

INTERVENTIONS AND RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS OF STUDENTS WITH
EMOTIONAL AND/OR BEHAVIOR DISORDERS

by

SONIA A. MOORE

(Under the Direction of Jami Royal Berry)

ABSTRACT

Teacher burnout has become a growing concern within the field of education. This qualitative study examined teacher and staff perceptions of working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders and their impact on teacher burnout. The guiding questions that fueled this study are:

1. To what extent does training teachers and paraprofessionals on the use of tiered intervention strategies impact their levels of experienced burnout in working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders?
2. To what degree does implementing intervention strategies change the perceptions of teachers and staff about teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders?
3. How does incorporating direct support from administrators and/or mentors influence teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders to remain in teaching?

Data were collected from pre and post burnout inventories, walk through observations, meeting summary notes, and mentor/mentee meeting notes. Conclusions about how the implementation of intervention strategies could reduce teacher burnout in self-contained classrooms of students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders included the following: (1) faculty and staff valued training received from certified professionals tailored to their specific

needs, (2) training the staff on a defined instructional approach with clear roles identified helped to reduce negative behaviors and loss of instructional time, (3) support and collaboration with all stakeholders helped teachers and staff experience less burnout and remain in teaching, and (4) mentor teachers provided significant support to mentees, in particular with behavior intervention management and IEP development.

INDEX WORDS: Emotional and Behavior Disorders, burnout, intervention strategies

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by

SONIA A. MOORE

BA, Auburn University at Montgomery, 2005

MA, University of Phoenix, 2010

Ed.S, Columbus State University, 2018

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
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by

SONIA A. MOORE

Major Professor: Jami Royal Berry
Committee: Karen Bryant
John Dayton

Electronic Version Approved:

Ron Walcott
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
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DEDICATION

This doctoral study is dedicated to the memory of my late mother, Lillie M. Moore, whom I loved and adored with all my heart. She is my “Evergreen.” She always stood by me and encouraged me to follow my dreams.

Additionally, this paper would never have been possible if not for my family and loved ones. I truly stand on the shoulders of giants. Their sacrifices, support, and guidance have enabled me to soar beyond my wildest expectations. This paper is dedicated to them.

Mr. Bradley Perry, there are no words to express my sincere gratitude in the support you’ve provided to me throughout this process. From day one, you have been a source of strength, love, and courage to muster through.

While my name will be on this paper and my diploma, I share it with so many who were so important to me. You all have helped me Bloom. I thank you for that. I love you all to infinity and beyond!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this action research study was to determine if the implementation of intervention strategies would reduce teacher burnout in self-contained classrooms of students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders.

Research Questions

To address the purpose of this study, the following research questions guided this inquiry:

1. To what extent does training teachers and paraprofessionals on the use of tiered intervention strategies impact their levels of experienced burnout in working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders?
2. To what degree does implementing intervention strategies change the perceptions of teachers and staff about teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders?
3. How does incorporating direct support from administrators and/or mentors influence teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders in reducing burnout?

Problem

The impact of behaviors exhibited by students with emotional and behavioral disorders appears to have an impact on the overall climate and culture of the schools to which they are assigned. Despite the use of behavior intervention plans and positive behavior interventions and supports, some students still demonstrate high levels of intense and explosive behavior that interferes with the overall climate of the schools. Because of this, teachers of these students are experiencing burnout and are leaving the profession at a rate higher than any other

in education, and thus creating vacancies that are hard to fill. Limited research has been conducted on burnout in teachers who work with students who have emotional and behavioral disorders. However, a gap exists in the research in the use of intervention strategies that can be employed by teachers to reduce the deficits many districts are experiencing around the country in trained and experienced teachers. This qualitative study examined teacher and staff perceptions of working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders and their impact on teacher burnout.

Overview of the Case

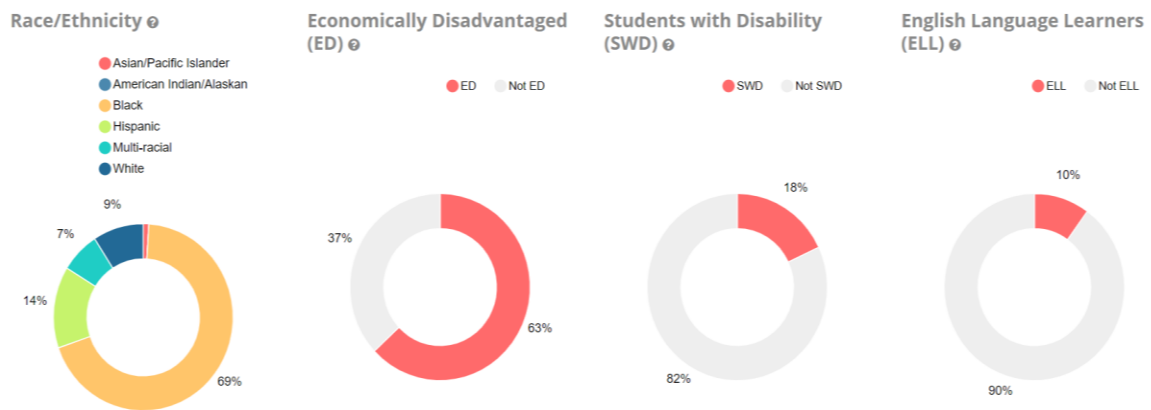
Cook County School District (pseudonym) is located in West Georgia and served approximately 36,000 students in 2018. The majority of the school district's demographic was African American at nearly 60%, with about 25% White, and another 15% other races and ethnicities. The district's College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) increased slightly over the previous 3 years to a score of around 72. Students with disabilities in Cook County School District represented about 18% of the total student population, which totaled approximately 4,800 students. One hundred eighty-nine students were served under the category of emotional and/or behavioral disorders (E/BD).

Perry Elementary School (pseudonym), one of the 32 elementary schools, was located in the southern most point of the Cook County School District. The student body was comprised of 348 students with nearly 70% of the student population being African-American and 14% Hispanic (Figure 1). One hundred percent of the students were considered economically disadvantaged. According to the state report Perry Elementary School's overall performance based on Georgia Milestones data was higher than 22% of the schools in the state and lower than

the district. The academic growth was nearly 50% of schools in the state and over 40% of the 3rd graders were reading at or above grade level target.

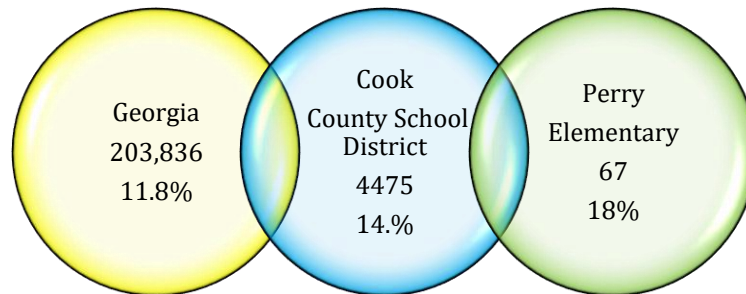
Figure 1

Demographics of Perry Elementary



Beginning in 2015, under the leadership of a new principal, Perry Elementary experienced a slight improvement from 63% to 65.2% in CCRPI scores. Since the 2016 school year, that improvement declined and the CCRPI score at the time of the research study was 63.4.

For the 2017-2018 school year, students with disabilities made up 18% of the student body (Figure 1).

Figure 2*Percentage of SWD 2017-2018*

Between 2017 and 2019, there was a 6.4% increase in the number of Students with Disabilities which represented about 25% of student population. This increase in the number of SWDs was attributed to the addition of two E/BD classes. However, over 90% of those students lacked proficiency in math and reading on the Georgia Milestones Assessment (GMAS) for the school year 2017-2018. In addition, over the two previous years, one hundred percent of the students with disabilities in 4th grade performed at the beginning and developing levels of the GMAS for reading and math. In tracking the cohort, while it varied depending on other variables, gains were not made. In fact, the achievement level for the same cohort of 3rd graders in 2016 to the 5th graders in 2018 showed a regression (Table 1).

Table 1*Proficiency Levels of Students with Disabilities*

Grade	Beginning Learner 16	Beginning Learner 17	Beginning Learner 18	Developing Learner 16	Developing Learner 17	Developing Learner 18
3 rd ELA	64.3	57.1	41.7	35.7	35.7	50
3 rd Math	64.3	42.9	33.3	35.7	35.7	66.7
4 th ELA		88.2	70.6		11.8	29.4
4 th Math		70.6	58.8		29.4	41.2
5 th ELA		58.8	82.4		35.3	11.8
5 th Math		70.6	64		23.5	35.3

In the 2016-2017 school year, the researcher became the Elementary Dean of Perry Elementary. Prior to the selection as the Elementary Dean, the researcher was the lead special education teacher. The district cited the researcher's particular background as a special education teacher as a factor in their decision to add the two self-contained special education classes of students with emotional and/or behavior disorders. Prior to the addition of the two classes, Perry Elementary's students with disabilities' enrollment percentage was higher than that of the district and that of the state.

The researcher's experience as special education teacher afforded her some unique insight into the problems teachers experienced in providing effective instruction to the students with disabilities. It additionally afforded her a first-hand understanding of the struggle the students faced attempting to meet benchmark goals and master the content. The challenge the researcher faced, however, was her lack of experience working with students with emotional and/or behavior disorders. As with any change, in particular with her new role and then the addition of the two new classes, things proved difficult. Not only did the change present new challenges, but it impacted the entire school as we were exposed to some external behaviors from the students with E/BD that we had never experienced. The students would hit, bite, scratch, and throw objects to inflict bodily harm to other students and adults. At other times, the students would destroy the classroom knocking over chairs, desks, and tables and tossing books and school supplies. In addition to the physical aggression exhibited by the students, they also were verbally aggressive. The students would threaten to harm the staff and use profanity-laced language directed at their peers and staff. The district-level personnel assigned to teach the classes did lessen the impact of the change. They were certified special education teachers who had years of experience in working with students with E/BD.

The newness of that experience soon turned into optimism as the district-level staff modeled some effective strategies in working with the students. By the end of the 2016-2017 school year, the researcher had gained the confidence and knowledge that she needed to help lead the E/BD program. The school had struggled to find qualified and experienced special education teachers to work with the E/BD program.

With this action research, my plan was to provide the educators who were employed to teach in these classrooms the tools they needed to effectively teach students with emotional and/or behavior disorders. It was important for the teachers to be able to implement interventions to decrease undesirable behaviors from the students and for the researcher to provide the teachers with the support they needed to reduce burnout.

Problem Framing in the Context

Cook County School District devised a plan to remedy the growing concern about teachers, especially special education teachers of students with E/BD, leaving the profession. The district decided to concentrate the number of specialized classrooms, called the Behavioral Support Program, to three elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. The school district recognized a student with disabilities as a student or youth from three through 21 years of age who was considered to have a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

This action research sought to address teachers' lack of knowledge of intervention practices for students with E/BD, considering this lack of knowledge can lead to teacher burnout. The research focused on developing a system of training that provided untrained teachers and paraprofessionals with knowledge about students with E/BD, tiered intervention strategies for

implementation, and ongoing collaborative professional learning communities (PLCs) incorporating specific learning opportunities that addressed the needs of each teacher.

In the second semester of the school year 2016-2017, the district selected Perry Elementary as one of the three elementary schools to have two self-contained classes of students with E/BD. For each of these classes, the district provided a special education content specialist to serve as the teacher, one paraprofessional, and one shared behavioral technician. The classes were divided into two groups, grades K-2 and 3-5, with a total of 13 students.

By the end of the school year, Perry Elementary had to begin the search for teachers and paraprofessionals to replace everyone with the exception of the behavioral technicians. Unable to find trained special education teachers for those positions, the school hired a K-5 certified teacher with 10 years of teaching experience, but zero experience working as a special education teacher in a self-contained classroom with students with E/BD. To fill the remaining vacancy, the school recommended someone without a teaching certification and zero years of teaching experience. Also during this time, the school also hired four paraprofessionals without experience working with students with E/BD. While adding more staff members would have been beneficial for the adult to student ratio, the number of students also increased from 13 to 24.

Table 2*Office Discipline Referrals Trend*

Total State Reported Incidents			
Data	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Total Incidents	122	146	162
Total number of ISS Days	1	0	0
Total number of OSS Days	130	90	149

Even though the district added an additional person to the classroom, the inexperience, lack of training, and increased class sizes overshadowed the value that this additional person should have brought. The school district trained the two teachers on how to write an individualized educational plan for students with disabilities. The teachers and paraprofessional also received training in de-escalation and physical restraint. Neither staff members of the Behavior Support Program nor the administrators of the schools housing the programs received any additional training. The lack of training about the characteristics of the students, tiered intervention strategies, and support from administration may have led to the burnout both BSP staff and administrators quickly experienced.

The program evolved again in the 2018-2019 school year. The district restructured the classes to decrease the number of students with E/BD served in each class by adding another class. With this restructuring, the need to employ another teacher presented itself to the school. Again, the school received limited applications from qualified special education teachers wanting to teach students with E/BD. The school recommended the hire of one of the paraprofessionals already in the program to become the third BSP teacher. Along with the hire of the additional teacher, the school hired two more paraprofessionals. Thus, in the 2018-2019 school year, the

BSP at Perry Elementary had 3 self-contained classes of students with E/BD. The classes were K-1, 2-3, and 4-5 grade levels capped at 8 students each. Each class had one teacher and two paraprofessionals. One behavioral technician worked with all three classes.

