school, and two other area high schools) due to the lack of supports available to teachers and other staff members interested in implementing one. There are 17 alternative schools throughout the city, which accommodate a large percentage of EBD students. Through my professional learning community, I was able to gauge teacher feelings and perceptions of the inclusion program

and worked to remedy any biases and concerns (lack of supports, comfort levels, collaboration, etc.) so that EBD students have an equal chance in educational equality as their counterparts within a successful inclusion program.

Advocacy

Advocating for this sub group of students is extremely important to me. In the past five years, I have seen an increase in the number of special education classrooms designed specifically for EBD students. To me, this increase in education segregation is something that needs to become nonexistent. According to Creswell (2007), I would associate myself with the advocacy/participatory theory due to my quest to study this issue and work to bring a positive change in the education of these students. Creswell (2007) describes the advocacy participatory theory as encompassing research that "should contain an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of participants (p. 21). My framework is based on the advocacy participatory theory because it is my personal quest to help all students with disabilities. I need to be the voice that these students do not yet have, and I am striving to be that one voice that makes a difference in their lives and improves their quality of education. I believe that I can make the difference in their lives by creating and implementing a model inclusion program that students from across the city of Philadelphia can participate in and benefit from.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated in such a way as to uncover supports and strategies needed for the teachers to better support EBD students within an inclusive program and examining the perceptions of staff members of EBD students within inclusive programs. It is expected that there will be different perceptions

discovered regarding the inclusion of EBD students, however, what is being sought are ways to remedy these perceptions to create an inclusive program that will benefit EBD students academically and emotionally.

Throughout my research, I hope to learn that EBD students can be included with their peers into the general education programming, with appropriate supports. Also, through my research, it is my hope that I will be able to unearth what exactly these supports may be.

1. What are the perceptions of school staff members at Forest Pointe Middle School toward the behavioral and academic performance of EBD students within inclusive classrooms?
2. Based on teacher interviews, what steps are needed in order to better support EBD students within an inclusive program at Forest Pointe Middle School?
3. Based on teacher interviews, what supports are needed to better support teachers at Forest Pointe Middle School who teach included EBD students?
4. Do EBD students in inclusive classrooms have better academic outcomes?
5. Do EBD students in inclusive classrooms have better behavioral outcomes?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because there is an immediate need to create inclusion programs for students who have been classified as EBD. One of the most noteworthy changes in education from the last few decades has been the progression towards inclusive education (Chmiliar, 2009). My own personal experiences with special education has shown me that now is the time to ensure equalized, quality education for all

students. I take it as my personal responsibility to educate, encourage, and uplift as many educational professionals as possible in the push for inclusive education.

I believe that education is ever evolving and we are at the point now that we need to make major improvements for students with EBD. The fact that students with disabilities continue to be educated outside of the regular education classroom setting lets us know that we still have a lot of work to do when it comes to inclusion. Inclusion has been an up and coming movement for quite some time, but I believe that it is time to make it a mandatory movement for all educational facilities. In fact, inclusion is a relatively new term and is not even included in the IDEA statute or regulations. IDEA is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which outlines rights and regulations for students with disabilities that require special education services. This law specifies how schools should be supporting their students with special needs, yet makes no reference to inclusion. According to Yell et al. (2004), "[t]he Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) created a detailed set of guidelines to ensure an appropriate education in the least restrictive setting for students who are eligible for special education programs," (p. 28) but even this statement is not a mandate for inclusion. According to Yell et al. and the IDEA 2004 regulations, schools are to use a continuum spectrum from least to greatest restrictive environment when deciding on placement for a child, but again, this continuum is up to the discretion of the school.

This study determines the various challenges of inclusion programs through teacher perceptions and the implementation of an inclusion program that meets the needs of EBD students. The implementation of the program that was directed by these perceptions was discussed and analyzed. My research also gathers pertinent data in

regards to teacher perceived effectiveness and the creation of an inclusion program that meets perceptions through surveys, interviews, and teacher focus groups. Challenges and perceptions in the inclusion program, particularly the implementation of an effective inclusion program were studied. However, every study has its own limitation, since Forest Middle School (a pseudonym) is located in Philadelphia, only the perspectives of the teachers, and the academic records of the students within this school were analyzed.

It was extremely important to begin this study at Forest Middle, because there are very few middle schools that have such a large population of EBD students. With suspensions and other disciplinary infractions on the rise, it was timely to implement a program that promotes positive academics and behaviors.

Conclusion

Working with teachers in a professional learning community, I looked at teacher perceptions, which allowed me to gauge their readiness for implementing an inclusion program for EBD students. I used this information to find out what supports and services are needed by teachers in order to make this implementation successful. In addition, I also used student academic data to analyze the academic impact of this program. Although the context of this study is one middle school within a large school district, it is expected that this inclusion program can go on to be a model for the rest of the district to follow.

Chapter II

Literature Review

One of the most noteworthy changes in education from the last few decades has been the progression towards inclusive education (Chmiliar, 2009). According to Yell et al. (2004), "[t]he Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) created a detailed set of guidelines to ensure an appropriate education in the least restrictive setting for students who are eligible for special education programs" (p. 18), but even this statement is not a mandate for inclusion. According to Yell et al. (2004) and the IDEA (2004) regulations, schools are to use a continuum spectrum from least to greatest restrictive environment when deciding on placement for a child, but again, this continuum is up to the discretion of the school.

According to Conderman and Johnston-Rodriguez (2009), IDEA has made many changes when it comes to the regular education and the special education teacher and their part in inclusive education. "Specifically, the reauthorization emphasized having high expectations for students with disabilities and ensuring their access to the general education curriculum in the regular classroom-to the maximum extent possible- to meet developmental goals" (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009, p. 235). According to Conderman and Johnston-Rodriguez, collaboration is a significant component of IDEA.

Inclusion

According to Cartledge and Talbert-Johnson (1996), inclusion is the "attempt to educate the child to the maximum extent appropriate" (p. 51). When creating and looking at a child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), it is crucial that the IEP team consider inclusion as a possibility for all children. Inclusion is the educating of disabled students

with their non-disabled peers. Inclusion is a term used to describe an educational practice where we have special education teachers working with regular education teachers to bring services to the students in the general education class, rather than bringing the students to their services in a segregated classroom. There are many factors that determine whether or not a school or district will be successful in implementing inclusive programs. Research has shown that negative attitudes of staff members involved in inclusion programs can undermine the efforts of inclusion (Heflin & Bullock, 1999).

Schools are faced with an increasing parental demand to place their children in more inclusive settings, including those students with a wide range of disabilities (Marks, Schrader, & Levine, 1999). The time is now to begin implementing inclusive programs for students with disabilities. According to Marks et al. (1999), "from the parents perspective, a reasonably good inclusion program today is preferable to a perfect inclusion program tomorrow" (p. 315).

Heflin and Bullock (1999) note that inclusion is a top-down movement, and teachers feel as though they are being forced to participate. One teacher described inclusion as an "administrator bulldozer" (Heflin & Bullock, 1999, p. 107). It is clear that teachers feel forced to be a part of inclusion, but based on the federal mandate, it is something all schools need to be working towards. In order for inclusion to work, teachers need to be a part of the planning process and need to be willing to collaborate in strategizing for the inclusive program. There is a dire need for the careful execution of a thought out inclusion program for students with EBD, if there is a chance of them being successful in an inclusion program.

Moore (2009) stresses the importance of all teachers, general education and special education, knowing and understanding the federal laws and mandates surrounding special education and that they work together in creating an inclusive program. According to Moore, "the concept of promoting inclusive environments is not an easy decision to make and all stakeholders involved should be included in the process" (p. 15).

Traditionally Excluded Students From Inclusion

According to Mathur (2007), students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) engage in "aggressive acts and receive less positive attention by peers and adults" (p. 11). Placement data vary depending on the source, but in at least one national survey from the 1990s, nearly 60% of children with EBD were serviced in self-contained classrooms or some other segregated placement (Cullinan, Epstein, & Sabornie, 1992). According to Mathur (2007), "some popular beliefs, such as segregating students with EBD in the self-contained settings without access to the general education curriculum continue without any significant basis" (p. 11).

Heflin and Bullock (1999) report that students with EBD are easily excluded, with some school districts even going as far as to send their EBD students to separate schools or to out of state placements. It is clear in looking at the research that there has not always been much support in including students with EBD, but it just goes to show that the inclusion of students with EBD must be "carefully planned and individually determined" (Heflin & Bullock, 1999, p. 105).

Educating EBD Students in an Inclusive Environment

Students with Emotional Behavioral Disorders (EBD) are considered the most difficult to include (Yell et al., 2004) and are often excluded from inclusion programs. This discovery is attributed to teacher attitudes towards students with EBD. Harvey (1996) examined perceptions and found that teachers believed that self-contained classrooms were more appropriate than programs in general education classrooms. This very line of thinking is one that needs to be changed, if there is any hope for including students with EBD. Heflin and Bullock (1999) did a study that surveyed teachers in general and special education about the inclusion of students with emotional/behavioral disorders. They chose to survey teachers as a way to compare their collected data to previously published data related to the full inclusion of EBD students. Heflin and Bullock found that teachers were more receptive to inclusive practices when they felt as though they had input in its implementation. Heflin and Bullock (1999) found that the inclusion of students with EBD must be carefully planned and individually determined. Heflin and Bullock's findings on the improvement of EBD behavior within an inclusion class show the possibility of implementing successful inclusion programs for students with EBD.

Accommodating EBD Students into the Inclusive Environment

In an effort to begin including students with EBD into the general education classroom, it is very important to focus on what accommodations we will be providing for these students once they become a part of the inclusive environment. One major accommodation that is crucial to including EBD students into the general education environment is behavioral interventions and accommodations. The school that is initiating the inclusive movement for EBD students needs to have a discipline policy that

will promote positive effective and inclusive learning. This discipline policy needs to not only provide consequences once the behavior has been exhibited, but also have a system in place to prevent the behavior from occurring.

According to Eber, Breen, Rose, Unizycki, and London (2008), schools need to be proactive when using interventions with EBD students. These interventions have long since been reactive, and Eber et al. clearly express the need to become proactive in meeting EBD students' needs. As Eber et al. state " [i]nstead of resorting to exclusion or restrictive placements, schools need to be able to implement proactive interventions that match the complexity and intensity of the student's needs" (p. 16). Eber et al. have proposed the use of a continuum spectrum of interventions to use with EBD students to keep them on track behaviorally and academically.

Sutherland and Morgan (2003) found that teachers have a significant influence on a student's behavior and they also pointed out how teachers often provided instructional activities that were at a considerably lower instructional level for students with problem behaviors, which then lead to even less involvement by these students. This cycle between teacher and student does not promote positive inclusion for EBD students, and suggests that educators need to always have high expectations for all students (academic and behavioral), and not just the ones that are behaving appropriately. Sutherland and Morgan pinpointed that when a teacher consistently treats EBD students differently (be it a lower level assignment, or in limited interactions), students begin to fulfill the prophecy before them and actually end up misbehaving even more.

