Factors Considered by Special Education Case Managers When Making a Decision to Mainstream Emotionally Disturbed Students from a Self-Contained Classroom to General Education Classes

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Factors Considered by Special Education Case Managers When Making a Decision to Mainstream Emotionally Disturbed Students from a Self-Contained Classroom to General Education Classes

A Dissertation by Pamela Butler-Harris

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

June 2019

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ABSTRACT

Factors Considered by Special Education Case Managers When Making a Decision to Mainstream Emotionally Disturbed Students from a Self-Contained Classroom to General Education Classes

by Pamela Butler-Harris

Purpose: This qualitative comparative case study analyzes the perspectives, feelings, and beliefs of eight special education case managers who work with students who have been diagnosed as emotionally disturbed (ED), or exhibit ED type behaviors in Contra Costa County, California. It is the hope that through the identification of criteria leading to successful integration, policy makers and educators will be able to develop and implement effective strategies to successfully mainstream ED students, or students who exhibit ED type behaviors into general education classes.

Methodology: This qualitative comparative case study is designed around the following research question: What factors do special education case managers identify as important when making a decision to mainstream emotionally disturbed students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes?

Findings: For ED students to be successfully mainstreamed into general education classes, in addition to adhering to legal requirements, case managers have to look at safety and the ED students’ strengths, weaknesses and ability to self-regulate.

Conclusion: On-going effective communication between IEP team members is imperative so that ED students have access to counseling, appropriate interventions and sufficient support to be successful in general education classes. Adequately trained teachers and staff who maintain a warm school climate, and have positive
relationships with ED students increases the chance of ED students being successful in general education classes.

**Recommendation:** A readiness checklist should be used as a tool to inform IEP team of areas where the ED students could use the most support in order to increase the probability of them successfully mainstreaming into general education classes. It is essential to build the capacity of teachers and staff, so that they have the knowledge to competently utilize effective strategies to manage classroom environments, and provide the support and structure necessary for ED students to be successful.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: .................................................................................................................. 1
Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 1
Background ...................................................................................................................... 4
  History of SWD in the United States ............................................................................. 4
Problem Statement ........................................................................................................ 11
Purpose of the Study ...................................................................................................... 12
Research Questions ....................................................................................................... 12
  Research Sub-Questions ............................................................................................. 12
Significance of the Study ............................................................................................... 13
Definitions ..................................................................................................................... 14
Delimitations .................................................................................................................. 17
Organization of the Dissertation .................................................................................... 17

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW ........................................................................ 18
Introduction .................................................................................................................... 18
ED ................................................................................................................................. 19
  Causes of ED .............................................................................................................. 22
    Biological factors ..................................................................................................... 22
    Family and culture .................................................................................................. 23
    School ....................................................................................................................... 25
    Community ............................................................................................................... 26
  FAPE .......................................................................................................................... 27
    Mild cases ............................................................................................................... 29
    Moderate cases ...................................................................................................... 30
    Severe cases .......................................................................................................... 31
    ED students ........................................................................................................... 32
  IEP ............................................................................................................................. 33
    IEP Team Members ............................................................................................... 34
    Contents of the IEP ............................................................................................... 34
      Present levels of educational performance ......................................................... 35
      Goals .................................................................................................................... 35
      Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) services .......................................... 36
      FAPE setting ....................................................................................................... 37
    Segregation ............................................................................................................. 38
    Inclusion ................................................................................................................ 39
    Mainstreaming ...................................................................................................... 41
    Integration .............................................................................................................. 41
    Mainstream Training and Support ........................................................................ 42
  Factors Associated with Effective Mainstreaming ..................................................... 45
    SCCs ......................................................................................................................... 46
    Transitioning .......................................................................................................... 47
    Attitude Towards Integration/Mainstreaming ....................................................... 49
    Important Factors for Successful Integration ..................................................... 52
      Teacher training .................................................................................................. 52
Support services ................................................................. 53
Classroom modification ...................................................... 53
Student preparation .......................................................... 53
Parent role ........................................................................ 53
Academic counselors ......................................................... 55
Therapeutic/mental health counselors ................................... 56
Administrators .................................................................. 56
Role of Teachers in Identification and Referring SWD ................. 57
The Role of Teachers .......................................................... 58
The Role of Case Managers .................................................. 60
Summary ........................................................................... 61