The 2019-2020 school year also brought a new set of challenges as the district decided to partner with a behavior health provider, ChangeBright. According to the district, this collaboration could bring the necessary components to help teachers of students with E/BD through continued support and training. In addition and even more importantly, the collaboration promised to provide the students who have been identified with behavioral skill deficits the tools they needed to improve and adjust. However, because this decision was relatively new (June 2019), details on how it would impact each school were still unknown. The need to provide the teachers with support and ongoing training continued to be a concern. Regardless of what was to come, it was imperative that Perry Elementary develop a system of continuous learning, mentorship, and support for the teachers. This action research examined the impact of training and tiered intervention strategies on teacher burnout for teachers of students with E/BD characteristics.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this action research was Senge (1990) Organizational Learning Theory, which asserts that learning organizations aim to transform old behaviors and patterns of thinking to improve skill and know-how in order to adapt to a challenging environment. The value of an organization is based upon the ability of the members to recognize and use opportunities to learn from whatever resources that are available, so that additional value is added to the organization (Pedler & Hsu, 2019). The action research team developed action steps to address the deficits in the BSP staff's knowledge of students with

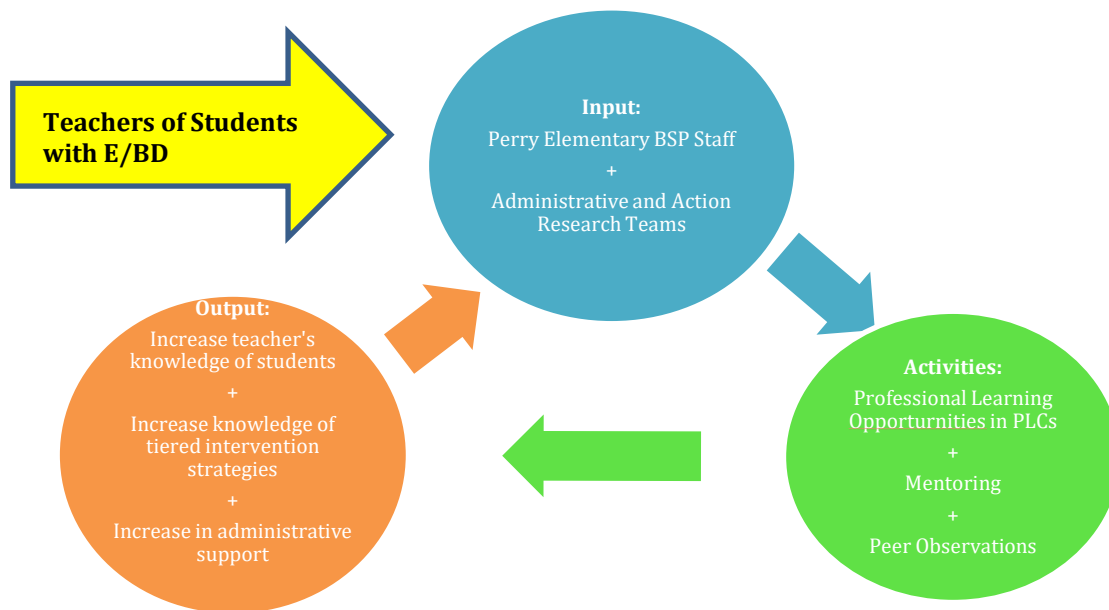
E/BD and evidence-based tiered intervention strategies. In addition, the team also evaluated the roll of administrative support in helping teachers of students with E/BD from experiencing burnout. The goal of the action research was to provide the participants with the time, space, and opportunities to obtain new knowledge, synthesize that knowledge, and transfer it to action. A more detailed description of the theory can be found in the next chapter.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in Figure 4 depicts how the action research team implemented newly developed strategies of integrating knowledge into a system of various learning opportunities. The development of the new system allowed the BSP staff to acquire, share, and retain new knowledge about the students with E/BD. The goal of the team was to provide the staff with professional learning opportunities, mentoring, administrative support, and feedback that would contribute to their understanding of students with E/BD. This process also aided in the implementation of tiered intervention strategies intended to help alleviate experienced burnout. After participation in the learning opportunities, BSP staff felt prepared to address the needs of students and improve their self-efficacy.

Figure 3

Conceptual Framework for Action Research



The conceptual framework illustrates a system of mediating variables. As outlined in Figure 4, the researcher incorporated activities, professional learning opportunities, mentoring, and observations from the BSP staff and AR team. Several expected results expected from the input of the activities included: increase knowledge of students, tiered intervention strategies, and increased administrative support to help reduce the level of burnout experienced by the staff. The following sections explain how that process unfolded.

Overview of Methodology

Process of Engagement with the District

The Cook County School District established Behavior Support Programs (BSPs) throughout the district at five elementary, four middle, and three high schools. According to the

superintendent, Cook County School District “has experienced an increase in the frequency and intensity of significant behavioral deficits exhibited by students, which led to our district’s development of an appropriate continuum of services to best serve their needs while ensuring a safe and productive learning environment for all,” (D. Lane, personal communication, 2019). In conjunction with the establishment of this program, the district contracted ChangeBright, a behavioral health and therapy company to provide assistance where needed. This new program intended to offer students with emotional and behavioral disorders effective therapies in conjunction with their school-based education. In addition to providing assistance to the students, this collaboration was also designed to aid in the “unique challenges associated with staffing and training this continuum within our district,” (D. Lane, personal communication, 2019). The training of the staff was an important component of this new instructional approach for students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders.

Entry Process

As the researcher began this program and identified an area of concern within the school, she met with the principal, Dr. Sang, to discuss the relevance and importance of the topic as it related to the improvement of the school climate and culture. Dr. Sang gave her approval to implement proposed actions and was willing to serve as part of the action research design team. She worked with the researcher to gain approval from the district for the IRB. Dr. Sang, and the researcher met weekly for updates on school business, and the researcher communicated any details about the research as they were available throughout the process.

Identification of Major Stakeholders in the District

Various stakeholders participated in the design and action research implementation teams. The principal, Dr. Sang, and the academic coach, Mrs. Puters, served on the design team.

The researcher identified the lead special education teacher, Mrs. Evermint, who could assist teachers in the development of individualized education and behavior intervention plans, and behavior analyst, Mrs. Ruger, who could provide professional development on tiered interventions and strategies. My plan was to meet monthly with this team to provide updates and revise action plans as needed.

In addition to the design team, the teachers and paraprofessionals assigned to the BSP classes were also essential stakeholders and served on the implementation team. Perry Elementary was initially one of three schools selected to have self-contained classes of students with E/BD. After the first year, the program hired teachers without experience or training in the field of special education. The goal of this action research was to provide the teachers with the skills and knowledge they needed to become more efficacious and experience less burnout.

Contracting Process and Update on Identifying a Working Group

No formal agreements had been established. However, the researcher spoke to all members that she wanted to serve on the design and implementation teams. Five of the seven members of the design team agreed to be active participants, to meet on a monthly basis, and to receive and discuss any updates. The team agreed to meet virtually or through phone conferences if members were unable to meet in person. Any pertinent information or data were disseminated electronically or added to data notebook. All participants on both teams were privy to all information.

Initial Steps for the Action Research Team

After approval from all parties, the researcher planned to meet with the design team to determine if there was a need for change, define the future state, and assess the present in terms of the future to determine key elements in the process of planned change. The researcher

provided the team with a summary of key findings within the literature concerning students with E/BD, tiered intervention strategies, and administrative support for teachers of students with E/BD. The researcher continued to work with the academic coach and behavior analyst about topics to address these themes in order to provide professional learning opportunities for the teachers and paraprofessionals. In addition, the researcher worked in conjunction with the principal to determine the type of support that the administrative staff could provide to increase efficacy and therefore reduce teacher burnout. Finally, mentorship is important in the development of teachers. The researcher elicited the assistance of district level personnel for other teachers of students with E/BD who held the promise of being ideal mentors.

Significance

This study's findings have implications in two arenas: the school's behavior support program and the school district's behavior support programs that have teachers who are experiencing burnout. This study could shape the district's strategies for training teachers of students with emotional and behavior disorders for upcoming school years. Professional learning opportunities for the teachers of students with E/BD, development of specific skills for out of field certified special education teachers, special education mentor teachers, and support from administrators were implemented based on the findings of the action research team. Teachers of students with disabilities were experiencing high levels of burnout. The researcher was optimistic that the findings from this action research study will inform other schools and districts in how to better support teachers of students with E/BD so that their levels of burnout will be decreased. By implementing the interventions that addressed the specific needs of the faculty and staff of the behavior support program, teacher burnout levels may be reduced. Thus, the results

of this study may result in improving student achievement for students with E/BD throughout the district over the course of time.

Organization of the Dissertation

This chapter began with identification of the problem and established the groundwork for this study. Research questions used to guide the research were also identified. Also, this chapter briefly described the context of problem, theoretical framework, and conceptual framework. These will be further described in subsequent chapters. The chapter concluded with the process of engaging in the action research process and the initial steps taken to begin the process.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature related to the study, justifying the research questions and research methodology. Key components reviewed include: students with E/BD, educator burnout, and the effects of burnout. The review indicates the relationship between lack of training and administrative support to burnout among teachers.

After the review of the literature, Chapter 3 provides a description of and rationale for the methodology used in this study. The chapter also includes a description of the research process and the intervention and implementation plans. Finally, the chapter details the methods of collection of data, as well as the process used to analyze the data.

Chapter 4 presents the context of Perry Elementary BSP and describes how teachers experienced levels of burnout. It also describes the action research team, as well as the story and outcomes to include actions taken in each cycle. In addition, Chapter 4 provides a description of the artifacts used to qualitatively measure and present the results of the study.

The researcher provides a summary review of the study in Chapter 5. It also offers a narrative of the findings based on the research questions.

Chapter 6 presents the conclusion of the action research study. The results are tied to the literature and include implications and recommendations for future researchers and practitioners.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM FRAMING IN THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders make up approximately eight percent of the population nationally according to the 2014-2015 statistics provided by the National Center for Education (2018). Kauffman, Simpson, and Mock (2009) suggest that many of these students are under-identified and underserved. Many districts have adopted the practice of placing students with E/BD in self-contained, specialized classes or in separate schools. “About one out of every five special education students spends more than 60 percent of school hours outside of a regular classroom, in such settings as self-contained classes for students with disabilities, individual or group pull-out sessions, or resource rooms” (Swanson, 2008, p. 8). Kauffman and Landrum (2013) also assert that students with E/BD are isolated from their peers and spend more time in a classroom with students who have similar behavior concerns.

The underlying premise of this practice has created environments that are not conducive to learning and influence the overall climate of the schools. Gresham (2014) states that the challenges presented by students with E/BD “cut across disciplinary, instructional, and interpersonal domains, and they often create chaotic home, school, and classroom environments” (pg. 1). Administrators and teachers struggle to maintain a positive climate for the faculty, staff, other teachers, and other students when they are bombarded by the number of frequent and intensive behaviors exhibited by a small percentage of students. In many cases, faculty and staff are not equipped or trained to deal with students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders. As Billingsley (2004) noted, the lack of qualified special education teachers has presented an

enormous risk to the quality of education for students with E/BD. In addition, Cross (2016) indicated that there is a shortage of teachers working in special education, especially those sufficiently trained to teach students with E/BD.

Available literature has focused more on general education teachers and burnout; however, this action research study will focus on teachers of students with E/BD and intervention strategies. Teachers of these students are experiencing burnout and are often leaving the profession. The result of this exodus is that many districts are left with vacancies to fill in what is already a difficult teaching field. The shortage of qualified educators with the expertise to manage the behaviors of E/BD students while incorporating grade-level instruction is serious (Cancio, Albrecht, & Johns, 2013). However, there is a need to train the under qualified teachers occupying these positions on strategies that will improve the academic performance of the students with E/BD, while also decreasing the frequency and intensity of their behaviors.

Emotional and/or behavioral disorder is one of the 13 exceptionalities recognized by the state of Georgia and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (2004). In order for a student to receive special education services under this category, he or she must have presented one or more of the five characteristics defined by IDEA (1997). One of the characteristics exhibited by a student under this exceptionality is that he or she consistently behaves inappropriately or does not act within typical expectations under normal circumstances. The inability to build or sustain interpersonal relationships with peers and adults is another characteristic students with this categorization of exceptionality exhibit (GaDOE, 2019). In addition, students who have continued feelings of depression and sadness also qualify under the E/BD exceptionality (GaDOE, 2019).

The common practice for schools is to place all students with similar behaviors in the same classroom. Kena et al. (2015) reported that 12.9% students with E/BD are assigned to a separate school and 1.5% is assigned to a residential facility. This has led to some states adopting and bringing in outside resources to assist in providing therapeutic services to this population of students throughout the day to decrease the frequency and intensity of the behaviors. Maag and Katsiyannis (2010) reported the following:

School-based mental health services have increased and improved during the past 20 years. ... However, schools still face many challenges for getting mental health services to more students in need of them, determining how to fund those services, and training mental health staff to work collaboratively in nontraditional roles. Not all school districts and administrators embrace having increased mental health services in schools. They may believe that schools are not in the mental health business and wonder whether enhancing students' mental health will result in concomitant improvements in academic achievement, although they acknowledge that academic success promotes psychological well-being (Weist & Paternite, 2006). (p. 178)

However, in the Cook County School District, no such services are available, and teachers, albeit underequipped, are required to provide grade level instruction to meet accountability expectations.

Hanover Research (2013), citing Council for Children with Behavior Disorders, argued, "all teachers and school personnel should be provided with the tools to implement scientifically-based academic and behavioral interventions... [and] be committed to providing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to ensure students' academic and behavior needs are addressed" (pp.15-16). Oliver et al. (2011) found that a preventative approach in classroom

management to reinforce expected behaviors is more effective than a reactive approach. Dunlap et al. (2006) observed, “When the challenging behavior of young children is not addressed in an appropriate and timely way, the future likelihood increases for poor academic outcomes, peer rejection, adult mental health concerns, and adverse effects on their families, their service providers, and their communities” (p.33).

Characteristics of Students with E/BDs

Students within E/BD classrooms can have a wide range of diagnoses that add to the challenges faced by educators. According to Kauffman (2001), emotional and behavioral disorders are classified according to biological, family, or school factors. Factors that contribute to EB/D include genetics, malnutrition, brain damage, and physical illness. Factors external to school include family interactions and family structure. Factors internal to school include deficiencies in the ability of the school personnel to accommodate students’ variable intelligence, academic achievement, and social skills.

Characteristics of students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders fall into two categories: internalizing (withdrawal or depression) or externalizing (conduct or acting out). However, students identified in each category will exhibit externalizing behaviors that make it difficult to sustain appropriate and typical school decorum. Students with E/BD also often have additional mental and health diagnoses. Emotional or behavioral disorders have a range of medical diagnoses. Generalized Anxiety, Major Depressive Disorder, and Bipolar Disorder are some of the internalizing disorders listed by American Psychiatric Association (2013) for students with E/BD. In addition, the manual also identifies externalizing emotional and behavioral disorders as Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder,

and Conduct Disorder. Often students with E/BD are receiving outside treatment and medications to help manage their disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Students who have been identified for special education services under the E/BD exceptionality experience difficulty managing emotions, are easily upset, are restless and hyperactive, have problems getting along with others, lack social skills, are verbally and physically aggressive, are impulsive, and have found limited success in school and relationships (Maggin et al., 2011). Adera (2007) found that teachers felt that the frequency of disruptions as the result of challenging behaviors exhibited by students with E/BD often led to loss of instructional time. It is important that teachers recognize and understand the implications of the disruptions in order to meet the needs of the students. The National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (2014) stated that recognizing and comprehending the manifestations and needs of students is a vital part of providing a suitable education for all students. Menzies et al. (2016) suggest that teachers use approaches to instruction that are more proactive than reactive to combat the loss of time to address behaviors that may impede the learning of others.