Behavior Modifications and Interventions

Successfully including students with EBD into the general education environment will depend on the interventions and behavior modifications that are put in place to support these students. According to Patton, Jolivette, and Ramsey (2006), students need to have the opportunity to take ownership of their own education and behavior. Patton et al. suggest that students can and should manage their own behavior. Patton et al. believe that when teacher implement student self-monitoring into the classroom correctly, more desirable behaviors will be achieved amongst EBD students, which will increase academic and student social potential. Student self-monitoring is a tool that is used to hold students accountable for their own behavior, it also helps to transfer the burden of behavior management from the teacher to the student.

Mathur (2007) reports that many schools use suspension and expulsion for simple behavior infractions in order to get rid of students with EBD. Mathur makes note that token economies are proven to increase positive social behaviors, and should be used in conjunction with other behavior modification plans to motivate EBD students. Although there is research supporting the use of positive behavior supports, "many schools opt to instead use suspension and expulsion" (Mathur, 2007, p. 16). Mathur insists that effective discipline processes "should always focus on long term effects and not just short term fixes" (p. 21). Long term effects are crucial when modifying or providing interventions to EBD students in an inclusive environment in order to ensure their success.

Students who are classified as Emotionally Behaviorally Disturbed (EBD) require strategic interventions and supports in order to be successful in the classroom. According to Mathur (2007), "children with EBD need a varied and comprehensive approach to

dealing with their behavioral issues and it is important to examine multiple contexts to understand the factors that may help in improving their behavior" (p. 19). Amongst these contexts is the ability of special education teachers to have input in the disciplining of EDB students. Administrators fail to empower special education teachers when they make ethical decisions supportive of students with EBD. This lack of support and direction has resulted in several issues in research, practice, and policy decisions (Stichter, Conroy, & Boyd, 2004). The problem with many discipline policies is that there is an increasing percentage of students who are now being served in alternative settings instead of being educated in their normal environments (Furney, Hasazi, Clarke-Keefe, & Harnett, 2003).

Role of Special and General Educators in an Inclusive Environment

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) "made significant changes in the roles of general and special educators, especially related to inclusion and collaboration" (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriquez, 2009, p. 235). The reauthorization pushed for higher expectations, educating students in the general education classroom to the greatest extent possible, and also a push for regular education teachers to have a more vocal role in the development of a students Individualized Education Plan. This change was meant to create a more fluid relationship between the general and special educator in order to better assist the special education student's access to the general education curriculum. Welch states "[t]he roles of the special educator is to assist regular educators as they make instructional adaptations for students with learning disabilities" (as stated in Parker, 2006, p. 56). In an inclusive environment,

it is up to both the general and special educator to ensure they are meeting the needs of every student in their classroom.

Laframboise, Epanchin, Colucci, and Hocutt (2004) found that general and special education teachers working together in inclusive classrooms created a mutually beneficial learning environment for the teachers. Laframboise et al. worked with teachers chosen via a strict criteria to develop exemplar cases of teacher collaborations. Based on their field notes and classroom observations, they were able to pinpoint several strategies teachers were using and the academic benefit they had on their children. Teachers who can work together in order to meet the educational needs of the children find that their work is valued and that they are making a difference. They also found that "teachers believed it was necessary for the whole school to buy into inclusionary practice and become knowledgeable about it" (Laframboise et al., 2004, p. 41). It is extremely important for teachers to feel as though they are supported, especially when taking part in an inclusive program.

Teacher Attitudes When Working in an Inclusive Classroom

Worrell (2008) supports the claim that teacher attitude is an important factor in the implementation of inclusion programs with the following quotation:

> A general educator cannot be expected to be successful at teaching in an inclusive classroom without a solid foundation of knowledge about the students' disabilities, educational needs, accommodations, modifications, and the laws that affect both the children with disabilities and the teacher. (Worrell, 2008)

According to Lohrmann and Bambara (2006), Cook (2001), and Cook, Tankersley, Cook, and Landrum (2000) found that "general education teachers were significantly more likely to hold attitudes of concern, indifference, or rejection toward

students with disabilities who engaged in challenging behavior, as opposed to forming attachments (i.e., wanting to keep the student another year)" (p. 158).

Cartledge and Talbert-Johnson (1996) state that, "unhelpful teacher attitudes and behaviors included conditions of teacher rigidity and excessive use of punitive discipline" (p. 52). This very behavior has a direct correlation to how students perceive teachers and consequently how they will behave in the classrooms taught by these very teachers. Cartledge and Talbert-Johnson also found that "students disliked teachers who attempted to discipline through excessive yelling or threats, displayed a negative attitude or disrespect toward the students, and used abrasive mannerisms such as telling a student to "shut up" (p. 52). In continuing their research, Cartledge and Talbert-Johnson cite Crowley (1993) for the absolute necessity of maximizing positive teacher behaviors and how positive teacher behaviors are "most critical for the successful school experience of students with EBD, particularly within the general education classroom" (as coted in Cartledge & Talbert-Johnson, 1996, p. 52). Cartledge and Talbert-Johnson found that general education teachers are most critical with students with disabilities, when comparing them to special education teachers, and therefore their interactions with these students tend to be negative.

According to Heflin and Bullock (1999):

> General education teachers resist including students with disabilities because they are afraid that they will be unable to meet the needs of the general population and that their classrooms will become violent environments…[and] in fact, these fears may stem from a general fear of the students with EBD. (p. 104)

The fear that Heflin and Bullock (1999) reference is something that will require a lot of collaboration amongst teachers in order to overcome.

Teacher Collaboration within an Inclusive Classroom

It is expected that general educators take an active role in the development and implementation of a student's individualized education plan (IEP) in an effort to ensure appropriate access to the general education curriculum (Conderman & Johnston-Rodriguez, 2009). Creating an IEP is supposed to be a collaborative process and Conderman and Johnston-Rodriguez explain the importance of bringing all participants together in an effort to create an appropriate IEP.

According to Conderman and Johnston-Rodriguez (2009), many researchers agree that the major responsibility for changing teacher attitudes and skills about inclusion and collaboration rests with teacher preparation programs. According to Cartledge and Talbert-Johnson (1996), "preservice coursework and experiences relative to special populations tend to be extremely limited or inadequate for more general educators" (p. 53).

Citing the need for collaborative practices, Cartledge and Talbert-Johnson (1996) found that:

> [It] is unlikely that general education teachers would be able to program students with EBD successfully without the ongoing assistance from other professionals, general classroom teachers especially need competencies in collaboration, team teaching, and working with other interested persons. (p. 53)

One Size Fits All

It is extremely important to examine what currently works for EBD students educationally and emotionally, and use that information to form an educational program for them. According to Mathur (2007), "we have made broad generalizations about students with EBD without finding out what works, with whom, in what contexts, and under what circumstances" (p. 12). It is extremely important to consider each child as an

individual and not try to force them to fit into any one mold. As with any disability, inclusion will work for many, but may not be the solution for all. It is our job as educational leaders to individualize instruction for our students with disabilities and work to meet their needs.

Moore (2009) states, "members of an IEP team must review all variables when determining the appropriate educational placement that supports increased achievement" (p. 13). Another important point made by Moore is that "It is vital that special education students are given the opportunity to participate in the regular education environment to the extent in which they can be successful" (p. 13). Moore also says:

> When an IEP team is deciding on the maximum extent possible that a student can participate with his regular education peers, stakeholders must analyze the progress of the student, the interactions with peers, and need for access to the general education curriculum to make adequate gains towards annual goals. (Moore, 2009 p. 17)

There is no way that an educational decision for a child should be made by one person; it is a joint endeavor when attempting to educate and then ultimately include a child with a disability. One way to ensure success is to have a staff committed to its inclusion program and willing to meet the needs of all of their students.

Successful Inclusive Practices

Research has found that the following factors are necessary for the successful implementation of inclusion: teacher preparations and training, effective strategies to use with the students, and collaboration. Included in the notion of teacher preparedness, Cartledge and Talbert-Johnson (1996) found that the teacher trainings should "clarify the beneficial effects of this placement for the student, what was expected of the general classroom teacher, what supports would be in place, and what strategies would be

effective with the students assigned to their class" (p. 53). Cartledge and Talbert-Johnson focused on four critical variables they felt were most important in inclusive classrooms with students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Along with preparing teachers to have students with disabilities in their classrooms, comes the need to give them concrete strategies that they can use with their students. Parker (2006) aimed to equip general education teachers with appropriate and useful strategies to use within inclusive classrooms. Parker (2006) claims "using specific [strategies] in an inclusive setting is a positive tool for both students [and] educators" (p. 58). With all of these supports in place, the next thing crucial to inclusion is teacher collaboration. According to the research of Marks et al. (1999), "[more] collaborative meetings in which the expertise of the teachers (from both special and general education) and the expertise of the paraeducator are utilized needs to be promoted" (p. 324). Including all parties involved in the inclusion of students with disabilities is crucial to the success of inclusion.

According to Niesyn (2009), "effective instruction for students with EBD requires consistency in delivering, monitoring, and adapting instruction beyond what is often feasible in a regular classroom." The very basic strategies Niesyn presents have an exact purpose of allowing EBD students to have an equal chance at an education as their peers.

Ideas for Continued Research

There has not been a lot of research done on including students with EBD into the general education curriculum. Niesyn (2009) had trouble generalizing her study due to "most studies of instructional strategies used with students with EBD are not conducted in the general education classroom" (p. 231). Due to the lack of research on including

EBD students, there is a true need to observe and report back on actual cases of included EBD students.

Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this mixed methods action research study was to evaluate and improve an inclusion program that is not only successful for student achievement, but one that also relies heavily on teachers' voice and input and that will encourage teachers to improve their attitudes towards EBD students. I chose to work with emotionally and behaviorally disturbed children (EBD) at a large middle school within the school district of Philadelphia. For the purposes of this study, the inclusion of EBD students is described as a program in which EBD students are placed in the general education classroom with a regular educator and a special educator, instead of a self-contained classroom. To enhance this study, I collected teacher input to find out which supports and strategies they feel are needed to improve inclusive programs for EBD students. In addition, part of the purpose of this study was to improve teacher attitudes in regards to EBD students. It is important to note that although I had a leadership role in the school, I was in no capacity a supervisor to any of the participants. I had no ability to evaluate or formally observe them.

This study sought to provide the missing teacher voice in evaluation and improvement of inclusion programs for EBD students, and also lay a framework down for future inclusion programs. Although there is not much research literature on the inclusion of EBD students, the majority of the literature that does exist focuses on the aftermath of these programs, and not specifically on their conceptualization and key stakeholders: the teachers.