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY .............................................. 63
Overview ........................................................................... 63
Purpose of the Study .......................................................... 63
Research Questions ............................................................ 64
  Research Sub-Questions .................................................... 64
Research Design ................................................................. 64
Methodology ..................................................................... 65
Population ......................................................................... 66
  Target Population ............................................................. 67
Sample .............................................................................. 69
  Sample Selection Process .................................................. 71
Instrumentation .................................................................. 72
  Instrument(s) .................................................................. 72
Reliability ........................................................................... 73
  Field Test ........................................................................ 73
Validity .............................................................................. 74
Data Collection ................................................................... 74
Data Analysis ..................................................................... 74
  Inter-Coder Reliability ....................................................... 75
  Research Sub-Questions ..................................................... 76
Limitations .......................................................................... 76
Summary ........................................................................... 77

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS ........................................................ 79
Introduction ......................................................................... 79
Description of the Sample .................................................... 79
Presentation of the Data ........................................................ 83
Research Question 1 ............................................................ 83
  Considerations relating to the emotional disability ................. 84
  Self-regulation and self-awareness ..................................... 85
  Disruption posed by the student with ED ......................... 86
  The law ........................................................................... 87
  Determining classes ........................................................ 89
  Preparation ................................................................. 91
Interventions .................................................................................................................. 93
Challenges and risks ....................................................................................................... 96
  Risk of harm ................................................................................................................ 96
  Harm to others ............................................................................................................ 96
  Self-harm .................................................................................................................... 97
  Victimization of students with ED ............................................................................ 97
  Risk to academic achievement .................................................................................. 98
  Social wellness .......................................................................................................... 99
  Benefits of exposure to social norms ...................................................................... 100
  Substance abuse and social issues ......................................................................... 100
Summary of Identified Case Manager Factors .......................................................... 101
Research Question 2 .................................................................................................... 102
  Receiving teacher .................................................................................................... 103
  Preparedness .......................................................................................................... 103
  Compassion ............................................................................................................ 106
  Community capacity ............................................................................................... 108
Summary of Issues Relating to the Receiving General Education Teacher ............ 108
Research Question 3 .................................................................................................... 109
  Academic strengths and weaknesses of the student with ED ................................ 109
  Behavioral strengths and weaknesses of the student with ED .............................. 110
  Student preparation and perception of readiness .................................................... 112
    Student expectations and perception of readiness ................................................. 112
    Anxiety and self-sabotage .................................................................................... 113
    Expectations of setbacks in transition ................................................................ 114
Summary of Student Perception .................................................................................. 115
Summary ....................................................................................................................... 116

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS ................................................................................................ 118
Introduction .................................................................................................................. 118
Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations ....................................................... 118
Research Question 1 .................................................................................................... 119
  Finding 1 .................................................................................................................. 119
  Conclusion 1 .......................................................................................................... 119
  Recommendation 1 ............................................................................................... 119
  Finding 2 ................................................................................................................ 119
  Conclusion 2 .......................................................................................................... 119
  Recommendation 2 ............................................................................................... 120
  Finding 3 ................................................................................................................ 120
  Conclusion 3 .......................................................................................................... 120
  Recommendation 3 ............................................................................................... 120
  Finding 4 ................................................................................................................ 121
  Conclusion 4 .......................................................................................................... 121
  Recommendation 4 ............................................................................................... 121
  Finding 5 ................................................................................................................ 121
  Conclusion 5 .......................................................................................................... 121
  Recommendation 5 ............................................................................................... 122
Future Study Recommendation 7 ................................................................. 140
REFERENCES............................................................................................ 141
APPENDICES............................................................................................. 162
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.  Selected special education statistics for public school districts in Contra Costa County, 2015-2016 School Year ........................................... 68

Table 2.  Selected staff FTEs for school districts in Contra Costa County, 2015-2016 School Year ................................................................. 69

Table 3.  Details of Sample Participants ................................................................. 80

Table 4.  Frequency of Identified Factors by Case Managers ...................... 102

Table 5.  Frequency of Identified Factors for Receiving Teachers ............... 109

Table 6.  Frequency of Identified Factors Related to Emotionally Disturbed Students ......................................................................................... 116
CHAPTER I

Introduction

“If we want America to lead in the 21st century, nothing is more important than giving everyone the best education possible — from the day they start preschool to the day they start their career” (President Obama, 2012). It can be extremely challenging to educate students within the public general education setting when the emotional or behavioral response of a student is continuously inappropriate (K. D. Gans, 1987; Janney & Meyer, 1990; Landrum & Kauffman, 1992).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) authorizes funds for nearly seven million students with disabilities (SWDs) across the nation. Public schools may choose not to adopt the inclusion model that automatically places SWDs into general education classes, however, the law states that SWDs are to be placed in the least restrictive environment (LRE), to the maximum extent appropriate (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 2004), providing SWDs the opportunity to be educated alongside their peers. Therefore, IDEA requires that a written Individual Education Program (IEP) be developed for each of the SWDs.