In addition, Adera (2007) asserted oftentimes within the self-contained specialized classes for students with emotional and behavioral disorders, the goal is to get through the lesson without any meltdowns, breakdowns, flare-ups, or conflicts between students. Specific examples of meltdowns and flare-ups include flipping over desks, throwing chairs, leaving the classroom, using profane and vulgar language, and physical aggression towards peers and adults. It is difficult for teachers to manage these behaviors in regular classroom or even in specialized classrooms.

Guidelines under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The Council for Exceptional Children notes that students with E/BD often display characteristics that do not support success in or out of school (Hanover Research, 2013). They may not be able to maintain appropriate social relationships with others; they may have academic difficulties; and they may display chronic behavior problems. The students may have difficulty following directions, and they may be oppositional and aggressive towards others, including adults. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) states that students receiving special education services should learn in the least restrictive environment (1997). This means, to the greatest extent possible, students receiving special education services, in this case students with E/BD, should spend as much time as possible with peers who do not receive special education.

Many of the students in the Cook County School District who have emotional or behavioral disorders have been placed in specialized classes and removed from general classes. When a student has been removed from his or her classroom, under IDEA, a determination is made that the nature of his or her disability is so severe that regular education cannot provide the students with an appropriate education (1997). In theory, according to Lane et al., (2005), the low teacher-student ratio of special education classrooms and the opportunities for individualized, one-on-one instruction should make those segregated classrooms more effective. There is evidence to suggest, however, that segregated classrooms for students with E/BD have had limited success in academically challenging students with emotional and behavioral disorders and promoting success in school (Lane et al., 2005).

Identification of Students with E/BD

The identification of a student within the school setting requires a series of steps the federal government outlined under IDEA. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

(1997) was established to ensure that students with disabilities have access to a free and appropriate education to the greatest extent possible in the least restrictive environment. The beginning of this process begins with the teacher. Cultural, environmental, and economic factors should be considered prior to a teacher initiating the process (McDaniel et al., 2015). In order for a student to obtain an identification as having an E/BD, the behaviors for which they are being referred must be intense in frequency and duration. Project IDEAL (2019) suggests that a student must have a discrepancy in his or her academic, social/emotional, behavioral, and/or physical ability and his or her age may signal the need for additional academic or behavioral supports. This part of the process is referred to as the recognition step, or Tier 1, and it is at this time the teacher and the parents meet to discuss all pertinent information as it pertains to the student. During this time, it is common for the teacher to have had a conference with the parent to describe the types of intervention strategies and progress monitoring that will be employed to assist the struggling student. According to Project IDEAL (2019), it is critically important that the teacher document all actions and strategies used in the classroom and the impact on the student. Tier 1 includes all students and, in general, about 80% of the students if implemented correctly. Students who do not respond to the instructional approaches in Tier 1 will be provided with additional supports and interventions.

All states and school systems have in place a system of tiered intervention strategies for instruction and behavior as outlined by the changes in IDEA (2004). Brown-Chidsey and Bickford (2016) refer to multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) as “structures and procedures that schools offer to help each and every student be successful” (pg. 1). The second step, or Tier 2, of the process for identification includes about 15%-20% of the students. Project IDEAL (2019) outlines the particulars of this tier stating that it provides targeted group instruction or

some form of group remediation to improve performance. The MTSS model believes that second level interventions and supports will improve performance for approximately 15% of all students. Brown-Chidsey and Bickford (2016) echo Bryant, et al., 2008 and Koutsoftas, et al., 2009 that “the additional instruction provided at Tier 2 can help such students close the gap and meet learning goals” (p.16). The same goes for behavior interventions.

After a cycle of interventions, a team is developed that includes the teacher, parent, chair of student support team, and/or administrator. The team decides whether to continue the interventions, change the interventions, or refer the student to be evaluated by school psychologist for special education services (Tier 3). The official referral begins the formal process of determining eligibility for special education services. Once a referral is provided, the school must obtain consent from the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to begin the evaluation phase of the referral process. As noted by Brown-Chidsey and Bickford (2016), school systems “have an obligation to ensure that evaluations of children suspected of having a disability are not delayed or denied because of implementation of an RTI strategy” (p.289). A recent study suggests that, even after receiving evidence-based interventions in a three-tiered model of school intervention, children at moderate or severe risk for E/BD continue to show serious impairment as they reach the third tier (Nelson et al., 2009). Even so, as Zirkel and Thomas (2010) noted, “there is a serious lack of mandated preventative interventions for school children at risk for E/BD that could be used prior to special education identification” (p. 43).

IDEA requires that students referred for special education services receive a nondiscriminatory multi-factored evaluation (2004). The school district is required to complete the evaluation within 60 days of the referral date. A team is compiled to review the findings of the school’s psychologist. If the results of a student’s assessment meets the criteria establish by

IDEA (1997) for a student with E/BD, the team then develops an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Within the IEP, the committee will determine the types of services needed, criteria for the specific exceptionality considered, and setting the student will need in order to be successful in the least restrictive environment.

In addition and in conjunction with this process, the IEP team must conduct a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and develop a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) (GADoE, 2019). The FBA is also a process that monitors a specific behavior that is impeding a student's ability to maintain appropriate educational progress. The purpose of the FBA is to develop a hypothesis on the function of the student's behavior and possibly develop an intervention plan based on the determination made. Ideally, the behavior intervention plan, if implemented with fidelity, helps the student manage those moments of frustration, gives replacement behaviors for inappropriate ones, and provides problem-solving strategies for the student. In the cases where intensive and explosive behaviors cannot be deterred, a crisis management plan may be necessary. With all of the specialized training needed for the identification and management of students with E/BD, it is essential to staff the classroom with well-trained certified teachers.

Burnout

First described in the early 1970's, burnout is a syndrome that is caused by prolonged stress in the workplace that has not been managed successfully (Squillaci, 2020). The syndrome can be manifested in a number of ways. It is characterized by feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Leiter & Maslach, 2016). Emotional exhaustion is the dimension that contributes the most to burnout and is most recognizable as feelings of fatigue or depletion of energy (Skaalvik, & Skaalvik, 2016). This has huge implications for how individuals who are experiencing these symptoms perform their duties in

the work environment. Another dimension of burnout is depersonalization. Characteristics of this dimension include the feeling of negativism and increased mental distance from one's job (WHO, 2018). Depersonalization can be expressed through contemptuous comments towards co-workers, having a lack of empathy, or interacting with others in an impersonal manner. The third dimension of burnout is reduced personal accomplishment. As described by Mealer, et al. (2016), "reduced personal accomplishment is the tendency to negatively evaluate the worth of one's work, feeling insufficient in regard to the ability to perform one's job, and a generalized poor professional self-esteem" (pg. 2).

Burnout is widely measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). Originally the inventory was designed to measure levels of burnout in the human service fields, but it has expanded to a wide range of occupations. The MBI-ES is specifically designed to use for educators. The inventory consists of 22 questions that give the respondents the opportunity to self-report using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "Never" to "Every day." The inventory measures each subscale of burnout. Higher scores for depersonalization and emotional exhaustion indicate higher levels of burnout, whereas, lower personal accomplishment scores indicate higher levels of burnout (National Academy of Medicine, 2018).

Educator Burnout and Contributing Factors

Given the demands and complexity of the roles of educators, it is highly probable that they may frequently face stress. The job requires many high-level responsibilities and pressures. According to Yong & Yue (2007), between 5-20% of teachers and other human service occupations are struggling with burnout. Teachers who experience burnout impact the students both academically and behaviorally, as well as themselves. Herman et al., 2018 asserted that burned-out teachers face excessive demands in educating students, but lack the resources to meet

those demands. The stresses of being a teacher have been found to be associated with “burnout, physical illness, depression, and increased staff turnover” (Ouellette et al., 2018). The impact of burnout could potentially have devastating consequences for all stakeholders and have huge implications for student learning.

A number of contributing factors could lead to burnout for teachers. Brunsting et al. (2014) conducted a study on working conditions of special education teachers and found that limited experience, limited administrative support, and student disabilities contributed to teacher burnout. For students with E/BD, Garwood & Vernon-Feagans (2016) added that the lack of training, in particular in classroom management, may also lead to teacher burnout. This list is not exhaustive, but offers a wide-range of variables that may aid in understanding how and when teachers may be exposed to situations that may lead to burnout. Some of the variables may reflect personal concerns, while others are directly related to the teacher’s environment, the school. While school leaders have little to no authority to what educators do outside of their buildings, they have complete responsibility for the experience of the educator within the building. Hence, if teachers are experiencing high stress and burnout due to school environment issues, it is the responsibility of the leaders to mitigate or intervene to alleviate these harmful variables.

Replacing special education teachers, especially those who teach students with E/BD is not easy. Therefore, it is in the best interest of schools for special education teachers to acquire strategies to curtail stress on the job and for school and district administrators to provide the teachers with the opportunity and resources to do so. Teacher burnout can have a negative impact on teacher health and the academic achievement of the students. According to Oliver and Reschley (2010), the characteristics of students with E/BD, primarily the students who exhibit

extreme and excessive behaviors, call for those who teach them to be proficient in managing their classroom. Teachers need more training on strategies to effectively manage those classrooms and meet the academic needs of the students (Garwood & Vernon-Feagans, 2016; Marsh, 2018).

Aside from the training of teachers, researchers also add that administrative support is a vital element of reducing teacher burnout (Mulvahill, E., 2017). Building leaders can manipulate the school environment to ensure that there are supports in place for teachers. Some of those supports include: providing training, interactions with building leaders that are not always evaluative, collaboration with parents, and developing a system of mentoring practices (Callahan, 2016; Herman et al. 2018).

Educators are constantly under pressure to meet the demands of various stakeholders within their school communities. The daily activities and responsibilities that teachers take on are above reproach. It becomes incumbent on school and district leaders to provide teachers with the necessary tools and resources they need to educate their students. The exposure to daily workloads, student misbehavior, lack of training, and lack of support is putting teachers at risk for burnout. When teachers are burned-out, student achievement suffers. The goal of this study is to, in part, address those concerns. Chapter 3 will provide a description of and rationale for the methodology used in this study to address those concerns. The chapter will also offer a description of the research process to include the intervention and implementation plans. Finally, the chapter will detail the methods of data collection, as well as the analysis of the data.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In the time between planning and designing the action research study to conducting it, there was a change to the format of the self-contained classes of students with EBD at the study sites. At the beginning of the study, there were two self-contained classes. One of the classes was classified as a transition class where students who had exhibited a marked increase in appropriate behavior would spend a set amount of time in general education classrooms with the hope that they could be fully integrated back into the general education classrooms. This changed, and the two classes were combined with no reduction in staff.

The action research team developed at Perry Elementary focused on constructing a plan of action to assist the Behavior Support Program (BSP) staff with intervention strategies to reduce the levels of experienced burnout. The intervention strategies employed sought first to enhance the knowledge of the staff about the nature and characteristics of students with emotional and behavior disorders. The team also designed additional intervention strategies that supported the BSP staff to improve practices based upon the desired outcome.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that supported this study was Senge's Organizational Learning Theory (Senge, 1990). Dixon (2017) asserts, "for organizational learning to occur it is not enough simply to encourage organizational members to exchange their accessible meaning structures with each other- the organization must actively facilitate collective learning." (pg. 63). The origins can be traced back to the 1970s and built upon the foundation that knowledge is created, transferred, and retained. Scholars often define the theory differently, but, in general, it describes a change process as an organization learns. Namada (2018) describes organizational

learning as a “composition of individual learning, development of culture, continuous improvement innovation, and applying systems which learn” (p. 86).

The theory model (Figure 3) is divided into three themes: Organization Learning Process, Organization Knowledge, and Organization Performance Outcomes. Although the steps are presented sequentially, they can be interwoven and overlap. The steps in this model served as a framework for the study.

The first theme of the theory, Organization Learning Process, encompasses four areas that address the needs of the faculty and staff who work directly with the students in the BSP. According to Cummings and Worley (2019), these processes are needed to generate the knowledge necessary for change and improvement. Although the discovery process is established, Perry Elementary at the time of the study had not developed an intervention, or solution to closing or reducing the gap that existed. This gap persisted, in part, because the teachers of the students with E/BD at Perry Elementary had not been provided with the professional learning opportunities they needed to increase their professional knowledge and skills. Without the development of an intervention, it becomes impossible to move forward with the production towards improvement. The last process of this theme is generalization, which involves the drawing of conclusions about the production and extending knowledge based on what has been learned (Cummings and Worley, 2019). Each step in the process informs the other and is necessary to the organizational learning process.

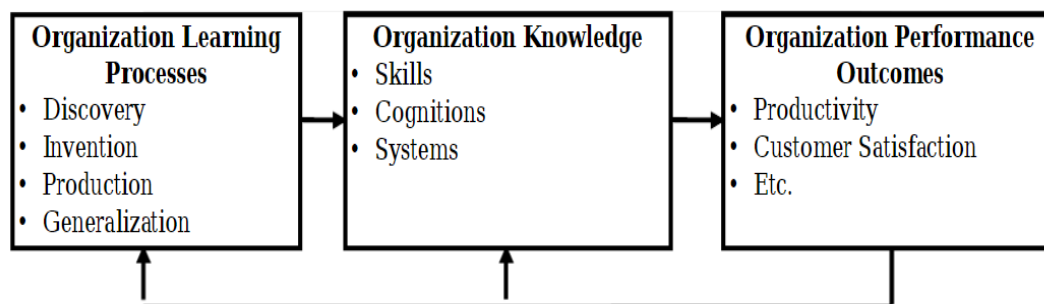
The second theme, Organization Knowledge, for the purpose of this study, was limited to skills and cognition. Acquisition of skills and cognition require training and practice. To address the deficits, Cummings and Worley (2019) suggest managing change in such a way that “knowledge and skills are transferred to build the organization’s capacity to achieve goals and

solve problems” (pg. 4). The proposed advantage to using this framework, as noted by Simonin (2017), is in relation to how learning strengthens individuals’ collective capabilities to enhance organizational outcomes, which, in turn, builds self and collective efficacy.