Methods

This site-based study is a mixed methods action research study designed to provide critical perceptions, insights, and suggestions for the successful evaluation and improvement of an inclusion program for EBD students. I chose to interview teachers, form a professional learning community, analyze suspension and academic data on EBD students, conduct follow up interviews, and also observe classrooms.

My research is mainly grounded in the qualitative framework, however, I am including quantitative data as well to support the academic and behavioral changes. According to Creswell (2007), "qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes" (p. 37). I chose to conduct all of my research in the middle school, which is the setting of this study, including special and regular education teachers as my interviewees, and analyzing my data in a way that themes could help guide my interpretation of the data. Once these data were collected and analyzed, I then began to evaluate the suggestions for improvement of the program that will successfully support EBD students and teachers within the general education classroom.

I started by getting approval from my university's campus-based Institutional Review Board (IRB) to begin collecting the data. The IRBs were established to protect the rights of the individuals in my sample and to assess the risk and potential harm of my study and to ensure that they are protected.

Action Research

I employed an action research study. Using action research allowed me to take the qualitative data that were collected and analyzed, and make a plan for improvements (Craig, 2009). I chose action research because it is cyclical and will allow me to improve the practice of educating special education students within the context of this study. According to Craig (2009), action research is "a common methodology employed for improving conditions and practice in classrooms" (p. 3). Effectively evaluating this inclusion program has allowed me to improve the practice of inclusion for both students and teachers.

The action research portion of my study was done through the professional learning community (PLC) I set up with the teachers. Through this PLC, we took actions to develop useful strategies inside and outside of the classroom, within the context of this inclusion program.

Setting

As a special education teacher leader within a huge district such as Philadelphia (over 200,000 students), I see first hand the exclusion of EBD students when inclusion programs are created. I conducted my research in a large middle school, which has a total population of 700 students, 150 special education students, and 15 EBD students.

The school in which this research was conducted is unique in the sense that it is one out of very few schools that have attempted to have an inclusion program for EBD students. There are not a lot of schools that readily include EBD students in the general population due to the lack of knowledge and tolerance of these students, the lack of

training for the teachers in regards to these students, and also the behavioral challenges these students can display.

Participants/Sampling

I enlisted purposeful sampling to get data on perceived supports needed and also teacher perceptions of EBD students from regular and special education teachers who have experience working with EBD students. Purposeful sampling is based on Patton's (1989) idea of a "convenience" sampling, and it was chosen due to the teachers and their availability to participate, and it provided a representative of the population most affected by my study. I focused on four teachers split evenly between regular education and special education teachers. I used Creswell and Plano-Clark's (2011) maximal variation sampling, by choosing regular education and special education teachers. The idea of maximal variation is that "participants are purposefully chosen to be different in the first place, then their views will reflect this difference and provide a good qualitative study" (p. 174). The varying views of the regular education and the special education teachers were expected, based on the sheer differences in their experiences with children with disabilities, and this variation helped me to also plan for them in the midst of this inclusion program.

The participants chosen for interviews were two special education teachers and two regular education teachers. All four teachers volunteered to participate and understood that they could quit at any time. All names used are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the interviewees. These teachers all have varying years of teaching, and varying experiences with student populations. Each participant brought her own experiences and perspectives to this study and each contributed valuable insights.

In order to gather data on student outcomes, I also included EBD students as my participants. I did not interview these students. I looked at their academic test scores, suspension records, and their hallway citations. I chose six students to focus on and monitor throughout this process. Each student chosen has a primary disability of EBD. I chose four boys and two girls, because the proportion of boys to girls is overwhelming in my school's EBD classification. All students are African American as my school has a 99.9% African American population.

Student One is a 13-year-old female student in the 7th grade. Student Two is a 12-year-old female student in the 7th grade. Student Three is a 14-year-old male in the 7th grade. Student Four is a 15-year-old male in the 8th grade. Student Five is a 14-year-old male student in the 8th grade. Student Six is also a 15-year-old male student in the 8th grade. All six students were previously in self-contained emotional support classes for a minimum of one year prior to this study.

Data Collection

In order to collect the desired data, I interviewed special and regular education teachers, analyzed student academic and behavioral data, observed the school and classroom setting, implemented a professional learning community, and also reviewed material culture during observations (such as seating arrangements of EBD students, attention given to those students, etc.). This study was broken down into three cycles. Each cycle lent itself to the necessary collection of data to move into the next cycle. These cycles were conducted in a way that helped me gather, analyze, and implement data that showed the impact of an inclusive environment for EBD students.

Cycle I included the training of teachers, and the collection of student data. Cycle II included the interviews of teachers, implementation of the PLC, and observations. Cycle III included an evaluation of the supports put in place for teachers and students – Cycle III was a progress monitoring cycle, where I gathered the data to see improvements in student classroom conduct and teacher attitudes.

Interviews. For the purposes of this study, I chose to use four interviewees, taking approximately 30 minutes with each. The reason interviews were chosen is directly aligned to my quest to include teacher input and also to allow the participants to tell their own stories. According to Seidman (2006), the purpose of interviewing is to "understand the lived experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 9). This notion of lived experience is crucial to my wanting to implement a successful inclusion program and, it is very important to understand how teachers have felt within the existing educational programs in order to implement an inclusive one.

The interviews were semi-structured and included several probing questions as suggested by Seidman (2006). I used pseudonyms for each interviewee. The interview questions asked were framed in a way to have teachers reflect on particular incidents and encounters with EBD students and their reactions as well as what strategies they currently use with EBD students and reflecting on their effectiveness.

Observations. I also observed classrooms that currently service EBD students. The purpose of conducting observations was to provide my research with an authentic description of the context. I observed teacher and student interactions and also classroom climate. My observations focused on the following areas:

1. Number of calls to the main office
2. Number of times a student needed to be removed from the classroom
3. Seating of the students
4. How much an EBD student requested help vs. how often the teacher helped

According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), "observation is fundamental to all qualitative inquiry" (p. 194). These observations gave me a first hand look at the actual teacher and student relationships, and also provided me with additional data to describe teacher actions in relation to their attitudes. During these observations, I wrote field notes, which allowed me to document and reflect on the observation: body language, external stimuli, etc. I conducted observations in the beginning stages of the inclusion program and also after three months of its implementation. According to Glesne (2006), "field notes should be both descriptive and analytic" (p. 56), and that is what I strived to accomplish in using and writing my field notes. Making sure that I was descriptive in my observations allowed me to better analyze these observations in relation to the teachers and their interactions with EBD students.

Professional learning communities. The purpose of a professional learning community (PLC) in an urban school is quite similar to one in a suburban school: to raise student achievement. DuFour, Eaker, and DuFour (2005) believe that a PLC is:

> A group of teachers who meet regularly as a team to identify essential and valued student learning, develop common formative assessments, analyze current levels of achievement, set academic goals, share strategies and then create lessons to improve upon those levels. (p. xii)

This very definition is what I based our PLC off of, while also focusing on the inclusion

of EBD students within their classrooms. I also included a focus on improving teacher attitudes to the focus of our PLC.

There are five stages to the implementation of a PLC according to DuFour et al. (2005). Each of the five stages is critical to the development, effectiveness, and sustainability of the PLC. The stages are; beginnings, establishing expectations, identifying and resolving conflicts and differences, supporting and expanding the PLC, and transitions or closure for the PLC. Understanding these five stages and creating a plan to successfully navigate through them was crucial to my PLC. There is a further description of the PLC as far as how it was formed, who participated, and the activities completed in Cycle II of this paper.

Material culture. Hodder (1994) describes material culture as the unspoken evidence. I chose to analyze the number of suspensions or write-ups that students are given, in addition to any other artifacts related to my study. In my interpretation of different articles of material culture, I was able to further analyze the relationship and interactions between teachers and students classified as EBD.

Data Analysis

In order to ensure rigor in this study, I enlisted the following methods: member checking, community practice, and journaling. I also used triangulation as a means of ensuring the information and data collected was accurate to the study. According to Creswell (2002),

> [Triangulation] ensures that the study will be accurate because the information is not drawn from a single source, individual, or process of data collection. In this way, it encourages the researcher to develop a report that is both accurate and credible. (p. 280)

Asking my teachers to keep a journal, and then following up with observations at the conclusion of this study, allowed me to triangulate in a way that my collected data were reinforced.

Member checking. Member checking was done by giving each interviewed participant a copy of the transcribed interview and allowing them to double check for accuracy. I also recapped after each PLC meeting, to ensure accuracy in the content discussed. Including my participants in member checking allowed them to not only review for accuracy, but also take ownership in this study. Once a participant begins to take ownership, they will most likely use the strategies in earnest, furthering the accuracy of my study results.

Community practice. Community practice took place within my academic community of scholars where we gave each other feedback, practiced with our interview protocol questions, and also practiced reflexivity. During my monthly meetings with community scholars, I reviewed my data with them and discussed next steps in reference to my collected data. This community practice also allowed me to reflect on my research and evaluate next steps in my research.

Journaling. Journaling was done to provide a discussion of decisions made in the field while compiling my research. I journaled throughout this entire study, starting from the date I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and ending after the review of my last PLC. Journaling acted as a way to hold myself accountable to following my research plan and model, and also reflect on challenges and successes in the field as I encountered them. In addition to keeping my own journal, I requested that the teachers

participating in the PLC also keep a journal. Their journal was used to track their attitudes and feelings in working with EBD students.

Action Research Cycles

Cycle I. I began the 2010-2011 school year as a special education teacher and ended the year as the special education supervisor for my school. During the 2010-2011 year, there were many changes within our special education programs, namely the push for inclusion. Prior to this school year, there were very few instances where children with disabilities were educated with their peers who did not have a disability. Once we began including children with learning disabilities with their non-disabled peers and saw the growth those students experienced, we began to strategize possibilities for other disability categories.

Working with the EBD students is something I had been doing prior to the 2010-2011 school year as the teacher assigned to them often called out, forcing other special education teachers to cover the classroom. The EBD classroom was filled with students who had behavior problems and who appeared to act out on a daily basis. There were days when as soon as the first bell rang, until the dismissal bell rang, complete chaos ensued within that classroom and throughout the school.

In working with my principal on other school-wide inclusion initiatives, this EBD class came up. My principal and I felt as though we were guilty of allowing these children have a disservice done to them educationally, because amongst all of the chaos there was very little, if any learning going on.

In the 2011-2012 school year, I was charged with implementing an inclusion program for our EBD students that would benefit them educationally and academically. When my principal handed this over to me, I do not think I understood the magnitude of the charge. Suddenly, teachers began to get nervous with the news that they would not only be teaching learning support students, but also emotional support students within their classrooms.

Training. As a special education supervisor with this new responsibility of an EBD inclusion program, I began to think of ways I could train the teachers to better work and strategize in their newfound classroom roles. Even though I wanted the teachers to work together to discover and test their own ideas, I knew that I needed to provide them with some initial training.