An IEP is a legal document stating how the SWDs educational needs will be met, and how the student will be included in the general education setting to the greatest extent possible. To achieve IDEA’s objective of placing students in the LRE, the restructuring of schooling was necessary, so that schools could accommodate every student regardless of their disability, ensuring that all students belong to a community (E. Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000). SWDs whose needs cannot be fully met in general education classrooms are placed in self-contained classrooms.
SCCs. SCCs are the most restricted classrooms within the public school setting. While numerous SWDs have been successfully integrated into the general education population, for many emotional disturbance (ED) students, successful integration continues to be a challenge (K. D. Gans, 1985; Janney & Meyer, 1990; Landrum & Kauffman, 1992). Consequently, these students are educated in SCCs, as those classes often incorporate behavior interventions such as a levels system, or token economy, as a means to provide additional behavioral support. ED students often lack social skills and they tend to exhibit inappropriate behaviors. When ED students are integrated and placed into general education classes, it can become problematic if the ED students possess academic characteristics that disrupt general education class activities by not respecting class rules, by revealing self-injurious behavior, or by exhibiting aggressive behaviors (IDEA, 2004). It is challenging to teach ED students in a general education class with a large number of students who are non-disabled (Cassady, 2011; F. Floyd & Gallagher, 1997). A number of teachers believe they are not adequately trained, nor have they been provided with the necessary support to effectively work with ED students. Teachers have been frustrated with preparing lessons and altering classroom environments in an effort to provide the best education possible, to diverse students with a variety of learning styles and abilities. This results in some teachers feeling hopeless, as they are required to create inclusive settings with very little training and limited support (E. Avramidis et al., 2000; Kalyva, Gojkovic, & Tsakiris, 2007).

Although a large number of ED students have the cognitive ability to be academically successful, nearly half of the students across America who are labeled
ED do not complete high school (Anderson, Kutash, & Duchnowski, 2001; Kaufman & Schmidt, 2005; Nelson, Benner, Lane, & Smith, 2004; M. M. Wagner 1995). Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (2005) reported that of all the disability groups, students with EDs had the lowest grades. This leaves a high probability of poor outcomes for students that are labeled ED, which ultimately negatively impacts society. The inability of ED students to handle the general education surroundings results in the ED student being segregated from the general population, and placement into a SCC where they are often stigmatized and held to lower academic expectations.

It has been noted that through the collaborative efforts of the general education teachers and the special education teachers, there has been an increase in classroom expectations for not only the SWDs, but for the general education students as well (Nutbrown & Clough, 2009; Sayeski, 2009). Although the integration of ED students into the general education setting has been known to increase the self-esteem and the socialization skills of the ED student, difficulties continue to exist in current public general education environments for ED students, as educators are challenged with how to best serve them (Jordan, 2006; Ritter, Michel, & Irby, 1999). ED students can be totally defiant and a total disruption to the class, yet not much has been done to proactively prepare teachers in terms of the ED students’ behavior, or to understand and accommodate the needs of ED students. We have a moral obligation to ensure that the needs of all of our students are met (Cline, 1990). ED students can be a success in our schools and communities with appropriate interventions (Hewitt,
If we do not intervene, we will continue to see statistics where only half of the ED population graduates from high school.

**Background**

SWDs are identified and then grouped into categories, so that their specific needs are taken into account. In California, SWDs are placed into at least one of the following categories:

- Mental Retardation
- Hard of Hearing
- Deaf
- Speech and Language Impairment
- Visual Impairment
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Specific Learning Disability
- Deaf-Blindness
- Multiple Disability
- Autism
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Emotional Disturbance (California Department of Education [CDE], 2018).