Organization Performance Outcomes is the third theme of organizational learning. The theme encompasses two main premises: productivity and customer satisfaction. In order for an organization to be effective, it has to be an engaged, satisfied, and learning workforce with satisfied stakeholders (Cummings and Worley, 2019). An engaged employee is aware of the context and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Markos and Sridevi (2010) also report that there is a positive relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance outcomes: employee retention, productivity, profitability, customer loyalty, and safety. After the organization has recognized the gap, determined solutions, extended the knowledge base, drawn conclusions, and acquired new skills and knowledge, it must begin putting in the work to accomplish the task.

Figure 4

General Model of Organizational Learning



Source: Senge, P. M. (2014). *The fifth discipline fieldbook: Strategies and tools for building a learning organization.*

Action Research

The method used to guide this inquiry was to conduct an action research study. According to Forster & Eperjesi (2017), “action research has been embraced as a viable model for modifying, changing, and improving the teaching-learning process” (pg. 3). This method of research allowed the researcher, design team, and implementation team to “engage in a systematic, reflective, and critical study to find out how to improve practices” (Forster & Eperjesi, 2017, pg. 13), for the Behavior Support Program. Forster and Eperjesi (2017) and Coghlan and Brannick (2014) agreed that action research is a cyclical process and is collaborative in nature. However, they differ with the number of steps for the process. For the purpose of this study, the six-step process (Figure 5) outlined by Forster & Eperjesi (2017) were used as a guide.

Figure 5

Action Research Steps



Teachers and staff of students with emotional and behavior disorders in two self-contained classrooms at Perry Elementary were experiencing burnout due to the lack of experience and training needed to support the unique needs of the students. This was the identified problem. After the problem was identified, a review of relevant literature was conducted to glean more information centered on three themes: students with emotional and behavior disorders, teachers of students with emotional and behavior disorders, and burnout.

Based on the nature of the research and research questions, a mix of qualitative and quantitative data were used to triangulate findings for the action research team. This study followed two cycles of action research. It identified ways to improve practices when working with students with E/BD in self-contained classrooms, designed and revised interventions, and provided multi-layers of support for teachers through mentorship and from administrators.

After receiving IRB approval from all parties, all team members were contacted via phone or email asking for their participation in the purposed study.

Prior to designing the study, a number of events occurred. More gathering of information was conducted prior to meeting with the design team to more deeply understand the problem. In late August 2020 and early September 2020, with varied dates due to the availability of participants, each member of the implementation team completed a pre-burnout inventory and subsequently sat for an interview. A post-burnout inventory was administered after the implementation phase had been completed to determine if the interventions were effective.

After summarizing the results of the burnout inventories and interviews, the design team met. The purpose of the first meeting with the design team was to determine if there was a need for change, to define the future state, and to assess the present. The team was presented with a

summary of key findings within the literature concerning students with E/BD, tiered intervention strategies, and administrative support for teachers of students with E/BD.

In addition, the design team was presented with an overview of the study and the results from the interviews and pre-burnout inventory. The common themes that emerged from the interviews were training, support, and parental engagement. Cooper (2019) noted that it is highly unlikely for teachers who have not been trained in working with students with E/BD to succeed, stating, “not implementing key instructional practices at appropriate rates, it is entirely understandable that general education teachers with limited training...would also be implementing those practices on a limited basis,” (p. 6) or not at all. Furthermore, it was asserted by Pas et al. (2016) that teachers of students with E/BD can limit the problems experienced by the students if they were given the proper resources.

Also, during the design team meeting, it was revealed from the analyses of the pre-burnout inventory that the teachers and staff of the BSP had experienced high levels of emotional exhaustion. Teacher burnout imposes a threat to student success as it leads to teacher absenteeism, which has a direct correlation with student achievement, fatigue, and low morale (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2015).

After presenting a summary of the findings from the interviews and pre-burnout inventory, the design team discussed possible next steps and developed an action plan to assist the BSP in reducing their levels of experienced burnout. At the conclusion of the meeting, the team determined the timeframe for which the interventions would begin.

Intervention and Implementation Plan

Calvert (2016) suggests that leaders must cultivate an environment of continuous learning that engages teachers in their professional learning at every step of the way. Establishing

ongoing professional learning for the BSP staff was the first proposed intervention. The behavior analyst, Mrs. Ruger, conducted a two-part professional learning session for the BSP staff centered on the characteristics of students with E/BD and determining the function of the behaviors. Once the learning sessions were completed, members of the design team conducted informal walkthroughs and focus walks to determine the effectiveness of the intervention. Marquez et al., (2016) noted that professional learning or in-service training should be paired with follow-up and other methods of support. The focus walks and walkthroughs served a two-fold purpose. One, the walkthroughs and focus walks offered details on the implementation from the professional learning sessions, but they also ensured that the BSP staff was receiving the support that they identified needing from the administrative staff (principal, dean, lead special education teacher, and academic coach).

Providing the professional learning opportunities for the BSP was in line with the organizational learning process. Organizational learning process is one of the three themes of The Organizational Learning Theory. Again, this theory is rooted in the idea that knowledge is created, retained and transferred. The goal of the professional development was to provide the BSP staff with the knowledge needed to continue working with students with emotional and behavior disorders. Secondly, the desired outcome of the training was to ensure that the staff learned additional skills that they could use to improve instructional practices, implement them so they are retained, and model the skills so that they will be transferred from individual to individual. Finally, as a result of the training, the overall objective was not only to transform how each individual performed, but also how the staff of the BSP and Perry Elementary as a whole applied what was learned in order to assist in reducing the experienced levels of burnout that might carry over.

Action Research Plan

Participants

Various stakeholders were invited to be part of the design and action research implementation teams. Only a selected group of educators were asked to participate. The selection of participants was based on their positions and direct working relationship to the BSP. Again, all participants were contacted via phone or email (see Appendix A) for consent. All participants reviewed and then signed the consent form.

The principal, Dr. Sang and academic coach, Mrs. Puters, were the building leaders who served on the design team. They were chosen because they were the instructional leaders and could provide research-based strategies for the implementation team. Additionally, they developed and facilitated the professional learning communities (PLC) that addressed the specific needs of the group as determined from the focus walks and walkthroughs. Furthermore, the establishment of the PLC also provided the teachers of the BSP with the support they needed. The lead Special Education teacher, Mrs. Evermint, was also identified as a vital member of the design team. Mrs. Evermint assisted teachers in the development of functional behavior assessments and behavior intervention plans. Her experience and leadership in special education were helpful as she served as a mentor for the teachers. Behavior analyst, Mrs. Rutgers, provided professional development on tiered interventions and strategies and assisted in identifying additional supports for the BSP. Her unique skills and qualifications were a direct correlation to the program. Mrs. Rutgers was a trained and certified behavior analyst. My plan was to meet monthly with this team to provide updates and revise the action plan as needed.

In addition to the design team, the teachers and paraprofessionals assigned to the BSP classes were essential stakeholders and served on the implementation team. Perry Elementary

was initially one of four schools selected to have self-contained classes of students with E/BD. After the first year, the program hired teachers without experience or training in the field of special education. The program had two teachers and four paraprofessionals. Mrs. Adams had been an educator for five years and had served as a teacher of this program for three years. Although she had the experience working with students with E/BD, she was not certified in special education. The other teacher, Mr. McDonald, was in his second year of teaching, with both years serving in the BSP. He was working towards certification in special education. The four paraprofessionals' experience in working with students with E/BD ranged from two to three years. All of those years had been at Perry Elementary in the behavior support program. The goal of this action research was to provide the teachers and paraprofessionals with the skills and knowledge they needed in order to implement research-based strategies within the self-contained classroom so that they would experience less burnout.

Data Collection Methods

Interviews

After participant observation, interviewing is probably one of the most important research strategies for action research (Stringer, 2014). Prior to the first design team meeting, interviews were conducted with the six members of the implementation team. Interviews were conducted in person at Perry Elementary and via Zoom. The participants were informed prior to the interview that the interviews would be recorded and that neither their name nor any other identifying information would be associated with the recording or transcript. They were also notified that the interview would be transcribed by the researcher and erased once the transcriptions were checked for accuracy.

The interviews were composed of questions to address the three research questions posed in the study. The interviews were semi-structured. I developed a guide, found in Appendix B, which was comprised of nine questions so that I could address the same topics with each of the six participants. At times during the interviews, supplementary questions were generated based upon the responses of the participants. The interviews provided a wide range of concerns and needs. The design team received a preliminary summary from the interviews, which they used the summary to design the first cycle of intervention.

Surveys/Inventories

To assess levels of burnout, licensing was purchased for the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The inventory (see Appendix C) is designed to measure three components or subscales of burnout: emotional exhaustion (EE), depersonalization (DP), and personal accomplishment (PA). The inventory measures how often participants experience different emotions. The inventory is comprised of 22 statements for which the participants are asked to rate how often they were experiencing the said statement. The inventory uses a Likert scale from 0-6, with 0 indicating “Never” and 6 indicating “Every day.” The inventory classifies each statement into subscales: 9 statements (EE), 5 statements (DP), and 8 statements (PA). This helps to score the inventory for each subscale. A scoring key is provided for each inventory. Users must line the survey form up with the scoring key and add the responses to produce totals for each subscale. Levels of burnout are then measured from low, moderate, and high based on the frequency. Each subscale has its own cut scores to measure intensity levels.

Each member of the implementation team received the inventory. Again, the researcher ensured participants’ prior to completing the inventory that neither their names nor any other identifying information would be associated with the completion of the inventory. The researcher

used code numbers to identify participants. Preliminary results indicated that 67%, or 4 out of the 6 implementation team members, experienced high levels of emotional exhaustion and 50% of the team experienced high levels of burnout. The researcher calculated pre-burnout inventory results prior to the first meeting with the design team. The design team used the results to develop a plan of action to assist in alleviating levels of emotional exhaustion and experienced levels of burnout.

Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher recorded and then transcribed data from the interviews. After completing the transcription of the interviews, the researcher examined the relationships between the interviews to look for commonalities and differences. The researcher presented a summary of findings to the design team. In subsequent meetings with the design team, the researcher provided each member with copies of the transcript to search for common themes already identified and used the pre-determined codes. If additional themes were recognized, the design team discussed the impact of that theme on the design intervention strategies and determined if modification should be made to the action plan.

After participants were assessed for burnout using the Maslach Burnout Inventory, the researcher scored and presented the results to the design team. The design team reviewed the results of the inventories to ascertain if additional interventions were needed. At the conclusion of the cycles of interventions, the pre and post inventories were compared to determine the effectiveness of the interventions. The additional data collected from the focus walks, walkthroughs, and mentor meeting notes were triangulated with the results from the interviews and inventories to determine qualitative validity.

Table 3*Research Plan*

Research Question	Anticipated Data to be Collected	Analysis Approach	Timeline
To what extent does training teachers and paraprofessionals on the use of tiered intervention strategies impact their levels of experience burnout in working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders?	Interviews data from teachers and paraprofessionals of BSP	Transcribe and Code for further analysis	Surveys administered in August,/September 2020
	Burnout Inventories completed	Summarize results of inventories	Inventories administered in August,/September 2020 and December 2020
To what degree does implementing intervention strategies change the perceptions of teachers and staff about teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders?	Mentor/Mentee Meeting Notes	Code for further analysis	Meetings in October, November, and December 2020
	Walkthrough and Focus walks feedback	Code for further analysis	Meetings in September, October, November, and December
How does incorporating direct support from administrators and/or mentors influence teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders in reducing experienced levels of burnout?	PLC meeting notes	Code for further analysis	Meetings in October, November, and December 2020

Subjectivity in Research

In the role as Elementary Dean coupled with her experience as a former special education teacher, the researcher had a profound sense of the needs of the teachers and paraprofessionals of the Behavior Support Program. Also, the researcher had a key perspective into how the success of the program played into the success of the school and ultimately the school district. The researcher did not hold any biases that could have affected her implementation of the research methodology; however, as a supervisor to the teachers within the study, she was aware that participants might hesitate to be as forthcoming as they might have been had that balance not existed.

This chapter provided a summary of the methodology and process used in this action research study. This chapter also included a description of the action research process to include the interventions and implementation plans. Finally, this chapter detailed the data collection and analysis methods.

The next chapter presents the context of Perry Elementary BSP and experienced levels of burnout and describes the action research team as well as the story and outcomes to include actions taken in each cycle. In addition, Chapter 4 provides a description of the artifacts used to qualitatively measure the results.

CHAPTER 4

THE CASE

Description of the Context

Perry Elementary is a small elementary school with a student population of approximately three hundred students located in a small urban school district in the Southeastern part of the United States. Within that student population is a specific subgroup of special education students who are a part of the Behavior Support Program (BSP). At the time of this study, Perry Elementary was one of four elementary schools within the district designated to have the Behavior Support Program located in their building.

The behavior support program was developed and designed to assist students who were identified through the multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). The MTSS framework is designed to provide additional support for students who are experiencing challenges to meet grade level standards or for students who are struggling to display appropriate behavior in the school context.

The Behavior Support Program had gone through a series of changes since its inception in the 2016-2017 school year. During the second semester of 2016-2017, Perry Elementary had two self-contained classes of students with E/BD taught by district level content specialists with one paraprofessional assisting both classes. The classes were broken down by grade level bands of K-2 and 3-5 with approximately 15 students in each class. The following year, the school administrative team was tasked with filling the vacancies of two certified teaching positions. The administrative team interviewed and hired two out-of-field certified teachers and two additional paraprofessionals. Although the teachers were certified, neither of them had experience in working with students with E/BD. The district provided the program staff with trainings on how

to write an individualized education plan (IEP) and Mindset. In 2018-2019, the program was changed again, in part, to reduce class size and to mitigate the increase in the number of students qualifying for the program throughout the district. An additional class was added and the search to hire a teacher and two paraprofessionals began. With the addition of another class, the grade bands were further divided into K-1, 2-3, and 4-5 with approximately 20 students enrolled. In 2019-2020, the program evolved again when the district added the services of a behavior health provider, ChangeBright, to assist with those students throughout the district who needed more therapeutic and intensive behavior support.