We have in-service days before the children arrive every year, and I picked the first day to focus on inclusion. My principal made this training mandatory for all teachers and placed it on the agenda for the day. During this day, I split the teachers according to subject area so that I could work with smaller numbers of teachers at a time. Initially, I played a video clip on inclusion, then I followed up with an inclusion quiz, gave them some literature on best practices and ideas for inclusion implementation, and then I ended with a general discussion on inclusion and next steps.

During this training, initially teachers were hesitant and resistant because they felt as though this was going to be a training "just like the others," where they were given information and lectured on what their responsibilities were, and then just left to figure

out the rest on their own. I explained to them that this training was about providing them with the opportunity to work together in the implementation of this program.

F.A.T. City. I began the training by playing a clip of the movie F.A.T City, which simulates the feelings of a child with a disability. This video goes through the various emotions a special education child experiences. The clip I chose to show spotlighted the feelings of frustration. The clip was only five minutes long, but was a very powerful five minutes.

The clip highlighted the feelings a child with a disability goes through when they are put on the spot to answer a question or complete a task assigned by her teacher when she does not completely understand what is required. After the clip commenced, the teachers in the training were completely speechless and we shared feelings after watching the clip and taking a minute to let the video sit in.

The purpose of my showing this video clip with its simulation was for the teachers I was working with to experience how some of the very children in their classrooms feel. Throughout this project, I would like for teacher attitudes to ultimately improve, and I felt that this would be a great way for teachers to step out of their comfort zones.

Some of the comments that emerged from our conversation were feelings of empathy, surprise, and guilt. The teachers commented that feeling how children with special needs feel was a reality check for them, and encouraged them to be more conscientious when working with them.

Testing our knowledge. I gave a special education quiz (Appendix A), which included various questions regarding special education services and supports. This quiz was used to help determine how much concrete knowledge teachers had in regards to special education students. It is important that teachers not only have supports and resources available to them when working within an inclusion class, but also that teachers have specific knowledge of special education rules and guidelines.

An inclusion program is only as strong as the foundation it is built upon, and the law is definitely a strong foundation to begin with. I was surprised to see how many of the basic questions teachers got wrong- they too were surprised. Questions as simple as "what does the acronym 'MR' stand for?" was met with blank stares. At this moment, it became apparent to me that teachers really did not understand the basics involved with working with special education students.

I knew that in addition to us working on teacher attitudes, I would also have to boost their confidence and their general knowledge of special education. For these teachers, there was a fear of the unknown, and they genuinely did not know about special education. Having honest conversations and providing them with documentation on special education helped them to feel as though they could tackle this beast otherwise known as "special education."

Best practices. As a means of using all of our knowledge to best support the inclusion program, we exchanged best practices when working with students with special needs. Although not every teacher had a lot of knowledge when it came to working with diagnosed students, every teacher shared something.

There were fact sheets printed out and distributed to every teacher as a quick reference available to them, as well as a packet of information on behavior support strategies and ways to differentiate their instruction to meet all learners.

One teacher shouted out "not this again!" in frustration to feeling like she was just given something else to be responsible for, but then another teacher leaned over and explained to her that these best practices help to take the guess work out of their challenges, and in fact makes their jobs easier. I was later thanked by that same frustrated teacher at the end of this project for allowing her to challenge herself to being a better teacher, and not for putting external pressures onto her.

Feelings and next steps. For our closure, I gave all of the teachers a journal and requested that they journal throughout this entire experience. I asked them to journal so that we could gauge common themes and be able to use this information at our bi-weekly focus groups. Understanding that remembering what happens on a day-to-day basis can often be a task, especially when we meet every other week, the journal was given so that teachers could jot down random thoughts related to their work in this inclusion program.

Although not every teacher wrote a lot about their journey in working in this inclusion program, there were a lot of attitude evolutions and clarity moments pulled from these journals. I do believe that the teachers will continue writing in their journals even after this project is officially over. Throughout our PLCs, the teachers expressed their appreciation in journaling, as they said it allowed them to self-reflect on their practices, something they never gave much thought to.

Student data. As part of this first cycle, I also wanted to have some student data to compare and use as a baseline for monitoring and gauging progress. I decided to focus on six students who were previously in self-contained classroom setting, and who are now members of the inclusion program here. For this information, I used their proficiency level from the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), which is the state standardized assessment used to measure how well students understand the state standards. I also used suspension data, suspension codes are very vague, but the number of suspensions is where I primarily focused. Hallway citations are completed by the entire school safety team who are in the hallways during transitions. The safety team carries notepads and keeps track of any students who are causing disruptions in the hallways. As long as they are minor occurrences, they will just make phone calls home or send letters home to the parents. The citation data are pulled from September until the last school day in March.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, there are four levels of which a student can score on the standardized PSSA; advanced, proficient, basic, and below basic. A proficient or advanced level is needed in order for the student to successfully pass the PSSA. The advanced level represents superior academic performance. The proficient level represents a satisfactory academic performance. The basic level reflects marginal academic performance. The below basic level reflects inadequate academic performance.

Student One: This female student is in the 7th grade and has scored Basic on her last year's PSSA in Reading and Below Basic in Math. She has three suspensions from

last year: failure to follow school directives, assault on a student, and foul and improper language. She also had various (20) hallway citations from last year.

Student Two: This female student is also in the 7th grade and has scored Basic on her last year's PSSA in Reading and Basic in Math. She has four suspensions from last year: two were from assaults on students, foul and improper language, and failure to follow classroom rules. She had 14 hallway citations from last year.

Student Three: This is a male student in the 7th grade, who scored Below Basic on his Reading PSSA last year and Below Basic in Math. He has four suspensions from last year and they are all for failure to follow established school rules. He has 16 hallway citations from last year.

Student Four: This is a male student in the 8th grade, who scored Basic on the Reading PSSA and Basic on the Math. He has three suspensions for assaults on other students. He has 29 hallway citations from last year.

Student Five: This is a male student in the 8th grade, who scored Proficient on the Reading PSSA and Proficient on the Math. He has seven suspensions from last year for assaults on students, failure to follow established school rules, and failure to classroom rules/disruptions. He has 39 hallway citations from last year.

Student Six: This student is a male student in the 8th grade who scored Advanced on the Reading PSSA and Basic on the Math. He has had four suspensions for failure to follow classroom rules/disruption. He has 11 hallway citations from last year.

Reflection on Cycle 1

I do believe that this Cycle helped to lay the groundwork and foundation for this project. Although the challenges seem great, the teachers feel empowered and equipped to handle them.

Having a baseline of the student data allowed me to have concrete evidence of what this inclusion program's impacts have been. The one commonality in the student data is that there are a lot of suspensions and hallway citations. Through this program, I hoped to see the number of suspensions and hallway citations reduced, while also improving student test scores.

Cycle II. Cycle II began with personal interviews I performed on each one of my four teacher participants. The next step in Cycle II were the observations I completed inside classrooms where teachers participating in the PLC taught EBD students. Cycle II then commenced with the formal implementation of our Professional Learning Community (PLC) and the implementation of strategies discussed during the PLC. The purpose of a PLC in an urban school is quite similar to one in a suburban school: to raise student achievement. The PLC that I established included regular and special education educators and focused specifically on strategies to improve the current inclusion program for EBD students.

There are five stages to developing a PLC according to DuFour et al. (2005), and my school team went through all five stages, albeit, some stages were more challenging than most. The stages are: beginnings, establishing expectations, identifying and resolving conflict/differences, supporting and expanding the PLC, and transitions or closure for PLC's. It is important to note that while a lot of time was dedicated to the

implementation of our PLC. This PLC formed the basis of our quest for improving the academic program we offered at Forest Middle School, while also allowing us to use self reflection to enhance our own practice as teachers.

Interviews. I interviewed four teachers and made sure to use pseudonyms to protect their identity. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the interviewees.

Table 1.

Interview Participants

Name	Age Range	Race/Ethnicity	Reg/Special Ed	Years of Exp.
Lily	Mid 50's	Af. American	Special Education	25+
Molly	Mid 20's	Af. American	Special Education	5+
Sunny	Early 50's	Af. American	Regular Education	15+
Lee	Mid 50's	Caucasian	Regular Education	22+

Lily is an African-American female special education teacher in her mid 50s. Lily has been working for the school district for over 25 years and has extensive knowledge in special education. Sunny is an African-American regular education teacher in his early 50s and has been working for the school district for about 15 years. Lee is a Caucasian male in his mid 50s who has been teaching regular education for 22 years within the school district. Molly is an African-American female special education teacher who has taught in the district for 5 years.

Initially, the teachers were very apprehensive about wanting to do the interviews. The same teachers who had no problem with the idea of participating in a PLC, showed resistance to being interviewed. In speaking with them, I discovered that they just wanted and needed reassurance that they would not be judged according to their responses. In my role at the school, I did not have the authority to formally observe or rate any of the teachers, I simply was in charge of ensuring IEPs and other special education paperwork got completed. I made sure to give the teachers a copy of the interview protocol (Appendix B) before the actual interviews, but I think that had a negative impact on their actual interview responses.

The fact that the interviews were going to be tape-recorded also fed into the resistance. I made sure to let the teachers know that I was there to help bring improvements, and not to judge. Lily made sure to remind me that no matter what, I was in her same bargaining unit and even if I wanted to judge or use information against them, I could not.

Even before completing the interviews, I knew and understood the personalities of the people I was interviewing and had preconceived notions about how their interviews would go. I had to make sure I ignored those notions and went into the interviews with a clear mind and ready to accept anything the interviewees had to offer.

These interviews helped to provide me with insight to begin to put together the PLC that we would ultimately form together. In order for me to better understand the teachers, I also decided to conduct informal classroom observations within the individual teacher's classrooms to see first hand the interactions between them and the EBD

students in their classroom, as well as the different strategies the teachers were currently implementing. I wanted the participants to understand that I did not have the authority to evaluate them, and I was just there to see interactions that we could discuss at our next PLC.

Observations. I decided to conduct observations after I completed the interviews. I explained to the teachers that I was not evaluating them and was in fact just observing student interactions and strategies used. The issue of my union alliance was brought up again by Lily, so I needed to preface my visits with that statement. Lily made sure to remind the group that since we all were in the same union, I would not formally observe, nor evaluate their teaching. I observed every classroom for a half of a period at a time – one day the first 45 minutes, and the next day the last 45 minutes. I chose to break up my visits so that the teachers and students did not get overwhelmed with having someone in their classroom for too long a period of time.

Each time I visited, I made sure to take field notes to record what I saw. There was one particular instance when I visited Lily and Lee's inclusion classroom and understood why the teachers were apprehensive about my classroom visit. Lily came to class late and instead of participating in the lesson, she sat down in the back of the room the entire time. The one EBD student in the classroom was having a bad day and would not stay put in her seat. Instead of Lily working with the student (as the special educator), she instead continued to sit and watch the lesson and time go by. It was apparent to me that there was no set plan for this particular student and she was allowed to roam the classroom, call out answers, and curse at her peers. In this instance, the EBD student

ruled the classroom and it was apparent that we needed to address this situation in our next PLC, to give the teachers control of their classroom again.