**History of SWD in the United States**

Around the world different approaches have been taken to address the needs of SWDs. In most developed countries, SWDs are educated in general education
environments with accommodations and/or modifications to assist them in accessing
the curriculum. In the United States of America, this was not always the case. A
federal change was sparked by the 1971 court case Pennsylvania Association for
ruled that in addition to focusing on academics, education should teach individuals
how to handle their surroundings. Prior to the enactment of Education for All
Handicap Children Act (EAH) in 1975, SWDs were segregated into schools for the
handicapped (Battaglino, 2007). As a response to the discriminatory treatment of
SWDs in public educational agencies, the United States Congress passed the (EAH)
Public Law 94-142, which declared that all public schools must provide equal access
to education, and provide SWDs with an IEP that is created with parental input, and
aligned to that of their non-disabled peers. The integration of general education
classes and special education for SWDs was encouraged by the federal government in
1986, and is referred to as the Regular Education Initiative (REI). The thought
behind the initiative was—if given an opportunity, along with special education
support, students with mild to moderate disabilities could be successfully educated in
the general education setting (Davis & Maheady, 1991). In 1990 after several
reauthorizations and amendments, EAH was renamed IDEA. The law now stated that
SWDs are entitled to free appropriate public education (FAPE) and due process, at
the expense of the public, without any charge to parents or students. Federal law
students who have disabilities are to be educated with children who do not have
disabilities.
IDEA Part B states that SWDs are to be placed in the LRE, and provided equal access and opportunities to be educated with their non-disabled peers. With the reauthorization of IDEA in 1997, schools were obligated to include SWDs in the general education setting. All SWDs were to be provided with equal access to the general education curriculum, along with any needed services and/or accommodations or modifications that would allow SWDs to work to their fullest potential in their LRE. Federal, state, local, and private sources were to be used to create an IEP for SWDs and generate provisions for them to receive specialized instruction and related services (Lipsky & Garner, 1997). Integrating SWDs into general education classes placed increased pressure on the general education teachers, as they took on responsibilities that went far beyond academics. For SWDs to be able to fully participate in meeting the learning standards, teachers would have to make accommodations, as simply sitting the SWDs in a general education classroom and giving them watered down content instruction would not suffice (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2007). An increased number of SWDs in the general education setting required teachers to differentiate instruction, collaborate with and (in many cases) share their classrooms with special education teachers. There are varying attitudes and beliefs regarding integration from general education teachers and special education teachers as well (Haider, 2008; Kalyva et al., 2007; Murawski, 2005).

A study conducted by Yasutake and Learner (1996), concluded that general education teachers did not feel adequately prepared to successfully include SWDs into their classes. Teachers also reported that they did not feel there were a sufficient number of supports to foster successful integration of SWDs into the general
education setting. Wigle and Wilcox (1997) reported that teachers, as well as administrators were cautious when it came to integrating SWDs into the general education setting. The study concludes that emphasis should be placed on the importance of teachers having the knowledge and skills to effectively collaborate, and make necessary modifications to educational programs in order for the integration to be successful (Wigle & Wilcox, 1997). Other studies indicate that general education teachers felt as though they lacked support from administrators, and they had little knowledge regarding policies for SWDs. Studies stated that teachers had not been properly trained to work with SWDs, nor did they have adequate time to plan for SWDs in a way that would provide them with the ability to successfully access the curriculum (Cook, Cameron, & Riddle 2009; Nimante & Tubele 2010; Parasuram 2006; Tankersley 2007).

According to Partners on Education 2010, nearly 95% of SWDs were enrolled in regular schools. In 1995-1996, SWDs spent less than half (46%) of their school day in general education classes. In 2008-2009, 58% of SWDs spent at least 80% of their school day in general education classes. Over a span of three years, 96% of SWDs spent 80% of their school day in general education settings (Partners on Education, 2010). Inclusion is the preferred model according to IDEA section 504, where it states that SWDs must be educated in regular education settings, to the maximum extent appropriate. “Inclusion is being a part of what everyone else is, being welcomed and embraced as a member who belongs” (Tomko, 1996, p. 1). Inclusion allows most students the chance to live a more typical life despite their disability (CDE, 2009). According to the Disability Network, inclusion allows SWDs
to develop positive relationships and friendships with their non-disabled peers, and the non-disabled peers have an opportunity to act as role models while learning to appreciate and accept those who are different from them (as cited in Perles, 2012).