This addition brought another change for the program. Each school was reduced to two classes, but now with only one grade level band. Perry Elementary elected to have second and third graders. One of the classes was classified as a transition class where students who had exhibited a marked increase in appropriate behavior would spend a set amount of time in general education classrooms. The school planned for the students in this class to be fully integrated back into general education classrooms. The other class contained students who continued to need more support. However, prior to the implementation of the action research study, in 2020-2021, the two classes were combined with no reduction in staff. The one class was staffed with two teachers and four paraprofessionals and, in effect, reduced the teacher to student ratio. Initially, during this change, behavioral analyst, Mrs. Rugers, was assigned to the building to provide daily support. However, Mrs. Rugers was later pulled to provide support to multiple schools throughout the district.

Although, the teachers and paraprofessional had only two to three years of experience in working with students with E/BD, the district provided no additional trainings for them. Each month, the Program for Exceptional Students held district-wide informative meetings for the

teachers. In my role as the Elementary Dean for Perry Elementary, it was one of my responsibilities to ensure that all students received a free and appropriate education. In conjunction with the principal and academic coach, that role also included supporting the teachers and providing them with the tools they needed to be effective. I designed this action research study to assist in the development of those structures of support.

The Action Research Team

The formation of the action research team was based on the roles and experience of the members. The formal recruitment of team members began in May 2020 after receiving approval from the school district. As the Elementary Dean of Perry Elementary, I served as the primary researcher for this study. Other members of the design team included: principal, academic coach, lead special education teacher, and behavior analyst.

Prior to the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, the nation was crippled by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some modifications to the intended plans had to be made. However, the changes were not substantive in altering the action research study. The intended meetings that were scheduled to take place in person took place via Zoom. Furthermore, the beginning of the action research study design team meetings, scheduled to begin in August, were delayed until September.

Dr. Sang was a school principal with seven years of experience as an elementary school administrator at the time of the study. She had over twenty years of experience as a middle school educator. She served on a principal's advisory board and had various connections with stakeholders throughout the community. Since the inception of the Behavior Support Program at Perry Elementary, Dr. Sang was concerned about the impact the behaviors observed from the students within that program might have on the teachers and specifically about the impact those

behaviors might have on the teachers, staff, and other students. Dr. Sang's additional concerns included loss of instructional time and the lack training of the faculty in working with students with E/BD. Dr. Sang's observations throughout the years of the program brought a unique perspective for the needs of the teachers in working with students with emotional and/or behavior disorders.

Mrs. Puters, a veteran teacher of thirteen years and two-year academic coach, brought a wealth of classroom experience and instructional strategies to the team. In addition to her role as academic coach, Mrs. Puters served as a mentor teacher and grade-level chair for many years. She supported and helped to develop first year teachers into effective classroom managers and instructional leaders. She worked in conjunction with the principal in the design of professional development, facilitation of professional learning communities, and in the mentor and mentee program.

Mrs. Evermint was the lead special education teacher at Perry Elementary. She supported all special education teachers within the building. She provided teachers new to the special education department, all of whom had out-of-field certifications, with guidance on managing IEP meetings and completing individualized education plans, functional behavior assessments, and behavior intervention plans. She was committed to ensuring that the continuity of support for this department was in place and that each teacher was in compliance with servicing guidelines for students with disabilities.

As a certified behavior analyst (BCBA), Mrs. Rutgers, who provided direct support to schools with the Behavior Support Program, brought expertise on best practices for implementing behavior strategies and developing and designing the instructional day for students with E/BD. Mrs. Rutgers was one of three behavior analysts employed by the district. Her

experience spanned over ten years, and she was deeply committed to training teachers on effective practices in working with students with E/BD. She was assigned to Perry Elementary as a home school and worked directly with the implementation team. In addition, Mrs. Rugers also supported the building leaders as she worked with teachers who were struggling with classroom management, observed identified students and reviewed behavior data, and offered different strategies to incorporate as a school and within individual classrooms.

The Story and Outcomes

The action research study began with the gathering of baseline data in August of 2020, through interviews and pre-intervention burnout inventories from the participants of the implementation team. The design team met after each cycle of intervention; twice in September, once in October, and once in November. For each meeting the researcher developed an agenda and wrote a summary of the meeting. Prior to each meeting, the team read the summary of the previous meeting. Each meeting with the design team had similar focuses that included reviewing of data from walkthroughs and focus walks and determining next steps for interventions. The interventions occurred within a week or two after the development of next steps, also in September 2020 and October 2020.

In August 2020, prior to the initial meeting with the design team and after receiving consent, the researcher conducted interviews with the implementation team and administered burnout inventories. The interviews intended to gain the participants' perspectives on what they felt they needed to help reduce experienced burnout levels in working with students with emotional and behavior disorders. The interviews also probed for insight on current instructional practices and perceptions of needed support. The burnout inventories, as developed by Maslach, assisted in determining pre-intervention levels of burnout. Once the interviews were

summarized and the burnout inventories completed, the design team met to begin the six-step process of action research as outlined by Forster and Eperjesi (2017).

Cycle One

The design team met in early September to discuss the action research plan and processes, protocols, summary of interviews, and results of burnout inventories. The focus of this meeting was to identify the problem, gather background information, and to begin the design of the study. The researcher presented the team with the results from the interviews and burnout inventories.

While members of the team noted knowledge about literature as it related to burnout impacting teaching, they were surprised at the level of experienced burnout among the implementation team and wanted to dive in to find a solution. Some members indicated that they had similar feelings and perspectives in their own experiences working indirectly with the program. Furthermore, most members contended that prior to the opportunity to participate in this action research, they observed a need for the faculty and staff of the BSP to receive professional learning opportunities about students with E/BD and a framework of instructional strategies. As a result and after much discussion, the team developed a plan of action.

Table 4*Revised Intervention Plan*

Proposed Intervention	Action Research Team Activities	Anticipated Outcomes/Connection to problem, theoretical framework	Proposed Timeline	What data will be collected to evaluate the intervention?
Professional learning opportunities (minimum of 2 or as needed determined by Design Team)	Design professional learning based on results of interviews and pre-burnout inventories	Knowledge is obtained about students with EBD Organizational Learning Process (discovery, invention, production, generalization)	August-September Ongoing if determined needed	Focus walks and walkthrough feedback and anecdotal notes
Professional Learning Communities (PLC)	Establish PLC for BSP faculty and staff for ongoing professional learning opportunities and collaboration as needs identified from interviews	Knowledge is retained and shared Organizational Knowledge (skills, cognitions, systems)	Sept 1-October 31 Ongoing if determined needed	Meeting notes
Mentor/Administrative Support	Delegate mentor for teachers (Lead Special Education Teacher)	Mentoring from designated mentor and administrative team will provide support as needed Organization performance	September 28-November	Meeting notes

In September 2020, Mrs. Rutgers, the behavior analyst, presented the first series of professional development to the implementation team. All participants were in attendance via Zoom. During these sessions, Mrs. Rutgers trained the implementation team on the functions of behavior and the ABC's of Behavior. During the design team meeting, the team concluded that it

was equally important to include a training session on a framework for effective instructional strategies. All members agreed and cited that effective teaching could reduce the opportunity for disruptive behaviors. In mid-October 2020, Mrs. Puters presented another learning opportunity. It focused on the Gradual Release Model Framework.

The second meeting with the design team centered on the discussion of feedback from anecdotal notes from the team as they conducted walkthroughs and completed observations after the first and second professional development sessions. Some design team members remarked that they had observed the implementation team putting into practice elements of understanding the functions of students' behaviors. The levels of camaraderie and supports team members provided for each other in moments of crisis impressed the design team.

Cycle Two

Again, the third session of professional development in October 2020 intended to give teachers and paraprofessional an instructional framework to use in order to engage the students in the learning process. Walkthroughs were conducted after the professional learning opportunity session. Again, all participants were present. Three members of the design team completed the walkthroughs, but only two were documented on the walkthrough observation forms.

Observation forms had been misplaced from one of the team members. However, during the discussion of the results from the walkthroughs, each of the three members provided input. The original process for the walkthroughs was that two members of the team would take one day per week and observe one component of the gradual release instructional framework for four weeks.

The third design team meeting discussion centered on the walkthrough observation data. The team realized that these walkthroughs not only provided the design team with information about session three professional development data, but also sessions one and two. Also during

the walkthroughs, the design team members, who were also members of the school's administrative team, were able to provide the BSP staff with any additional support that was needed. One design team member noted the changes that had taken place within the structure of the class. The design team member remarked that she "feels good about the opportunities the students are getting to not only improve their behavior, but also improve academically." Other design team members commented that the teachers and paraprofessionals could be commended on taking the information learned and applying it in the context of the BSP.

Prior to the presentation of professional development, the researcher completed her Critical Milestones II presentation. With the recommendation from a committee member and approval from the design team, the intended Cycle Three ran concurrently with Cycle Two. The intervention for cycle three included the assignment of a mentor teacher for both BSP teachers. Mrs. Evermint, lead special education teacher and member of the design team, met with each teacher individually to provide support and gain insight into the teacher's perspectives on the support and training they were receiving. In addition, Mrs. Evermint met with the teachers monthly in September, October, and November to ascertain specific knowledge gained from professional development, needs to help reduce levels of burnout, and reflection about the overall process. One of the teachers commented, "How do you know your practice is working?" Another commented, "Students are showing growth in their goals and in their positive behavior." The other teacher responded, "I am seeing less negative behavior and a desire to learn. I feel they are more engaged." In a subsequent meeting, when we asked one of the teachers to reflect on being a participant in this study, he added that he would like to improve in "taking better care of myself. I don't want to get burned out."

At the conclusion of all interventions, the participants on the implementation team were given the post-burnout inventory. Again, the researcher informed the participants that in no way would the completion of inventory affect their employment and that the researcher would take all steps to protect their privacy. Each participant received a copy of the inventory to complete within their own timeframe and in an area in which he or she felt most comfortable. The participants returned the forms enclosed in a secured envelope marked with an identifying number known only to the researcher. The inventories were then calculated for levels of burnout after the interventions had taken place and compared to the pre-intervention inventories.

The last design team meeting for the study focused on reviewing reflection mentor documents, comparing the results of the pre and post burnout inventories, and summarizing experiences and knowledge gained from the study. Members noted a significant difference between the pre and post burnout inventories. Certain members, as they reviewed the mentor meeting notes, suggested that the tone of teachers seemed to indicate growth in their knowledge about the students they were serving and a shift in their perceptions about the students. Continuing to provide support for the BSP was a sentiment shared among all members of the design team. Sharing the experiences and knowledge gained from the study to improve their own practices was also a commonality expressed by the team. Knowledge was created, retained, and shared.

The Interviews

After obtaining informed consent, the researcher conducted interviews with the implementation team. The interviews took place in August of 2020 via Zoom and in the school building in a location where the participants felt most comfortable. The participants were also informed of the recording of the interviews and that after the recordings had been transcribed and

checked for accuracy, they would be destroyed. The interviews that took place on Zoom were recorded using the feature within the Zoom program. The other interviews were recorded using the Apple iPhone and a micro cassette recorder. All interviews were uploaded to transcriptionpuppy.com to be transcribed. After receiving the transcription of the interviews, the researcher checked for accuracy and made any corrections that were needed. In addition, to ensure trustworthiness, the participants were provided a copy of their interview transcription to also check for accuracy, add more information if they wanted to do so, and edit where appropriate to reflect what the respondents stated. After the completion of the review of transcripts, the researcher began scanning the transcripts for reoccurring themes to address the needs for the BSP faculty and staff. The preliminary review for themes was presented to the design team to assist in developing the action research plan.

Found in Appendix B is a guide the researcher developed in an effort to ensure there was continuity for all six participants. When there was a need to elaborate and gain clarity from a response, the researcher asked follow-up questions. The researcher uploaded transcripts to NVivo to help develop codes and themes.

Action Research Team Artifacts

In order to effectively monitor the implementation of the interventions provided for the BSP, some members of the design team created a walkthrough observation form. The form included the different components of the Gradual Release Model. The participants were provided a copy of the document at the completion of the professional development so that they were aware of what the observer was looking for when they entered the classroom. The observers completed the form each time they visited the BSP class. The form was designed to provide a snapshot of the instructional indicators observed at the time the observer walked into the

classroom. The observer noted if the expectations of practice were evident, not evident, or not observed. After each walkthrough, the observers collaborated and gave the participants a copy of the completed form that highlighted some glows and grows in the comments.

In addition to the walkthrough form, the researcher revised the school district's mentor/mentee form to meet the needs of the action research study. Each time the mentor met with the teachers, which coincided with the professional development sessions provided by the design team, they discussed the implementation of training. The form contained pre-assigned questions that the design team created, but the meeting between the mentor and mentee was designed as an open discussion about anything the participants needed.

Summary

Perry Elementary was one of four elementary schools chosen to provide services for students with E/BD in a self-contained classroom setting. The program evolved each year since its inception. For the school year 2020-2021, the school had two blended classes of second and third grade students, who were a part of the Behavior Support Program. The special education students within this program exhibited a wide-range of behaviors that substantively interfered with their learning. In accordance with their individualized educational plans, students were placed in the least restrictive environment. The unintended problem that arose from the establishment of the behavior support program was finding experienced, certified teachers to teach them. From observations and open conversations with the BSP faculty and staff, a need to provide support was identified.

This chapter outlined the story and outcomes from a series of interventions that were implemented in order to reduce the burnout that the faculty and staff of BSP were experiencing. The chapter also detailed the components of the intervention plan. In the next chapter, the

researcher will discuss the findings from the interventions, data collected to answer the research questions, and results based on the research questions.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

This action research study sought to determine if the implementation of intervention strategies would reduce teacher burnout in self-contained classrooms of students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders. The research questions for this study focused on data that were collected using the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educator Survey (MBI-ES), interviews, walkthrough observation forms, and mentor/mentee reflection forms.

In this chapter, the researcher has presented an analysis of the data that helped to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent does training teachers and paraprofessionals on the use of intervention strategies impact their levels of experienced burnout in working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders?
2. To what degree does implementing intervention strategies change the perceptions of teachers and staff about teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders?
3. How does incorporating direct support from administrators and/or mentors influence teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders in reducing experienced levels of burnout?

The researcher began by first using the interview questions as a needs assessments to develop the actions that were taken by the action research design team. Transcriptions of the interviews, mentor meeting notes, and the design team meeting summary notes were uploaded to the NVivo software where codes were developed. The codes are displayed in Table 5. Using the codes developed by NVivo, the researcher, along with members of the design team, sorted, condensed, and combined the codes into categories. Once they reviewed the codes, members of the design

research team pulled out short word groups or words and created more descriptive codes that summarized the data more accurately. From the analysis of the codes, they developed themes to determine the findings for the research questions (see Table 6). After developing the themes, a member check was conducted by asking the participants to review the themes for input and accuracy.