Not every observation began and ended like the Lily and Lee observation, there was an observation that I conducted in Molly's classroom where I noticed how the students felt comfortable with her and how she respected the students. It was clear that her respect for the students resulted in their respect of her. Molly had a strict discipline model that she chose to follow, where the students understood what was expected of them. In Molly and Sunny's classroom, they had the rules, rewards, and alternative choices visible, and also had their behavior-monitoring chart very visible and accessible for the students to see.

During these observations, there were a few generalizations that I made; the teachers who had relationships with the students had the most success with them, teachers who had clear behavior modifications had very good success as well, and the teachers who had high expectations for their students saw academic success. Although Lily and Lee struggled with their classroom management, their students had academic success.

These observations added to our conversations as a PLC. We were able to use the observations and situations that arose during them as conversation starters and scenarios to problem solve. The teachers were very open to using their individual situations and challenges as examples for us to analyze during our PLC meetings. After the interviews and observations were completed, we began to implement our PLC.

Beginnings. During this stage, I focused on having all members of my PLC go from a name only basis knowledge of each other, to one that includes understanding each

other's beliefs, values, and also contributions. DuFour et al. (2005) suggest that this first stage focus on really getting below the surface and understanding each other. This stage was crucial for setting up the foundation of the members who are a part of my PLC. I made sure to incorporate team-building activities, such as "learn, delta," "glows and grows," and "your positive is my positive."

Learn delta. This activity is something I weaved throughout each PLC meeting, where we really focused on progress made. This activity is done at the end of the PLC meeting, and we use chart paper to chart things we learned (or new concepts we picked up) as well as our deltas – things we are planning to change in our classrooms. The purpose of this activity is to celebrate things that are working while also planning to make changes for the better when things are not working. The members of the PLC all knew that the purpose of our PLC project was to identify some solid strategies that could be implemented across curriculum within our classes that would benefit the inclusion of our EBD students.

Glows and grows. The concept of glows and grows is something very commonly used in teacher preparation programs that asks students to reflect on the lesson they just had and write down a glow and a grow from it. This activity focused on individual progress. We began each PLC meeting with a quick glow and grow. We focused on our own attitude growth for these quick-writes. The members had to use their journals to identify two glows they personally had in their interactions with their EBD students, and also two ways that they want to improve on their interactions with their EBD students and labeling them as grows. I think this process of self-reflection, going beyond what

they journaled really allowed the teachers to take ownership of their feelings and make changes for the better.

Hope and a fear. This activity was designed to think even more personally about particular students. In this activity, teachers had to think of their most challenging student for that week and write two hopes and fears for the upcoming week and how they would ensure their hopes for the child become a reality. The teachers then shared their hopes, fears, and plans with the rest of the members and we kept a chart designed to track our progress with each particular student.

In order to meet my goals of "helping each individual move from recognition of a name or face to one beginning to understand the beliefs, values, knowledge, and skills that each individual brings to the PLC" (Putnam, Gunnings-Moton, & Sharp, 2009, p. 32), I needed to include focused activities. During the beginnings stage, we adopted and implemented roles for each member as a way to hold ourselves accountable and focused on raising student achievement and improving our inclusion program.

I made sure to explicitly let all members of the PLC know that they are a part of leadership while participating in this PLC, and that together we would identify goals and strategies that we want to set not only for ourselves, but also for the students we are focused on. This information allowed the teachers to feel more comfortable with sharing, and also promoted ownership over this project. Due to the nature of us all being members of the same bargaining unit, I felt it was necessary to establish group norms and expectations as a guide for subsequent PLC meetings. These group norms worked to keep us on task and to limit wasted time.

Establishing expectations. Establishing expectations helped to provide the PLC with a focus for our bi-monthly meetings. Using our established group norms as a basis for ideal interactions, we strived to consistently follow and adhere to them; sometimes it was not so easy. There was a specific time when Lily shouted, "I don't have to do this! It's not a part of my contract!" and although there was another teacher nodding in agreement, the rest of the teachers chose to remain positive and ready to move forward in the progress we were making. Since the teachers understood that they could stop at any time, I expected them to never come back, but that was not the case. Our meetings continued as if this outburst never happened.

We began to establish expectations by setting goals for our PLC as a whole, reviewing the conflict resolution steps as a whole, and also by identifying individual strengths that exist within our PLC. I chose to focus on the team and not merely the individual for this stage in the PLC development.

Allowing each member to see what they brought to our PLC and how together we can improve student achievement for our EBD students, and also improve our own collective morale surrounding EBD students, was a huge focus for this stage also. Collective and individual accountability was the vehicle for ensuring that each member "pulls their own weight" and accepts responsibility for participating and internalizing the goals and mission of our PLC.

Identifying and resolving conflict/ differences. This stage is where unfortunately, initially a lot of our time was spent as a PLC. Working in a major urban school district, such as Philadelphia, there are a lot of conflicting attitudes and work ethics. Teachers like

Lily are abundant in the school district of Philadelphia, and unfortunately their negativity is what is overflowing in our schools.

According to Putnam and Burke (2005), there are six steps for identifying and resolving conflict. The steps are: reach an agreement that there is a conflict, state the conflict, identify and select responses, create a solution, design and implement a plan, and assess success. These stages are aligned in a manner that helped guide us through the natural process of conflict resolution.

During these steps of conflict resolution, it was very important to have a facilitator (someone removed from the conflict) and for that facilitator to solicit solutions from all members – this ensured that everyone feels heard. Using reframing techniques and "I" statements also helped to clarify conflict misunderstandings.

In order for these conflict resolution steps to be successful, all members needed to participate and buy into the proposed plan; this helped to ensure that all members feel accountable for the PLCs success. As the writer and participant of this project, I needed to be sure that I encouraged all of my members to be open and not afraid to question each other, because that is how true knowledge is built. I also had to set the expectation that everyone's voice is equal and that no matter what, we would all work together to solve any conflicts that arise. This expectation was tested a few times.

During our second PLC meeting, Lily and Lee did not show up to our meeting. I decided to page them through the school, because one of our norms was that we would not hold meetings if everyone was not in attendance. Once they reported to our designated meeting spot, they participated fully. Later on during one of our last meetings,

Lily told me since the day I paged her she had decided that she would participate as an equal party, because we did not start that meeting without her.

Learning how to work together and view each other as equals was a challenging task because of the number of years some teachers had and also how seniority impacted how much a person chose to participate. I made sure to include teachers with varying seniority years so that there would be an equal representation of all teacher levels.

Supporting and expanding the PLC. This stage was focused on learning goals and outcomes that were aligned with the improvement of the inclusion program for EBD students. We focused on exchanging lesson planning ideas (with differentiation), teaching strategies, and also best practices to meet the needs of our students. During this stage, we were constantly aligning our activities to the improvement of our EBD inclusion program.

To ensure that we were truly driven by student and self-improvements, we focused on before, during, and after data. Using the data I collected from Cycle I (standardized assessments, hallway citations and referrals, and also our first journal entries), we decided as a group to come up with ways that we can best support and enhance our students, while also improving our own attitudes as teachers towards this student population.

This stage worked on problem solving techniques, by focusing on what we each were seeing in our own classrooms and bringing it to our PLC meetings for discussions. This allowed the entire PLC to brainstorm ideas, solutions, interventions, and techniques to help the particular teacher and targeted student achieve success in the classroom.

By incorporating real scenarios from our individual classrooms and bringing them to the PLC, it allowed us to work as a team to solve them. Focusing on teamwork and understanding individual successes make up our team success is something that we came to realize during this stage.

Transitions or closure for our PLC. During this last and final stage of the development of our PLC, we completed our project by understanding that in order for any changes to be sustained, we would need to continuously work to better ourselves as teachers, which would in turn help our students to improve.

Reflection on Cycle II

Interviewing the teachers allowed me to hear from them first hand their perceptions they had for EBD students. These interviews allowed the teachers to have their voices heard and in doing so, allowed them to self-reflect on their current attitudes towards the EBD students within their classrooms. The observations let me take the insights learned from the interviews and see first hand the interactions between students and teachers and the strategies used. The interviews and observations provided me with a good amount of data, but the PLC proved to be very beneficial to student and teacher improvements.

Setting up the PLC proved to be extremely important for the success of our EBD students. Working with this specific group of students, each member of the PLC was able to focus strategically on the students' growth, and also their own growth as a teacher. "A professional learning community requires intention, a focus on learning, a focus on results, a commitment to collegiality and a willingness to reshape a school's culture"

(Crow, 2008, p. 10). As a PLC, we worked not only to improve the inclusion of EBD students, but also to improve upon our own negative feelings towards working with EBD students, as a way to help reshape the culture of Forest Middle School. While reshaping the culture of the school can be seen as a measuring tool of our school's success as a PLC, I decided that if I could demonstrate an attitude improvement amongst teachers, that would in turn eventually impact the school's culture.

Cycle III

Cycle III was the concluding cycle and it included an evaluation of the supports we put in place thus far. Although we did not take an entire school year to track and monitor progress, we did choose to use two marking periods to evaluate our success as a PLC and for me to evaluate my research project. This cycle looked at the strategies put in place and their effectiveness in regards to: testing data, post interviews with teachers, collection of hallway citations, and teacher journals.

Supports in place. The purpose of the PLC was to identify some key strategies for us to put in place as a collective group that would benefit our EBD students behaviorally and academically. These supports were used inside and outside the classroom. We identified weekly monitoring sheets, guided reading groups, computer time as an incentive, remediation work when needed, and electronic flash cards to keep students interested all as strategies to implement.

During our sessions, these five strategies were tried between our PLC meetings and teachers each discussed their effectiveness. All five of these strategies were shown to help hold students accountable, keep students interested, and allowed them to receive

additional academic supports inside their classroom, which all together created a better managed classroom with fewer disruptions from the EBD students.

Testing data. Prior to beginning this study, the students identified as being participants displayed a range of abilities as shown in their PSSA assessments. Because the PSSA is given at the end of the school year (April), I decided to base their testing data on their scores on the Predictive assessments. The Predictive assessment is given by the state of Pennsylvania three times a school year as an indicator of how a student will perform on the PSSA, as it is aligned to the PSSA with the same standards and format. The scoring is also the same for the Predictive (Advanced, Proficient, Basic, and Below Basic) and includes the same subjects – reading and math. There were numerous informal academic supports put in place for all six students, but by every student you will see what their respective teacher felt was the most beneficial for that student to learn and achieve.

Post interviews. In preparation for these post interviews, I gave each teacher a rating scale focused on their perceptions (Appendix C), where I asked them to rate themselves. I used these scales to see how and if teacher attitudes changed. I also chose to follow up with an interview with each participant to see if I could get even more insight from them in regards to teacher attitudes and perceptions. This time, I did not share the interview protocol with the participants.

Hallway citations. Hallway citations were a way for me to quantify the number of behavioral incidents the students encountered before we began this study and how that number may have changed. Hallway citations are completed by the school's safety team

and are used as tools to monitor inappropriate hallway activity. Historically, EBD students were the population of students with the most hallway citations. Collectively, among the six students who I chose to focus on during this study, they had 129 hallway citations from September until the end of March previous school year.

During this cycle, one of the strategies in place to help with hallway transitions was to give students a weekly monitoring sheet. Students carried a weekly monitoring sheet with them and if they were able to successfully complete hallway transitions without a citation they were awarded points according to how many transitions they successfully complete (there are a total of 6 transitions = 6 points) at the end of the week, students met with their counselors to "cash" in their points.

Students were able to choose from special lunches, helping time (where students got to work with their buddy teacher during their expressive arts time), computer time, and classroom/school responsibilities. A combination of these incentives can be credited to the decrease in hallway citations.

Teacher journals. As a part of their participation, teachers were asked to keep a journal, where they kept track of their feelings in regards to the EBD students in their classroom. I wanted us to be able to use our journals as topic starters during our PLC meetings. Although not every teacher wrote via the requested weekly timeline, every teacher did have something to share during our PLCs from his or her journals.

Lily. I found Lily's journal entries to be the most moving. Initially she spoke about "not being interested" and only participating "to make sure the union contract was being followed." Lily was apprehensive about this study because she felt as though "administration" was forcing us to do something we should not be doing and that the

EBD students were being set up for failure. Throughout this study, Lily evolved into being one of the most vocal proponents and supporters for inclusion. She was able to see the growth that the students experienced and was quoted as reading "the sparkles I see in the students eyes when they feel empowered and equal is not something I can take away," as something from her journal. When I asked her about that particular entry, she said if she continued to fight inclusion, she would be single handedly putting out that flame in students eyes and that was not something she could bare to do.

Molly. Molly's entries were the most positive from the beginning. Molly has always been a huge proponent of inclusion since she arrived at the school. In the beginning, Molly spoke about "uncertainty" and being "apprehensive" about her ability to actually follow through on an inclusion program that included EBD students. Molly's entries became more powerful and filled with confidence towards the end of our PLC meetings. Molly continued to bring her "make it work" attitude to our meetings, and she always had a strategy to try. Molly's confidence boost from seeing strategies that actually worked helped to transpire into her classroom, which helped her classroom management improve.

Sunny. Sunny entered into this project doing a good job accommodating students, but through his journaling, he saw the need to better accommodate his students academically. Lee thought that he was doing a good job behaviorally, but he needed to make a bigger effort academically. In the beginning he wrote about being "structured but supportive" and how he made his students feel comfortable within the confines of his behavioral expectations, but that he was "failing them academically" when he did not

give them work that challenged them. Through this process, he was able to give his students more challenging work and watch them rise to the challenges.

Lee. Lee's entries were able to chronicle his evolvement into being a more accommodating teacher. Lee was able to see from our meetings that although he felt as if he was accommodating his students by letting them "work with partners," he was not doing anything on a more individualized level. Lee began to write things such as "how am I helping Sean," where he was forcing himself to think of individual students and how he could help them. Lee began to realize that as a regular education teacher, he had to "think like a special education teacher" in order to meet all students needs at times.

These journal entries showed the growth from all teachers and allowed everyone to do self-reflections. Once the teachers were able to reflect on their thoughts from the previous week, they were able to mentally list things to work on for the coming week.

Reflection on Cycle III

Cycle III was a very hands-on cycle. It allowed us to put strategies in practice as we were discovering them, and actually see how they worked. This cycle was able to track progress made for two marking periods, and we discovered that the strategies put in place had a positive impact on the academic and behavioral well being of the EBD students in our study.

The testing data improved, hallway citations decreased, and generally teachers felt better equipped to teach EBD students. These three main facets are all important to the inclusion of EBD students. The strategies we used allowed students to take ownership of their own learning, allowed students to be challenged and supported on academic

assignments, allowed students to maintain interests in academic subjects, and forced teachers to be reflective in their everyday practice. All four teachers who participated found these strategies to be helpful in their every day classrooms. The teachers may not have used every practice daily, but through our PLC meetings, they were able to strategize and use the strategies most effective for particular students.

The teachers also gained a confidence, not witnessed before, which helped in their daily interactions and teachings of not just EBD students, but all students who require accommodations. As crucial as this cycle was, it allowed students and teachers alike to come to a place where education was taking place, without boundaries.

Chapter IV

Explanation of Findings

The research findings from each of the three research cycles allowed me to fully answer my research questions. From the cycles, I was able to gauge staff members' behavioral and academic perceptions of EBD students, discover strategies to support teachers and students in EBD inclusion programs, and also find evidence of improved academic and behavioral outcomes for EBD students in inclusion classrooms.

The findings from this study provide a lot of positive results for the possibility of inclusion programs for EBD students. The purpose of this mixed methods action research study was to evaluate and improve an inclusion program that is not only successful for student achievement, but one that also relies heavily on teachers' voice and input and that will encourage teachers to improve their attitudes towards Emotionally Behaviorally Disturbed (EBD) students. Through the below findings, there are suggestions for improvements to the current inclusion program, examples of teacher voice, along with evidence of attitude improvements amongst teachers towards EBD students.

Common Themes

Table 2 provides the reader with the process by which I chose to code and further analyze my data. Within Table 2 there are the research questions on the left and followed by four iterations of data coding and theme emergence (the fourth iteration is in narrative form under the table). This code map helped narrow down and discover the perceptions and strategies most needed that emerged from my research and the data collected. The first iteration includes information gathered from my first interviews and from

preliminary observations completed. The second iteration represents common themes brought up in our PLC meetings. The third iteration represents the themes brought up through the implementation of our PLC strategies. The fourth iteration represents a culmination of all common themes seen throughout my data collection.

Table 2.

EBD Common Themes

Research Questions	1st Iteration	2nd Iteration	3rd Iteration
1. What are school staff member's perceptions of EBD students within inclusive classrooms	1. Same as other students 2. Requires additional time 3. Should not be included with other students 4. Can't tell the difference between them and regular education students	1. All of our children 2. Best setting? Keep children first	1. Resisting
2. What strategies do teachers enlist to support EBD students?	1. Extra time 2. Behavior charts 3. Allow co-teacher to interject 4. Yelling and/ or screaming	1. Same strategies for all students 2. Personal expertise	1. Accommodating
3. What resources are available to support teachers whom work with EBD students?	1. Office Support 2. Special Educator 3. In school behavioral health	1. Use of another teacher 2. In school behavioral health support	1. Transitioning

4th Iteration. Staff members exhibited one of the following three characteristics when it came to their perceptions of EBD students in an inclusion program before our PLC: resistance, accommodation, and/ or transitioning. Three out of four interviewed staff members had very positive things to say regarding the inclusion of EBD students, whereas one staff member spoke rather negatively about not only EBD students in particular, but also about all students. In general, when a teacher felt supported and as if she had someone in her corner (co-teacher, special educator, etc.), she had a more positive perception towards EBD students in their classroom.

Theme Emergences

Within my findings and as seen in Table 2 (3rd iteration), there were three common themes: resisting, accommodating, and transitioning. Each theme provided me with a category in which my findings fell. These themes allowed me to identify patterns and commonalities between my four interviews and my five observations conducted.

Resisting. Within my observations and interviews there was clear evidence of resistance from certain teachers. During my first observation at the beginning of the year meeting, there was a verbal altercation between two of my participants. Lily felt as though this would be unnecessary work, and that inclusion was a waste of our time. Lily was very transparent in letting everyone know how many years she had been in education, and inclusion was just not a part of her experience. Lily was clearly resisting changes within the realm of special education. The resistance that Lily exhibited initially was so strong and obvious from observations, that when she did eventually see the benefits of inclusion, the entire PLC was shocked.

In my interview conducted with Lily, there were several instances where she referenced not wanting to have EBD students in her classroom and that she was not "equipped" to handle them, even as a special educator. Lily has been employed by the district for quite some years and brings with her a wealth of special education knowledge, but she was also resisting the idea of including EBD students (something that had not formerly been done) within her inclusion classroom setting.

Accommodating. One observation in particular with Sunny showed his willingness to accommodate and make accommodations for an EBD student. The student in Sunny's class was fixated on his watch and refused to participate in the lesson or even let the lesson continue, finally Sunny pretended to try to fix his watch and when he noticed it could not be fixed and that he tried, he began completing his work. This minor accommodation allowed this particular student to feel validated and also for him to complete his work. In my interview with Lee, who also has this same student, when he saw the student fixated on his watch one day he decided to take the watch and refuse to give it back to him, instead of trying to figure out why the student was fixated on it. This minute difference was the deciding factor on whether or not this student would get his work done (as done with Sunny) or be a class disruption for the entire day (as with Lee).

Transitioning. The subsequent observations done in classrooms showed teachers willing to try and work with the students. Although not all of the teachers observed had a special education background, there was evidence that they were willing to work with and have the EBD students in their classrooms. In one particular observation, Molly was clearly struggling with controlling her inclusion classroom, as students were talking over

her, refusing to do their work, and some were even walking around the room. Even though there were only two EBD students in the room (and one was at the nurse), she was working with the main disruption (the other EBD student) and finally found something to keep him busy, an electronic math game (which is something she shared during our PLC meeting). She said ordinarily she would have just sent him out of the room when he began disrupting it, but because she is a proponent for inclusion she would do what she had to do to make it work, even though this was all new to her.

Teacher Perceptions

When interviewing and observing my interviewees, there were commonalities that emerged:

- EBD students are the same as other children
- All students require assistance at times
- Students should not be excluded

During Molly's interview, she made it very clear that whatever strategies she was using for her EBD students, she would use them with her other students. Molly was very adamant that what works for some students can work for all students and that it was her job to find out what works to meet their needs. There was however, one outlier (Lily), who came across extremely negative in the interview and consequently her observation, who felt as though as a special educator she was not "equipped" to handle certain classified students and that she did not believe that EBD students should be included with the general education students.

Throughout the journal entries (see Chapter III), you can see the growth and transformation that each teacher made in their interactions with EBD students. Teacher perceptions of EBD students improved throughout each cycle of this study. The condensed descriptions from their journals in Chapter III further describe this improvement.

Identified Strategies to Help EBD Students

In one particular observation, there was a special education teacher printing out remediation work for the EBD child (and other child) that was on their level when she realized the lesson she planned was too hard for them. In her classroom there was a computer and printer, and with that she was able to create something that kept the children engaged, and also learning. In the classroom where this same observation took place, there were behavior charts on the wall where students were able to visually gauge how their behavior was for the day, week, and even month. Each student had individualized behavior goals and incentives that they were working on, and this also helped with ensuring proper behaviors amongst all students, EBD students included.