Table 5

Common Codes

Source	Common Codes (Frequency)	Themes/Patterns
Transcribed interviews, meeting notes, walkthrough observations	Tired (3), overwhelmed (5), exhausted (12), stressed (8) burned-out (2) behavior (10)	Burnout
	Parent support (4), district support (8), leadership (5), administrative support (8), collaboration (7), time (4), evaluative (5)	Supportive leadership
	Unprepared (22), management training (12), PD (professional development)(3),	Training

Table 6*Summary of Research Findings*

Research Questions	Findings
<p>To what extent does training teachers and paraprofessionals on the use of intervention strategies impact their levels of experienced burnout in working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders?</p>	<p>The BSP faculty and staff valued the training received from certified professionals unique to the students they serve, especially with behavior management.</p> <p>Training the staff on a defined instructional approach with clear roles identified helps to reduce behaviors and loss of instructional time.</p>
<p>To what degree does implementing intervention strategies change the perceptions of teachers and staff about teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders?</p>	<p>Teachers and staff experienced a significant reduction in their perceived levels of burnout as indicated by post burnout inventory.</p> <p>Support and collaboration with all stakeholders is essential to help teachers and staff experience less burnout and remain in teaching, but staff would welcome more parental support.</p>
<p>How does incorporating direct support from administrators and/or mentors influence teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders in reducing experienced levels of burnout?</p>	<p>Mentor teachers provide significant support to mentees, in particularly with behavior intervention management and IEP development.</p>

Research Question One

Training of BSP Staff

The researcher analyzed the data collected from individual interviews, design team meeting notes, and mentor/mentee meeting notes to qualitatively measure what trainings and interventions were needed for the BSP staff. Prior to the first design team meeting, the researcher conducted individual interviews with the BSP staff in late August and early September 2020. From the analysis of those data sources two themes emerged:

1. The BSP faculty and staff valued the training received from certified professionals unique to the students they served, especially with behavior management.
2. Training the staff on a defined instructional approach with clear roles identified helped to reduce behaviors and loss of instructional time.

Theme 1: On-going Trainings

After the researcher completed the interviews with the implementation team, the design team met and discussed the plan of action for the study. All of the members of design team agreed to the need for the implementation team to receive training. All members of the implementation team shared that sentiment, as indicated from their interviews. Their comments are shared in Table 7. Calvert (2016) suggested that leaders must cultivate an environment of continuous learning that engages teachers in their professional learning at every step of the way. As noted by Benner et al. (n.d), because of a lack of training, teachers of students with E/BD may not be prepared to meet the demands of their jobs.

Table 7*Participant excerpts: Training*

Participants	Participants Comment
Participant 1	<p>“We need training on how to deal with different behaviors, how to deal with the kid’s situation. I feel that we should have training at least every three to six months...”</p>
Participant 2	<p>“I think we should do more training. I think with this program we need something outside of physical training.” We need like maybe some kind of training every six months to see how we can reach each child on a different level outside of having to physically restrain them.”</p>
Participant 3	<p>“I think that we do need more training, especially when it comes to dealing with the children with different disabilities that they had. I think we need more training when it comes to how to deal with burnout and how to deal with our own mental health.”</p>
Participant 4	<p>“With everything going on, I just hope that we could get more training to help us help the children more. Because with us being burned out, it is kind of had to keep being energetic for the children and doing things for them. Maybe we could get more support and more training, then it would make or lives and jobs and kids’ lives a lot better.”</p>

the lesson to the end. All the staff needed was the tools to do their jobs. When effective instructional practices are sound, inappropriate behavior decreases.” Another design team member echoed this assertion and added, “the staff was responding to implementing the instructional framework, now how do we continue to support them?”

One of the teachers of the students with EBD stated:

While the training provided me with the components and strategies of the framework, it was a challenge to find the time to plan, manage the behaviors, and be effective. But what I have learned is when students have down time, behaviors arise. Constant engagement really helps lower behavior. We just need more time.

Overall, most participants and design team members observed a significant reduction in extreme and inappropriate behaviors from the students after implementing the new instructional practices. Also, the participants recognized that these new practices reduced some behavior problems, but acknowledged the challenges to continuing to implement it with fidelity would be difficult.

Summary of Findings for Research Question 1

While all the participants shared similar points of views that training is an essential element of helping to reduce the extreme or inappropriate behaviors that occur in the classroom, they differed on the type, length, and frequency that training should occur. Some of the participants noted a need for mental health training or behavior/classroom management, while others saw a need to just have general training to assist the students with their needs. The participants also had various suggestions as to when the trainings should occur. One participant shared that the trainings should occur prior to starting the position and others cited that training should be ongoing throughout the school year. The research supports the view that it is possible

to reduce employee burnout by establishing a system of trainings or professional learning opportunities (Iancu et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the participants of the study also acknowledged the need for becoming more effective at delivering instruction that promotes student engagement. The participants recognized having a structured framework for instruction would reduce some of the negative behavior exhibited by the students and therefore reduce the burnout they were experiencing. As reported by Pedler & Hsu (2019), an organization has added value when the members of the organization identify and utilize the opportunities to learn from available resources. The participants of this study recognized the need for training in order to better serve the student population they taught.

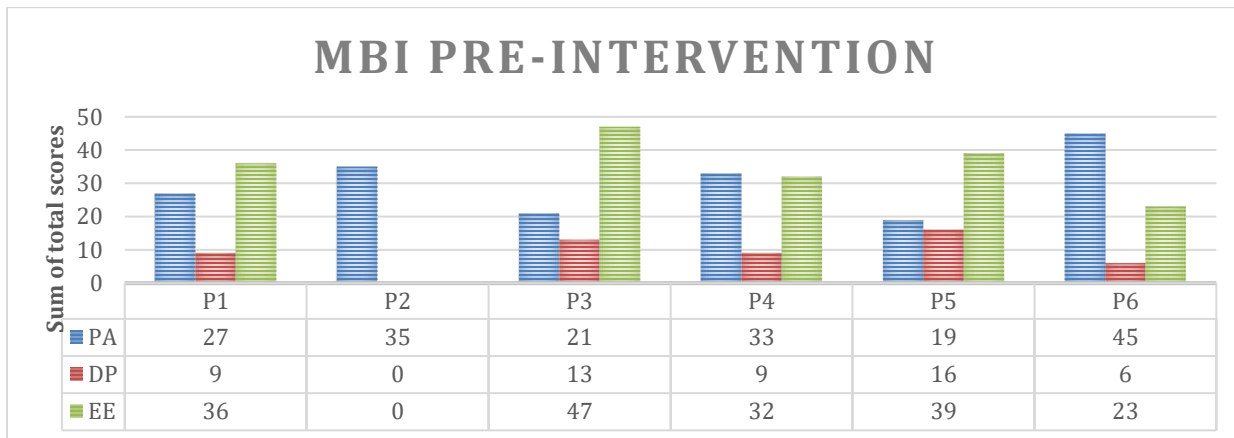
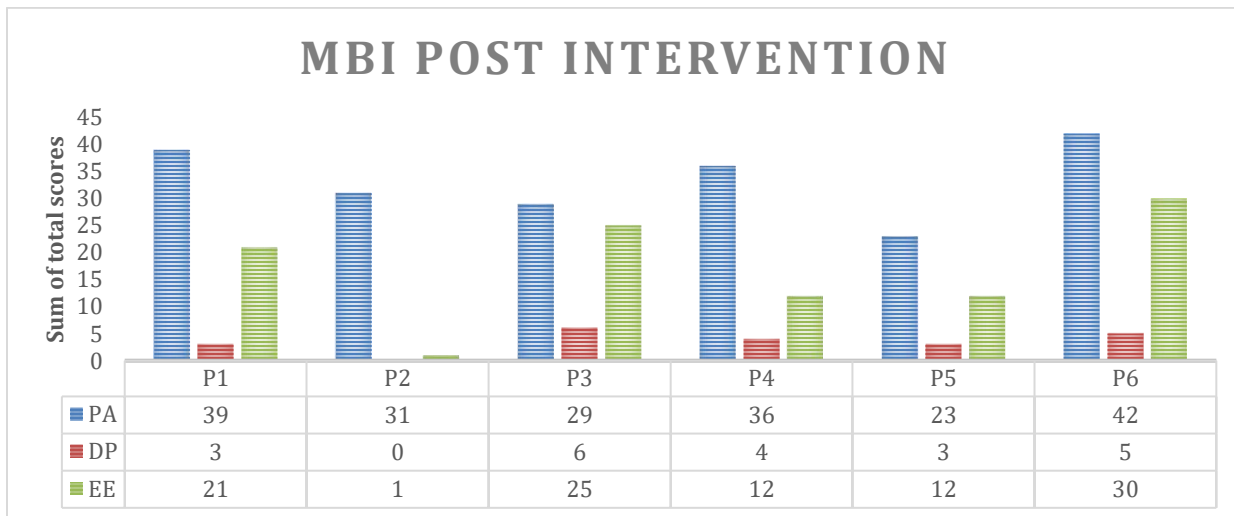
Research Question 2

Implementation of Interventions

In addition to the qualitative analysis from the results of interviews, walkthrough observations, and meeting notes, the researcher completed an analysis of the data from the pre and post administration of the Maslach Burnout Inventory to determine to what degree implementing intervention strategies changed the perceptions of teachers and staff about teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders. The analysis also determined if incorporating direct support from administrators and/or mentors impacted teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders to remain in teaching. The analysis included the scores of the participants for each subscale in relation to their emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, and depersonalization levels. The levels were analyzed in two phases, pre-intervention and post-intervention. After the development and implementation of designed interventions, the participants completed the post MBI-ES. Figure 6 illustrates the results from

phase one. The table includes the participants and each subscale total scores. The results indicate that 67%, 4 out of the 6 implementation team members, experienced high levels of emotional exhaustion and 50% of the team experienced a high level of burnout. According to the National Academy of Medicine, an individual is considered to have “at least one symptom of burnout if they have high scores in either emotional exhaustion (score of 27 or higher) or DP (score of 10 or higher) subscales” (2018).

The participants were assessed at the conclusion of the interventions and the results are displayed in Figure 7. An analysis of the data revealed that the levels of experienced burnout had decreased significantly. At the time of the survey (November 2020), one out of the six, or 17% of the participants, experienced high levels of emotional exhaustion, which is a 50% decrease. Further analysis indicated that as the levels of personal accomplishments increased, the levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization decreased. This trend was expected, as there is an inverse relationship between personal accomplishment and both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. While that inverse relationship was observed in the pre-intervention data, the gap widened with the results of the post-intervention.

Figure 6*MBI Pre-Interventions Data***Figure 7***MBI Post Interventions Data*

To help draw a clearer picture of the results from the pre and post burnout inventories, the researcher ran a descriptive analysis to include the mean, range, and standard deviation of scores (Table 8).

Table 8*MBI Subscales: Descriptive Analysis of Pre/Post Scores*

Burnout Subscale	#	Minimum		Maximum		Range		Mean		Standard Deviation	
		Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
PA	6	19	23	45	42	26	19	30	33	9.7	7.0
DP	6	0	0	16	6	16	6	8.9	3.5	5.6	2.1
EE	6	0	1	47	30	47	29	29.5	16.8	16.5	10.5

Using the scoring and interpretation key found in Appendix C, the mean scores for the pre-assessment indicated a high values for emotional exhaustion (29.5), a low value for personal accomplishment (30), and a moderate value for depersonalization (8.9). The values shifted with the post-intervention assessments. The values all moved in a positive direction: EE moved from a high value to low end moderate level (16.8), PA moved from a low value to moderate value (33), and DP moved from a moderate value to a low level (3.5). The calculations of the standard deviation for each subscales for both pre and post results yielded a high range which indicated the desired variability.

To further determine if the implementation of strategies changed the perceptions of the BSP staff in working with students with E/BD, the researcher utilized qualitative measures, which included meeting notes and observation notes. In the final meeting with the participants, after implementation of the interventions, the researcher concluded the session with general questions about the participants' experiences with the action research process and their overall sense of wellness as it related to burnout.

One theme emerged from the analysis of the meeting and observation notes. Participants mentioned feeling or receiving support and collaboration among peers seven times.

Theme 1: Feeling or Receiving Support

With the exception of one participant, the other five shared similar sentiments that after the implementation, they felt supported by the administrative team more and that support led to improvement of their overall feeling of being burned out. One participant commented:

Out of these few months, the one thing that has helped me the most was to see and be able to talk, real talk, to a/or any member of the school's administrative team was the most valuable. I feel better now. I felt the benefit of it and I hope they did too.

Another participant added: "This additional time that we've spent with members of the administrative team has helped me feel more relaxed and supported versus being tensed up because I was being evaluated." "I agree," responded another participant, "I think this experience has opened my eyes to the type of support we need so that this job won't become so, at times, taxing."

While two other participants expressed the same thoughts, they also believed that receiving support from the parents is just as important. One of the two stated, "Having constant and consistent administrative support has benefited me greatly. I truly believe that we need to somehow get the parents more involved to help us manage their child's behavior. It takes a village." Another participant shared, "The support we've had during this process has been amazing. I feel the access to our leaders has grown substantively. What I want most though is to have that same level of support from our parents."

Summary of Findings for Research Question 2

When examining the results of the pre interventions burnout inventory, 50% of the participants indicated they were experiencing low levels of personal accomplishments; 67% indicated that they were experiencing high levels of emotional exhaustion; and 33% indicated that they were experiencing high levels of depersonalization. Each of the levels is symptomatic of burnout. However, after the implementation of interventions, the percentages of participants indicating burnout levels changed: for emotional exhaustion from 67% to 17% and for depersonalization, from 33% to zero percent. Although 50% of the participants indicated low levels of personal accomplishment, participant one moved from low to moderate and participant two moved from moderate to low.

Analysis from the Maslach Burnout Inventory for Educators Survey (MBI-ES), interviews, and meeting notes revealed that the support of building leaders and parental support has an influence on teacher satisfaction and burnout levels. As reported in the literature, according to Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015), instructional leaders' behaviors make significant independent contributions to teacher burnout.

Research Question 3

Assigning Mentor and Direct Support from Building Leaders

To determine how incorporating direct support from administrators and/or mentors influenced teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders in reducing burnout levels for the staff members the BSP, the researcher captured qualitative data from mentor/mentee meeting notes and reflection forms along with meeting notes and observations made from the design action research team. Through analysis of these data, one theme emerged:

1. Mentor teachers provided significant support to mentees, especially in the areas of behavior management and IEP development.

Theme 1: Mentor Teachers Provided Significant Support to Mentees, In Particular With Behavior Intervention Management and IEP Development.

After reviewing the results of the first administration of the burnout inventory, which reflected that nearly 70% of the participants were symptomatic of experienced burnout, the design team members all agreed with providing the teachers with a mentor. As one member shared that having a mentor kept her from “leaving the teaching profession early in my career. My mentor was someone who I could go to for answers and valuable resources. The BSP staff needs this.” The other members agreed with that assertion and developed a plan to assign a mentor to the staff.

Once the mentor was assigned, the mentor and mentee established dates and times that they would meet. The meetings centered on the needs of the participants. When asked what you would like to improve or enhance your practice, most of the participants indicated that continued support from the mentor about the basic principles of individualized educational plan and behavior intervention plan development is important. One participant stated:

We need ideas and strategies to help the students. Sometimes we get defeated because we just don't know what to do. If we had someone in addition to and outside of leadership, a mentor, who has knowledge about FBAs, IEPs, and BIPs, who will support us, we welcome that.

The time during the mentoring sessions also supported Jacobson (2016) when he noted that providing people with time to collaborate and problem solve in an arena helps them develop

skills to cope and not feel overwhelmed. The insertion of mentors into the daily schedules of the mentees proved beneficial as one of the participants shared,

To me this is just like we are in Tier 2 of support, like with the students in MTSS. This feels like a check-in/check-out type of intervention. The mentor checks in with me in the morning and reminds me of the goals I've set for myself and checks back on me in the afternoon to see if I've met those goals. If I haven't, we discuss how I can the next day. Takes no more than 5-10 minutes. I know daily check-in may not be sustainable, but I like it.

Summary of Findings for Research Question 3

The action research team used data from mentor/mentee meeting notes and reflection forms along with meeting notes and observations made from design action research team to determine how incorporating direct support from administrators and/or mentors impact teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders in reducing burnout levels.

The analysis revealed the value of providing additional support with mentors. The mentees reported that having the support gave them the opportunity to collaborate and share ideas and strategies that would help better serve their students and not feel so overwhelmed. In addition, the assignment of a mentor ran concurrently with the implementation of the trainings the participants received. As noted earlier, the participants' levels of burnout decreased significantly. Prior to the insertion of the interventions, implementation of trainings, and mentor support, 67% of the participants were experiencing symptoms of burnout. After the interventions, the percentage dropped to 17%, or 1 out of the 6 participants.

Summary

This action research study utilized qualitative and quantitative data to examine the impact of interventions for the BSP faculty and staff in reducing their levels of experienced burnout. The action research design team employed a series of actions to meet the needs of the participants including trainings, observations, and mentors to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent does training teachers and paraprofessionals on the use of intervention strategies impact their levels of experienced burnout in working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders?
2. To what degree does implementing intervention strategies change the perceptions of teachers and staff about teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders?
3. How does incorporating direct support from administrators and/or mentors influence teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders in reducing experienced levels of burnout?

The BSP faculty and staff worked specifically with a group of students who at times displayed behaviors that were physically and verbally aggressive and inappropriate within the context of a typical classroom setting. Analysis of the interviews indicated that these behaviors, along with deficits in training and support, had the staff members of the program feeling overwhelmed and burned out. Two themes emerged from the analysis. Firstly, the BSP faculty and staff valued the training received from certified professionals unique to the students they serve, especially with behavior management. Secondly, training the staff on a defined instructional approach with clear roles identified helps to reduce behaviors and loss of instructional time.

The second research question focused on the implementation of the trainings and perceptions the BSP staff had in working with students with E/BD. The data from the interviews

was compared to the results of the pre-intervention burnout levels. Triangulation of these data sources revealed that each of the participants were experiencing at least one symptom of burnout. In addition, all of the participants felt the need to acquire ongoing training and administrative and parental support. After the insertion of training and support, the experienced level of burnout decreased significantly.

To answer the final research question, the researcher analyzed analysis of post-intervention burnout surveys, mentor meeting notes, design team meeting notes, and reflections. The analysis revealed that the participants benefited from having access to a mentor to help answer questions and provide them with strategies to help better serve their students. Furthermore, the data revealed that the participants reveled in the ongoing and daily support the mentor provided to help them meet the demands of working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this action research was to determine if the implementation of intervention strategies would reduce teacher burnout in self-contained classrooms of students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders. The research was guided by three research questions:

1. To what extent does training teachers and paraprofessionals on the use of intervention strategies impact their levels of experienced burnout in working with students with emotional and behavioral disorders?
2. To what degree does implementing intervention strategies change the perceptions of teachers and staff about teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders?
3. How does incorporating direct support from administrators and/or mentors influence teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders in reducing experienced levels of burnout?

This chapter provides a summary of the methodology, a summary of each finding from the action research data, connections to the literature, the limitations of the study, and implications for practitioners, policy makers, and future researchers.

Summary of Methodology

This research was completed through a qualitative action research study and informed by some quantitative methods. The action research process provided the framework that engaged the participants in a cyclical structure that encompassed two cycles of interventions. Qualitative measures included interviews of six participants, summary of meeting notes, observation forms,

and mentor/mentee reflection notes. The research recorded, used an online program to transcribe, and reviewed each interview. To ensure trustworthiness, respondents received transcriptions to review as well. After verification from each interviewee that the transcription accurately captured what was intended, the researcher uploaded the transcriptions into a coding program. Once the information was coded, the researcher reviewed and analyzed the data to create specific categories and then developed themes based on those categories.

In addition to the qualitative measures used in this study, quantitative measures were also used and analyzed. By completing pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys, participants assessed their perceived levels of burnout. The design team received results of the pre-intervention survey and the interviews to develop a plan of action for the participants. At the conclusion of the interventions, the participants again completed the burnout survey. The results of the pre and post intervention were compared and analyzed. The researcher reviewed all of the data sources further to determine the findings for the study.

Summary of the Findings

At the conclusion of collecting, organizing, and analyzing the data, themes emerged that addressed the research questions. For research question one, one major theme, training, with two sub-themes aligned to the types of trainings, emerged: training from certified professional about behavior management and training on a defined instructional approach. The distinction between the types of training was important because of the specificity of the behavior support program. The theme that emerged for research question two was support and collaboration. This theme appeared from the results of the burnout surveys and insight from both the design and implementation teams of this study. The analysis of the data also yielded one theme for research

question three, mentor support. The themes identified through the action research process assisted in the discovery of the conclusions presented in this chapter.

Conclusion 1: Training of Faculty and Staff Could Reduce Educator Burnout

Based on the data gathered, the participants in this study provided insight from their experiences in working with students with E/BD that more training proved effective. As the participants described, the trainings provided them with the skills they needed to assist students, relieving their experience of feeling overwhelmed and burned out. The design team valued training equally. After reviewing the responses of the participants from the interviews, the design team quickly developed a plan of action to provide the trainings the participants indicated they needed. These included strategies in behavior management and a specific instructional strategy design to reduce the behaviors and decrease loss of instructional time.

While the action research process generated the necessity of the trainings, variations occurred with the frequency and time frame of the trainings. According to the findings, these variations contributed to an articulated need to develop a more robust system of professional learning opportunities and trainings for the behavior support program in an effort to continue to reduce their experienced levels of burnout. In short, the participants identified training prior to working with their students, ongoing training, and training relevant to the student demographic they served as all valuable. They also felt such trainings were needed to maintain a homeostatic balance between their feelings of being burned out and effective teaching.

The participants also delineated the types of trainings needed in order to be effective. Of the three specifically mentioned, they identified trainings on behavior/classroom management and a research-based instructional approach as most beneficial. However, part of being an

administrator is providing teachers with the tools they need in order to be successful. For some of the participants, mental health training was highlighted as one such tool.

Conclusion 2: Support and Collaboration From Administration and Parents

Support and collaboration were consistently conveyed throughout the data sources. In reference to support, the participants identified the need to have the support of the building administrator or administrative team. They reported that having the access to the administrative team was beneficial in that it provided them with the opportunity to engage leadership about their specific concerns. The participants also noted that the support they received helped them feel more at ease. Not always being evaluated when interacting with administration was a common desire shared by the participants. Additionally, the behavior support staff shared that they felt they had support of someone working with them when it came to the students who were struggling with their behaviors on a daily basis.

In addition to the continued support needed from the building administrative team, the participants identified more support from district personnel outside of the monthly special education meetings and restraint training. Given the nature of the behavioral challenges exhibited by the students within the BSP, participants shared that any additional support would be welcomed, especially from district personnel who were skilled and trained to work with students with E/BD. As clearly defined throughout the data collection and analysis, support and collaboration can make the difference in reducing burnout.

Although not addressed directly in the study, the participants shared the necessity of collaborating with and receiving parental support. While teachers are required to annually meet with the parents to collaborate in the development of the student's IEP, the participants reported that the challenges of ongoing collaboration with parents or guardians were significant. Parental

support has been a leading indicator in the success of the students within the schools. It is imperative that schools incorporate interventions and supports that include the training of parents, staff, and administration.

Conclusion Three: Mentor Teachers Provided Significant Support to Mentees, In Particular with Behavior Intervention Management and IEP Development

Results from the feedback and mentee reflection notes suggested that the mentees found the support provided to them to be of great significance in decreasing their overall feelings of being overwhelmed and burned out. The mentees responded especially well to the opportunity to check in and check out with their mentor on a daily basis. This daily access gave the mentees the opportunity to establish goals and reflect on the achievement of those goals with someone who had experience in working with students who required behavior intervention plans.

Access to a mentor also helped teachers build lines of communication and established relationships between the mentor and mentee. As members of the design team conveyed, having a mentor was key in their decisions to remain in teaching. The faculty and staff of the behavior support program contended daily with behaviors from students not within their control, including those that were aggressive and sometimes violent in nature. The BSP staff welcomed support from their mentors.

In order for the mentors to be effective, they had to possess knowledge of the BSP and of the characteristics of students with E/BD. They also needed to have experience in the requirements and development of FBAs, IEPs, and BIPs and in this case, they had to have previously served a mentor. For this unique group of educators, who serve students with E/BD in self-contained classrooms, it proved essential to assign a mentor with those qualities in order to aid in the reduction of teacher burnout.

Major Findings Related to the Literature Reviewed

With the new designation of burnout as a workplace syndrome caused by chronic workplace stress (WHO, 2018), the implications for instructional leaders to provide educators with support is profound. Burned-out teachers are often overcome with the stresses placed on them by their jobs, lack of resources, and student misbehaviors (Herman et al. 2018 and Cancio & Conderman, 2008). The results of this study back this assertion. When the participants of this study participated and implemented the strategies the design team provided them, their levels of burnout decreased. “Fitting people to the job with training and education is one way we can solve the problem of burnout” (Maslach, 2018).

The participants of this study all noted that they were unprepared to serve the students due to lack of training, which led to high levels of emotional exhaustion and high levels of depersonalization. After the teachers and paraprofessionals of the behavior support program were provided a series of professional learning opportunities reinforced with walkthroughs and feedback, their levels of perceived experienced burnout were reduced significantly; approximately 70% to 17% respectively. The quality of teaching decreases when teachers are experiencing high levels of burnout (Howson, 2016). Training the staff on strategies that promoted the success of the students with E/BD reduced the feeling of being ill-equipped and underprepared as reported by the participants. This was also supported through the reviewed literature (Marsh, 2018; Flower et al., 2014).

As determined through the interviews, administrative support was one of the most critical factors in the BSP staff feeling less burned-out. Research supports the efforts of administrative support or lack of support as being important variables to the success of teachers (Crosby, 2015). Building leaders are charged with facilitating a school culture and climate that supports teachers

(Turner & Morelli, 2017), and provides them with the resources they need in order to be effective in teaching the students they serve. This support can be emotional and non-evaluative, and can include other human resources, such as a mentor (Bevis, 2008). After the assignment of the mentor and support of the administrative team, the participants shared their continual need for such support and reported less stress than they had previously. The sentiments the participants shared were echoed throughout the literature and supported the findings of this study. More support is required to help the teachers of students with E/BD through mentoring, coaching, and on-going professional learning opportunities (Pas et al., 2016; Maynes, et al., 2015). In short, when educators who work with students with E/BD show symptoms of burnout, it is vital that educational leaders incorporate ongoing training and support to help mitigate the effects.

Limitations of the Current Study

Through this qualitative study informed by quantitative measures, the faculty and staff members' perspectives were collected, analyzed, and coded to determine whether the insertion of interventions reduced their levels of burnout. By limiting the sample to one small school, the study was further limited to only six participants. The study did not consider the perspectives from other behavior support programs, district leaders, or parents. Including the other elementary behavior support programs across the district could have strengthened the study.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying impact on teachers, students, and all aspects of education further limited the action research study. The study findings should be interpreted with awareness that the pandemic may have had some impact on the perceived levels of stress and burnout of the participants. Teachers had to adjust by using different teaching

strategies in addition to measures associated with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendations for schools.

Implications and Recommendations for Practitioners

Educator burnout impacts student achievement. The implications of this study could be valuable over a broad or extended range of the educational spectrum and used in several different ways. The findings of the study could enhance the practices of schools and school districts in reducing teacher burnout through ongoing trainings, support, and mentoring. While this list is not exhaustive, all of the participants in this study found ongoing trainings and support reduced their feelings of being overwhelmed and stressed. In some instances, the participants varied on the types of trainings and support they found most beneficial.

Given the findings of study, other schools and school districts should consider developing a system of supports and professional development trainings that target special education teachers in effective teaching practices for students with E/BD, especially in a self-contained environment. However, not all students with E/BD are in self-contained classrooms, and thus, schools and school districts could extend this training to general education teachers. Also, partnering with institutions of higher learning, especially as it relates to their program of study for special education, is a consideration worth noting. Such a partnership could help foster the relationship with schools that have those specialized classes in order to develop and train current and future teachers on best practices in educating students with emotional and or behaviors disorders.

Educators are searching for ways to improve and support their instructional practices for teachers of students with E/BD. This study suggests that providing a mentoring program that targets the distinctive needs of the specific group of special education teachers who work

exclusively with students with emotional and or behavior disorders may result in adjustment of classroom practices in the areas of instruction and classroom management.