Resources Available to Teachers

In interviewing and observing Molly, it was very apparent that although she was interested in inclusion she required more supports in order for it to be successful. During Molly's observation she required assistance from school security due to an altercation between two students, but yet security took over 20 minutes to arrive, and even then they only removed the students for 10 minutes before bringing them back to class. Molly expressed the need to have better supports in place within her classroom when there is an

emergency, such as the one described. Molly felt as though if there were more supports in place and resources for her as a teacher, she would be more successful in the inclusion of her students.

Post Interviews

The post interview rating scale for each teacher participant was designed to measure teacher perceptions and their overall feel of support. The questions asked the participating teachers to rate their level of comfort in providing supports to EBD students in their classrooms and the mean score was a 4, indicating that the teachers agreed that they were comfortable providing educational and behavioral supports. The participants were also asked to rate their understanding of EBD students and their needs, and the mean was a 4.5 which was equally between the strongly agree and the agree statement. The question asking participants if they knew who to reach out to if they needed additional classroom supports pertaining to EBD students received a mean score of a 5. This shows that participants all strongly agreed that they knew who to reach out to. For the question asking participants if their participation in this project had changed their interactions with EBD students, the mean score was a 4, indicating that the participating teachers agreed. The final two questions on the rating scale asked if participants witnessed academic and behavioral progress being made by EBD students, and they both scored a 5, indicating that they strongly agreed that progress was made.

The results of this post-interview rating scale overwhelmingly indicate positive results for both teachers and students. The teachers not only felt as though they had a

better understanding of EBD students and that they knew who to turn to with any needs, but that they also witnessed academic and behavioral progress made by EBD students.

Student Data

Testing data results. As discussed in Chapter III, the PSSA and State Predictive data were collected to not only serve as baseline data, but also as projective data in regards to the individual students test scores. The following is a narrative of each individual student's baseline and projective data.

Student One: She previously scored a Basic in reading and Below Basic in math. For this year's two Predictive assessments, she scored a Basic in reading and a Proficient in reading and then a Basic in Math and Basic in Math. Her test scores show that she improved in reading and math and is expected to score Proficient on the PSSA in reading and Basic on the PSSA in math.

Student One's reading teacher felt as though including her in the small reading groups was her best support, prior to this study she had never worked in small guided reading groups with her peers due to her self-contained class status. Her math teacher thought that she was missing a lot of the basic skills, and began allowing her to use the computer for various differentiated assignments. The computer was also an intervention that helped to calm her down when she was having a bad day.

Student Two: She previously scored a Basic in reading and math on the previous PSSA. For the past two Predictive assessments this year, she scored a Basic and Advanced on Reading and a Basic and Proficient in Math. She also improved according

to this year's Predictive assessments and is expected to score Advanced on the reading PSSA and Proficient on the math assessment.

Student Two's reading teacher felt as though her biggest barrier to learning was her behavior, and therefore further pushed the weekly monitoring sheet for her academic classes as well as her hallway behavior. Her behaviors drastically improved in the classroom and got to the point where she was able to self-monitor herself. She was so proud of the improvement in her behavior that her academic abilities were able to be showcased. Her math teacher (the same teacher that Student One had) also implemented computer time and computer skills as a way for her to practice her basic math deficits. This tool helped her to increase her confidence in math and therefore allowed her to better seek help when needed. She previously scored Below Basic on the reading and math PSSA and according to Predictive data, should score Proficient on reading and math.

Student Three: He previously scored Below Basic in both reading and math on the PSSA. He scored a Below Basic and a Basic in reading and a Basic and Proficient on math for this years Predictive assessment. Student Three has also improved on his test scores for both areas and is expected to receive a Basic in reading and a Proficient in math on this years PSSA assessment.

Student Four: He previously scored a Basic in reading and math on the previous PSSA. He scored a Proficient on the reading Predictive assessment and Basic and Proficient on the math portions. He too has improved on his academics and is expected to score a Proficient in reading and a Proficient in math for the upcoming PSSA.

Student Five: He previously scored a Proficient in reading and math on the previous PSSA and this year scored a Proficient in reading and an Advanced in math. He was absent for the first Predictive, so he only has one score for each subject area. Even with his absence, he is expected to score a Proficient in reading and an Advanced in math on this years PSSA assessment.

Student Six: This student previously scored an Advanced on the reading and a Basic on the math assessment. He scored Advanced again on both reading Predictives and Proficient on both math Predictive assessments. He is expected to score Advanced on the reading portion and Proficient on the math portion.

Table 3

Student Test Data

Student	Previous PSSA	Predicted PSSA
1	Basic- Reading	**Advanced**-Reading
	Basic- Math	**Proficient**- Math
2	Below Basic- Reading	**Proficient**- Reading
	Below Basic- Math	**Proficient**- Math
3	Below Basic- Reading	**Basic**- Reading
	Below Basic-Math	**Proficient**- Math
4	Basic- Reading	**Proficient**- Reading
	Basic-Math	**Proficient**- Math
5	Proficient- Reading	Proficient- Reading
	Proficient- Math	**Advanced**-Math
6	Advanced- Reading	Advanced- Reading
	Basic- Math	**Proficient**-Math

Bold displays improvement

Hallway citations. Table 4 shows how the number of hallway citations changed. Hallway citations were used as a part of the data collection for this study, because it was a tangible way to get real-time numbers on student behaviors. Hallway citations are used daily and at all hallway transitions to ensure students are exhibiting appropriate behaviors. The data collected represent September until the last day of school in March. This was an area in which EBD students often times held the most number out of any school group, and therefore, it was important to decrease these numbers.

Table 4

Citation Data

Student	Prior to Study	At Completion of Study	Change
Student 1	20	10	-10
Student 2	14	5	-9
Student 3	16	4	-12
Student 4	29	10	-19
Student 5	39	11	-28
Student 6	11	3	-8

The number of citations drastically reduced from the previous 129 collectively to the present 43. That is a decrease of over 80 citations.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

Researcher as a Leader

When I came into this project, I had no idea where to begin with making my vision of inclusion a reality. I was determined to make changes in the special education arena. The one thing I knew was that if I stood quietly and watched the special education classrooms become black holes, I was not being an advocate for my students. My students have behavioral challenges, learning disabilities, and some even have a general anxiety of school. I know that a person in my position as an educator has the ability to motivate, encourage, and simply be a role model to our students. Ensuring that these students are receiving the same quality education as other students and that we are meeting all of their needs is the true definition of an educator. It was my hope that I may have been able to encourage my fellow educators to work to not only teach these students, but also to embrace them.

I believe that once educators see the benefits surrounding inclusive education, they will be more apt to embrace it. Educators are morally obligated to ensure all students are given the opportunity to learn in the most conducive environments as possible. As soon as the urgency to improve our educational system's inclusive education becomes dull, we begin a downward spiral of injustice. This helped to shape my thinking as a leader during this study; if not now, when? Coming into this study, I began to work it all out in my head.

The team of teachers who agreed to participate helped me to realize quite a few things about myself during this study. Working with adults is harder than simply working it all out in my head. There were times that I felt no one else shared my vision, and that because I knew how I wanted it done, I should do the work myself. When I felt like things were not as efficient or as detailed as I would have liked, I took over the project and then just gave them the information afterwards. This proved to be my downfall. This caused conflicts with my participants and caused some time to be wasted during our PLCs. The necessary conversation had during our third PLC meeting gave me a reality check.

The conversation I had with my team is something that has completely changed my idea of leadership. I learned a great deal about myself and working with others during that conversation. Knowing that because I was not giving anyone a chance to work at their own pace and contribute accordingly, I was essentially distancing myself and encouraging negativity amongst the group. In order to be a leader you need to trust your team – that was something I did not do. I realized that I did not trust them, and that I was indeed working in isolation and was more consumed with the end product then the team's cohesiveness.

I began to realize that I was not the only one who was capable of researching, and I definitely was not in the fight for inclusion by myself. It meant a lot to me to have my team open up to me and trust me enough to not only express their feelings on how they felt they were being treated, but also express how they still wanted me as their leader. I am grateful that they were able to converse with me, and that we were able to get past our

differences fairly quickly. Looking back, I am only beginning to see the huge impact this conversation has continued to have on me. When in similar situations such as this study I try to reflect on this conversation with my participants and remind myself that no matter what the situation looks like, I am not in this alone. I am grateful that we were able to come together and work as a true team to make our inclusion program a success. Inclusive classrooms are inherently complex environments that involve the interactive participation of all key stakeholders to be successful (Chmiliar, 2009). Had we not all worked together on this project, it may not have been as successful as it is.

After our conversation, opening up the lines of communication with my participants became easier, and working with them to set up our inclusion model became more inclusive in itself. Instead of trying to do all of the work myself, I allowed other teachers who had more expertise in a particular area spearhead the strategy piece, this allowed for everyone to contribute to the success of our program. I began opening up the lines of communication; that is where all of the ideas for inclusion came from. During our PLCs, we were able to focus our time brainstorming about our inclusion program and how to make it better.

Understanding the importance of people working together is something I am still learning. Although I had a vision and was on a mission to empower my special education students, the process by which I was leading was wrong. My team had a lot to offer, and together we were able to take this idea of inclusion and make it a reality in our building. There was no way that one person could have done all of that work as effectively and efficiently as we did. After all, as much as I liked to believe I knew everything about inclusion, the people on my team were much more knowledgeable than I was on the

subject. I had to force myself to realize that I did not know everything and that I was not the only person passionate to begin inclusive practices at the school. Once I had this revelation, I began to see the worth and the value of working with others. I began to see the wealth of knowledge and the different points of views that my team members had.

In doing the research, I have found that although most of my values have been in the realm of Model II, my actual execution of leadership has been that of Model I. Argyris and Schön (1974) discuss each Model in detail. When I talk about Model II, I am mostly speaking about transformational leadership. According to Wren (1995), a transformational leader is one that "shapes, alters, and elevates the motives and values and goals of followers" (p. 103). Model I, or transactional leadership, is best described as one who mainly "owns and controls the task" according to Argyris and Schön (1974). I was guilty of exhibiting Model I attributes when I thought that I could perform the entire task of improving inclusion on my own. I began my journey wanting to make a change and not only empower, but also advocate for the students I knew most needed it. I wanted my students to feel as if they could do anything anyone else could do. I wanted my students to know that they would be educated with everyone else. What I found myself doing, however, was being so concerned with the end result that I began to work in isolation and withhold information. My vision for inclusion was getting muddied all because I was unable to realize the benefits of shared-decision making and open communication.

In order to get other educators and administrators on board in the beginning and maintaining district wide inclusive programs, I know that I need to do so collaboratively.

I know that although I may think I know the right way, it is always more beneficial to solicit other people's suggestions and work together to come up with solutions. I know that I am not one to stand in front of a crowd and dictate; I am much more the person to quietly take responsibility along with the added work. I will have to work to make sure I am practicing distributed leadership, so that I can continue my quest for practicing Transformational Model II leadership. This idea can best be akin to Argyris and Schön (1974), when they talk about internal commitment. "The individual is committed to an action because it is intrinsically satisfying" (p. 89). I believe that because I have made an internal commitment to inclusion and educational equality, I will now need to do my best to be an effective leader. A transformational leader who "converts followers into leaders and [also] may convert leaders into moral agents" (Wren, 1995, p. 3) is someone I strive to be. I would like to engage others in a way that they too want to fight for inclusion and educational equality.

Conclusions

The purpose of this action research study was to find out what supports and services are needed to improve an inclusion program for the 13 students who are classified as Emotionally Behaviorally Disturbed (EBD) within my Middle School (Forest Middle School). This study focused on regular and special education teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of inclusion programs as a starting point and worked to develop a professional learning community that focused on finding the supports to best assist EBD students, while also including the teacher perceptions, comfort levels, and feedback.

Through the PLC that we established as a part of this study, we were able to identify five different strategies, which proved successful throughout the duration of this study. The five different strategies identified were: weekly monitoring sheets (student self-monitored), guided reading groups, computer time (as an incentive), remediation work, and electronic flash cards (to keep students interested).

Strategies

Successfully including students with EBD into the general education environment depends on the interventions and behavior modifications that are put in place to support these students. According to Patton et al. (2006), students need to have the opportunity to take ownership of their own education and behavior. Patton et al. believe that students can and should manage their own behavior. Patton et al. believe that when teachers implement student self-monitoring into the classroom correctly, more desirable behaviors will be achieved amongst EBD students, which will in turn improve academic and student social potential. The weekly monitoring sheets implemented in this study allowed students to do the self-monitoring. Student self-monitoring is a tool that is used to hold students accountable for their own behavior; it also helps to transfer the burden of behavior management from the teacher to the student. Student self-monitoring is just one example of a more formal intervention desired by the interviewed teachers of this study.

The teachers in this study agreed with Patton et al. (2006) that students who take ownership in their own behavior and learning have better outcomes than when they are forced by their superiors. The weekly monitoring sheets were individually made with each student's input and allowed the students to feel as though they were taking control

of their own behaviors. These weekly sheets proved crucial in the decrease in hallway citations, as students were eager to show their positive marks to their teachers. The students also enjoyed being able to have computer time and other incentives to look forward to because of their positive behaviors.

These strategies were all developed through the teachers during our bi-weekly PLC meetings. The teachers came up with these strategies because they wanted to take part in the improvement of their classrooms and also the students overall education. Empowering teachers through the PLC and allowing them to self-reflect on their current attitudes and practices, allowed them to improve their educational practices and their interactions with their EBD students. When the teachers felt as though they had a voice and a vote in how their classrooms would support EBD students, they worked even harder to come up with strategies and accommodations for their students.

Functional behavioral assessment as a strategy is one that is federally mandated, but one that was not further explored in this study. Functional behavioral assessments (FBA) can also be a part of future research, focused on the fidelity of their implementation. FBAs are a mandate according to IDEA, but there is a question on their implementation. Future research should focus on training for teachers centered on FBAs and also how well they are being implemented for the students who require them.

Teacher Perceptions

Teachers such as Molly often times would have a more positive perspective if there was appropriate training that prepared them for working with classified students. Chmiliar (2009) found in her research for inclusion that "[t]eachers expressed less

favourable attitudes toward teaching students with severe disabilities" (Cook, 2001); however, these attitudes can change as a result of experience and/or training (Martin et al., 2003). Through my research and this study, I have included teacher attitudes and also their suggestions for improvement within these inclusive programs.

The post-interviews showed that teachers developed a more positive attitude towards their EBD students and had a more general willingness to ensure their students have the resources needed to be successful.

Available Resources

According to Heflin and Bullock (1999), many general education teachers were open to inclusion as long as they had sufficient support. Brantlinger notes, "difficulties in implementing inclusive programs have not resulted from opposition of inclusion; rather, lack of skill in implementing inclusive programs has often been the problem" (as cited in Smith et al., 2003, p. 55). Brantlinger's assertions further exacerbate the need to include teachers and their voice in the implementation of inclusion programs for EBD students.

The teachers in this study recognized each other as valuable resources. The fact that all four teachers participated in this study that focused on better supporting EBD students in their classroom, showed each one that they could rely on each other.

Although the school does not offer any formal resources for inclusion help, each of the four participants are well versed in how to strategize and help EBD students within their classrooms. These participants are not only resources for each other, but also for the other teachers in the building who were not a part of the study, but who teach other EBD students.

Researcher Conclusions

Student data along with my observations were two of the final pieces of data I collected. I found that projective test data shows that all student participants have improved in their academics and that each student is at least projected to score a Basic understanding on their upcoming state assessments; this is an improvement to the Below Basic status our students were at last year and in previous years.

The observation data were also very informative. During my pre and mid-inclusion observations, I saw a decrease in calls for help to the office and also evidence of improved student-teacher relationships. Teachers were evidenced as spending more time with students, whereas prior to this study they would be hesitant to work with EBD students due to their perceived unpredictability in EBD behaviors. As the researcher for this study, I am very pleased with the student and teacher improvements this study found.

Each cycle provided me with the opportunity to lay the groundwork for this study, hear input from teachers, and collaboratively work with teachers to improve supports and strategies for EBD students. This research study was hands-on, not only for the researcher, but also for the student and teacher participants. Each person participating in this study had a responsibility and contributed to the success of the study.

Recommendations for Future Research

As more and more schools and districts begin to implement inclusive practices and inclusive schools, there is a need to really focus on the EBD population and its long-term effects on participants in these programs. This study highlights the possible positive outcomes when including teachers and students as stakeholders in the process, but this

study does not test long-term effects. Further research can aim to provide long-term effects of EBD students in full inclusion programs.

Future research should also aim to include the parents of children with an emotional and behavioral disability. Parents are also key stakeholders in the process of inclusion and there should be research that includes their thoughts on their children's educational programs.

This study focused on including students who were previously excluded and placed in self-contained settings, but there also should be a study that compares included with non-included students. This idea for further research will help to bring more conclusive data on EBD students and their educational settings.

Limitations and Strengths of this Study

This study generated data from a particular middle school and its current inclusive practice, which includes EBD students for all academic subjects. Other neighborhood middle schools may implement different inclusive practices, therefore the results of this study may not be easily transferable to other inclusive programs.

Despite these limitations, this study found several strengths in terms of offering data from the teachers and also individual student data. The students saw positive results in their academic and behavioral objectives, and the teachers also saw positive results in their classrooms, and their attitudes towards the EBD students in their classrooms. This study used many different data sources, interviews, observations, student academic data, behavioral data, and PLC focus group data, which allowed us to get the most accurate results within this short period of time.

Implications

The results of this study may help other schools in their quest to support EBD students. This study outlines advantages to including EBD students, such as improved academics and behavioral outcomes. Every student who took part in this study improved academically and behaviorally. Not only have the students improved, but also have the teachers. The teachers report more positive attitudes towards their EBD students and an improved ability to support EBD students within their inclusion classrooms.

One of the main facets of this study was the professional learning community that was formed. All of the teacher participants found that this PLC allowed them to work together to strategize and problem solve for their students; hence feeling better supported. The notion of a PLC being formed within schools is not a new one, but one that is geared solely towards academic and behavioral improvements for EBD students is. Schools looking to improve upon their current educational practices for EBD students can start with this study and follow its progression from a program that had little support, to one that is embraced and valued by its teachers.

I embarked on this research quest when I saw how this excluded population of students was always left out of inclusion programs. Through this journey I was able to also find excluded teachers and work to blend the two populations into key stakeholders of inclusion programs at my school. It is my desire that other schools will see the injustice of excluding students and failing to give teachers a voice in their own programs, and will work to include key stakeholders to realize the same positive results I did in this study.

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Appendix A

Special Education Quiz

1. When special education works as it should, the outcome for students is
    a. the ability to hide their disabilities
    b. the eradication of their disabilities
    c. instruction in a special class
    d. improved achievement and behavior
2. Which of the following is an expectation for general education teachers?
    a. knowledge of special education law
    b. instruction of students with severe cognitive deficiencies
    c. participating in the writing of individualized education plans
    d. to diagnose regular education students as being special education students
3. By federal law, an exceptional student is eligible for special education when
    a. the teacher recommends it
    b. parent requests it
    c. careful assessment indicates that he or she id unable to make satisfactory progress in the regular school program
    d. a teacher has recorded observations of behavior and assessments of academic performance for at least two months
4. Before making a referral for special education, a general education classroom teacher should do all of the following EXCEPT
    a. modify or adapt their instructional program
    b. administer diagnostic tests
    c. examine the students school record
    d. request that the parent get the child tested for special education
5. Which of the following is an expectation of a special education teacher?
    a. monitor behavior in the class they are supporting
    b. work only with their students
    c. constant communication with the regular education teacher to program for special education students
    d. make copies and other clerical duties within the general education classroom

*Special Education is a *Right*, not a *Privilege**

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

1. Can you tell me about a time when you had to modify your instruction due to the needs of an EBD student in your classroom?
    a. Was it successful?
    b. Did it encourage or discourage you from doing it again in the future?
2. Can you describe any particular encounter within your inclusion class that you may have had with an EBD student?
    a. How did this experience shape your perceptions of EBD students?
3. Can you specify which academic resources are available to support you when working with EBD students?
    a. How effective have these resources been?
    b. Have you had any input in these resources
4. Can you specify which behavioral resources are available to support you when working with EBD students?
    a. How effective have these resources been?
    b. Have you had any input in these resources?
5. Can you tell me a little bit about your inclusion class with EBD students, in comparison to your other classes?
    a. Would you say they differ academically? Explain.
    b. Would you say they differ behaviorally? Explain
6. Can you describe a particular conversation that you may have had in regards to an EBD student within the inclusion program? (anonymous)
    a. Did you feel the same way as that person? Why or why not
7. Can you tell me about some interventions that you may have put in place for your inclusion classes that have EBD students in them?
    a. How successful were they?
8. Tell me what you would do if you needed academic supports within your inclusion classroom for an EBD student.
    a. Is this a school wide policy/strategy or one that you came up with on your own?
9. Tell me what you would do if you needed behavioral interventions within your inclusion classroom for an EBD student?
    a. Is this a school-wide policy/ strategy or one that you came up with on your own?
10. Can you tell me how strategies used within your inclusion classroom differ for an EBD student, versus any other classified student within your classroom?
    a. How do you determine the use of the strategy?

Appendix C

Post Interview Survey

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I am comfortable providing educational and behavioral supports to EBD students inside my classroom.					
2. I have an understanding of EBD students and their needs.					
3. I know who to reach out to if I need additional supports in my classroom with EBD students.					
4. My participation in this project has changed the way I interact with EBD students.					
5. I have witnessed academic progress made with EBD students in my classroom					