Implications and Recommendations for Researchers

Overall, the health and well being of teachers has an impact on student learning and achievement. As an implication for future research, this study's findings included support and collaboration from administration and parents. Therefore, future researchers may want to investigate the correlation between parental support and collaboration as it relates to teacher burnout. Some of the interviews conducted mentioned parental engagement in some form whether it was related to communication, collaboration, or support. It would be interesting to determine how this variable may impact teacher burnout.

An opportunity for future research could also address a comparative study of different sub-groups of teachers. For example, interrelated special education teachers' burnout levels can be compared to those of special education teachers in this study or to all the teachers within the building. If a researcher chose to apply the study to the entire school for his or her research, the larger presence of general education teachers should provide a more telling picture of the role that student behavior plays in teacher burnout. Additionally, if the number of participants were increased to include other roles, more variations and contexts affecting teacher burnout could be explored. This would assist building and district leaders in developing a more specific system of interventions for teachers or educators who are experiencing burnout. Furthermore, addressing those concerns could help leaders save money and retain qualified and experienced teachers.

This research spanned from August 2020 to November 2020. While the results of this study indicated a significant decrease in the percentage of participants experiencing symptoms of burnout, researchers should consider a longitudinal study that measures burnout scores at the

beginning, middle, and end of the school year. A longitudinal study would provide the researcher with more time to observe the participants implement interventions for an extended period.

Chapter Summary and Final Thoughts

This chapter provided a summary of the methodology, a summary of each finding from the action research data, connections to the literature, limitations of the study, and implications for practitioners and future researchers. The purpose of this action research was to determine if the incorporation of interventions for the BSP faculty and staff would reduce their levels of experienced burnout. The action research design team engaged in a series of actions that determined the needs of the participants, enacted trainings, completed observations, and provided mentors as a means to reduce or alleviate that burnout.

The study took place in one location, Perry Elementary, and centered on one subgroup of impacted teachers and staff members who serve in a self-contained classroom for students with emotional and/or behavior disorders. From the findings reported in this study, four conclusions were determined to have impacted the experienced levels of burnout self-reported by the teachers. The study revealed the following conclusions:

1. Training received from certified professionals tailored to the specific needs of the faculty and staff was valued.
2. Training the staff on a defined instructional approach with clear roles identified helped to reduce negative student behaviors and loss of instructional time.
3. Support and collaboration with all stakeholders helped teachers and staff experience less burnout.
4. Mentor teachers provided significant support to mentees, in particular with behavior intervention management and IEP development.

Given these conclusions, suggestions were annotated for other schools with similar behavior support programs within the district that want to improve the instructional practices of the faculty and staff, and, when necessary, reduce burnout. The recommendations for other schools and school leaders to consider are as follows:

1. Develop a system of supports and professional development trainings for special education teachers targeting effective teaching practices for students with E/BD, especially in a self-contained environment.
2. Partner with institutions of higher learning in their program of study for special education student teachers.
3. Establish forums to help build relationships fostering strong communication between parents, teachers, and leaders who work with students with E/BD.
4. Design and implement a mentoring program that targets the distinct needs of the special education teachers who work exclusively with students with emotional and or behavior disorders.
5. Monitor and provide mental health assistance for the faculty and staff of behavior support programs.

A continuation of this study and future research could support the findings with extending and expanding participant pools, subgroups of teachers, and the length of interventions. In addition, replicating this study after the pandemic may yield data that provide leaders with valuable information about the long-term effects of COVID-19.

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Appendix A

Email Correspondence

Dear _____,

My name is Sonia Moore and I am a student at the University of Georgia, and Elementary Dean at Key Elementary. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about the impact of implementing tiered intervention strategies to reduce teacher burnout in self-contained classrooms of students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders. You're eligible to be in this study because you _____.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you'd like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email or contact me at 334-467-5487, sam91329@uga.edu.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Sonia A. Moore

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?
2. What is the most challenging/difficult aspect of your job?
3. Reflect on your experience as a teacher/paraprofessional of students with emotional and behavior disorders?
4. Prior to taking this position, what prior experience have you had in working with students in the behavior support program?
5. Rate your level of preparedness in working with students with E/BD.
6. Describe the level of support received from: a: building principal; b. central administration; c: other special education teachers.
7. What are the kinds of support you would like to receive to help you become more competent in working with students with E/BD? From who?
8. Identify any pre- or in-service needs that you perceive valuable in your role in working with students with emotional and behavior disorders.
9. What intervention strategies or instructional practices are you currently using in your classroom?

Appendix C

Maslach Burnout Inventory

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Maslach Burnout Inventory™

Instruments and Scoring Keys

Includes MBI Forms:

Human Services - MBI-HSS

Medical Personnel - MBI-HSS (MP)

Educators - MBI-ES

General - MBI-GS

Students - MBI-GS (S)

Christina Maslach
Susan E. Jackson
Michael P. Leiter
Wilmar B. Schaufeli
Richard L. Schwab

Published by Mind Garden, Inc.

info@mindgarden.com
www.mindgarden.com

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MBI for Educators Survey

How often:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

How often
0-6

Statements:

1. _____ I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2. _____ I feel used up at the end of the workday.
3. _____ I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.
4. _____ I can easily understand how my students feel about things.
5. _____ I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal objects.
6. _____ Working with people all day is really a strain for me.
7. _____ I deal very effectively with the problems of my students.
8. _____ I feel burned out from my work.
9. _____ I feel I'm positively influencing other people's lives through my work.
10. _____ I've become more callous toward people since I took this job.
11. _____ I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.
12. _____ I feel very energetic.
13. _____ I feel frustrated by my job.
14. _____ I feel I'm working too hard on my job.
15. _____ I don't really care what happens to some students.
16. _____ Working with people directly puts too much stress on me.
17. _____ I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my students.
18. _____ I feel exhilarated after working closely with my students.
19. _____ I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
20. _____ I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.
21. _____ In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly.
22. _____ I feel students blame me for some of their problems.

(Administrative use only)

EE Total score: _____ DP Total score: _____ PA Total score: _____

EE Average score: _____ DP Average score: _____ PA Average score: _____

MBI - Educators Survey - MBI-ES: Copyright ©1986 Christina Maslach, Susan E. Jackson & Richard L. Schwab.

Scoring & Interpretation Key – MBI-HSS

Instructions. For each column, transfer your response (0-6) from the original measure to the three columns below. Only transfer numbers to the unshaded/ungreyed spaces. Then, sum each column and place that number in the space provide below. This number represents your score for that dimension. Guidelines for interpretation can be found on the right side of the sheet.

Emotional Exhaustion Depersonalization Professional Accomplishment

How Often 0-6	How Often 0-6	How Often 0-6
1. _____	1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____	5. _____
6. _____	6. _____	6. _____
7. _____	7. _____	7. _____
8. _____	8. _____	8. _____
9. _____	9. _____	9. _____
10. _____	10. _____	10. _____
11. _____	11. _____	11. _____
12. _____	12. _____	12. _____
13. _____	13. _____	13. _____
14. _____	14. _____	14. _____
15. _____	15. _____	15. _____
16. _____	16. _____	16. _____
17. _____	17. _____	17. _____
18. _____	18. _____	18. _____
19. _____	19. _____	19. _____
20. _____	20. _____	20. _____
21. _____	21. _____	21. _____
22. _____	22. _____	22. _____

Categorization: Emotional Exhaustion, Human Services & Educators Forms	
	Frequency
High	27 or over
Moderate	17-26
Low	0-16

Categorization: Depersonalization, Human Services Form	
	Frequency
High	13 or over
Moderate	7-12
Low	0-6

Categorization: Personal Accomplishment,* Human Services Form	
	Frequency
High	39 or over
Moderate	32-38
Low	0 - 31

EE Sum _____

Dep Sum _____

PA Sum _____

Appendix D

Empirical Findings Table

APA — by Author	Title of Study	Purpose	Method(s)	Sample	Result(s)	Conclusion (s)	Implicatio ns(s)
Bettini, B., Cumm ing, M., Merrill , K., Brunsti ng,N., and Liaupsi n, C. (2017)	Working Condi tions in Self- Contain ed Settings for Student s With Emotio nal Disturb ance	To understand whether special education teachers in self- contained classrooms of students with EBD experience conditions necessary to effectively implement academic and social evidence- based practices (EBP).	Integrative and narrative literature review. For the purposes of this investigati on, the term working conditions included a teacher’s subjective perception s of his or her working conditions as well as objective conditions in the school and classroom. Multiple- gated procedure	Peer- reviewe d studies publishe d since 1990 (555 articles)	Conditions necessary for learning and implem ting evidence- based practices are seldom present in these settings. In addition, the extant research on special education teachers’ working conditions in these settings is largely disconnecte d from research investigatin g teachers’ use of evidence- based practices.	Many special education teachers in self- contained settings may not feel that they have adequate access to the kind of high- quality professiona l developme nt that is likely necessary for them to learn about and implement EBPs. SETs felt they had insufficient time to plan for teaching multiple subjects to students from multiple grade	Ongoing profession al opportunit ies and profession al developm ent about EBP on the design and implemen tation of interventi on strategies for teachers of students with ED. Provision s for increase collaborat ive planning.

						levels, and to also complete paperwork. SETs generally felt satisfied with support from colleagues and administrators.	
Brunsting, N., Sreckovic, M., & Lane, K.	Special Education Teacher Burnout: A Synthesis of Research from 1979 to 2013	To update the knowledge base on burnout by reviewing all empirical studies examining one or more of the components of burnout delineated by Maslach (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment) for SETs in the United States (US).	Systematic search using a multiple-gated process, which included electronic, hand, and ancestral searches. A binary coding scheme of met/not met was used.	23 articles published from 1979 to 2013	Self-efficacy for classroom management correlated with burnout for SETs, but self-efficacy for obtaining support from their administration or colleagues did not. Multiple studies documented a relationship between student age and teacher burnout, but none explored the process or mechanisms	Due to the impact of burnout on teacher attrition, teacher health, and student outcomes, it is critical for researchers to provide both a better understanding of the processes by which SETs experience burnout and more interventions to alleviate burnout based on challenges teachers	Leaders should provide teachers with both emotional and instrumental support. Teachers become advocates for themselves when experiencing burnout. Principals and other administrators provide detailed job descriptions and attend to situations

					by which student age may account for increases in burnout. Of all the factors associated with burnout, the three most supported by the included studies were school level factors: role ambiguity, role conflict, and administrative support.	experience.	when multiple teacher responsibilities are in conflict. Pre-service and in-service teachers to continue to increase their confidence in and knowledge about classroom management techniques.
Cancio, E., Albrecht, S. & Johns, B.	Defining Administrative Support and Its Relationship to the Attrition of Teachers of Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders	This study was conducted to identify the perceptions of current teachers of students with EBD on the definition of and the extent and importance of administrative support to identify contemporary factors	Survey of members of CCBD. Qualitative and Quantitative analysis	403 respondents to emailed survey. Ninety-six percent are licensed in the area.	Specific administrator behaviors influencing the decisions of EBD teachers regarding longevity in this teaching field.	Principals of students with EBD who are emotionally supportive and provide information. Administrative support are more likely to have teachers who are satisfied with their work.	SETs of students with E/BD experience high levels of job dissatisfaction. Administrators need to provide more trust, guidance, feedback, and appreciation to support to

		affecting teacher longevity in the field.					SETs
Cooper, J.	The Importance of Teacher Behavior in Increasing Student Success: Are Teachers Prepared to Meet the Needs of Students with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders?	Provides overview of selected teacher specific practices that are not occurring in practice at expected rates, as well as implications for the lack of their use, and discusses teacher preparation programs can take to help alleviate the research to practice gap in teachers who serve students with EBD	Literature review		Even in classrooms where students with EBD are being served by more experienced teachers, the experienced teachers are often not consistently implementing instructional practices that have been known to increase the probability of students success for students with EBD.	Students with EBD are the very students who need the most highly trained and effective teachers, yet are in rooms that are often staffed by emergency-certified teachers or teachers who have entered in to alternative certification routes and are serving as the teacher-of-record in classrooms before they have had coursework in classroom and behavior management or instructional methodology	Students with EBD often have academic deficits and demonstrate behaviors that interfere with their ability to acquire academic knowledge and skills, the use of effective teaching practices being delivered at high rates is paramount

						y.	
Dewey, J., Sindelar, P., Bettini, E., Boe, E., Rosenberg, M., and Leko, C. (2017)	Teacher certification area and the academic outcomes of students with learning disabilities or emotional/behavioral disorders	To examine whether elementary and middle school students with learning disabilities (LD) or emotional/behavioral disorders (EBD) scored better on state math and English language arts (ELA) assessments in years when they	Quantitative:	A large longitudinal dataset with teacher, classroom, student, and school control variables in addition to models with school fixed effects and models	Within schools, students with EBD who took the modified assessment did worse in ELA when they had a dual-certified teacher, an association that was not statistically significant in the OLS or student fixed effect models. Students	More questions are raised regarding the use of certification as an indicator of teaching quality.	The academic achievement of students with LD and EBD continues to lag far behind their peers without disabilities. Teachers of students with EBD need additional training and support to
Greenberg, J., Putman, H., & Walsh, K (2014)	Training our future teachers : Classroom management.	To examine traditional teacher preparation in classroom management	Qualitative research involving analysis of teacher preparation programs, open records requests, syllabi, coursework, interviews	122 teacher preparation programs to include 79 institutions across 33 states	Embedding classroom management training everywhere is a recipe for adequately covering it nowhere.	The field of teacher education has not reached any sort of consensus on the “who, what, where, when or why” of classroom management	Teacher preparation programs should provide more practical coursework for students to have more relevant practice

O'Brien, K., Brunsting, N., Bettini, E., Cummings, M., Ragunathan, M., and Sutton, R.	Special Educators' Working Conditions in Self-Contained Settings for Students With Emotional or Behavioral Disorders: A Descriptive Analysis	To examine these SETs' working conditions using a national sample	Descriptive survey study	171 SETs serving students with EBD	SETs were relatively isolated from colleagues. SETs felt that paraprofessionals were not adequately trained and that SETs reported having limited time to develop paraprofessi	Supportive working conditions are especially important for SETs who serve students with EBD in self-contained classes.	Researchers should examine how working conditions relate to SETs' affective outcomes (e.g., stress, workload manageability), retention, and instructio
---	--	---	--------------------------	------------------------------------	--	--	--