Research shows that the inclusion model benefits SWDs by enhancing student achievement, self-confidence, self-esteem and image (Vaughn et al., 2007). Additionally, inclusion creates for the general education student a greater sense of social and cultural awareness, as well as instills tolerance and patience towards SWDs (Mastropieri, Scruggs & Berkley, 2007; Newburn & Shriner, 2006; Staub & Peck, 1994). Rinyka Allison’s (2012) The Lived Experiences of General and Special Education Teachers In Inclusion Classrooms: A Phenomenological Study pointed out that Burk and Southerland’s (2004) study, as well as other studies, determined that teacher attitudes regarding inclusion and responsibilities between the special education teachers and the general education teacher that were clearly defined, produced success in academics, as well as improved social skills, benefitting both the SWDs and their non-disabled peers (Biddle, 2006; Keefe & Moore, 2004; Kings & Young, 2003; Ryan, 2009; Titone, 2005; Woolfson, 2009).

According to No Child Left Behind (NCLB), over 1 million SWDs were segregated and excluded from attending adequate regular public schools, and another 3.5 million SWDs attended public schools without needed supports, and therefore were not able to access the curriculum (Aron & Loprest, 2012). Some public schools continue to segregate students in homogeneous grouping, as some SWDs perform better when they are in smaller settings such as SCCs.
SCCs provide an alternative in the form of a small, controlled setting in an effort to support SWDs whose needs cannot be fully met in a general education classroom. Although it varies from state to state, generally SCCs have 5 to 10 students and are staffed with a special education teachers, and at least one para educator who assists in meeting the educational needs of SWDs. SCCs are staffed with a special education teachers, and at least one para educator who assists in meeting the educational needs of SWDs. SCCs often contain a span of a few grade levels of students who have similar academic requirements (Bainbridge, 2014). SWDs work at various academic levels, and have different curricula. The design of SCCs came about as a result of the California Code of Regulations (Cf. Title 5) also referred to as The Hughes Bill, and the work of Special Education Consultant and Advocate, Richard LaVoie. On July 1, 2013 the State of California Title 5-Section 3052, also known as the Hughes Bill was repealed by Assembly Bill 86 stating that behavior interventions should be in closer alignment with laws and regulations of IDEA.

While integration into the general education setting may be the ultimate goal that the government has for SWDs in terms of LRE, the law also states that integration would not be appropriate when “the handicapped child is a disruptive force in the non-segregated setting” (WrightsLaw, 1998, III section) or “when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily” (WrightsLaw, 1998, II section). Students who exhibit continuous inappropriate
responses in an educational setting are often students who are labeled ED. According to IDEA, ED is defined as

...a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child’s educational performance because of an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school factors.


ED also includes schizophrenia, but does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance (Code of Federal Regulation, Title 34, Section 300.7©(4)(ii)). Because of anti-social behavior, conduct disorder, and oppositional defiance associated with ED, successful integration and inclusion continues to be a challenge for the ED population (K. D. Gans, 1985; Janney & Meyer, 1990; Landrum & Kauffman, 1992).

Students generally acquire the diagnosis of ED through assessments rendered by a school psychologist and a compilation of categorical data from parents, teachers, and a student study team. Most of the students who acquire this label attend public schools, and are predominantly African-American males (Sample, 2009). It is imperative to examine how to best integrate students with ED into the general
education setting in an effort to assist them in acquiring the behavioral and academic skills that will assist them in gaining meaningful and stable employment (Lane & Carter, 2006).

**Problem Statement**

Despite the philosophical embrace of education for all, there continues to be a gap in obtaining equal access to education for SWDs, more specifically those with ED (Anderson et al., 2001; Kauffman, 2005; Nelson et al., 2004; M. M. Wagner 1995). Through the successful completion of high school, ED students have a greater chance of acquiring the academic skills that lead to gaining meaningful and stable employment (Lane & Carter, 2006). In addition, the integration of ED students into the general population allows the ED student to observe their peers modeling appropriate behavior, which can assist ED students in developing socially appropriate behavior (Magg, 2005).

Nationwide, SWDs are not always successfully integrated or mainstreamed into general education classes (Jordan, 2006). ED students are even less likely to successfully integrate or mainstream than any other special education group (K. D. Gans, 1987; Janney & Meyer, 1990; Landrum & Kauffman, 1992). Additionally, ED students are often stigmatized because they are segregated from the general population (Kauffman, 2008). Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (2003) reported that of all the disability groups, students with ED had the lowest grades. ED students are often held to lower academic expectations, despite having the cognitive ability to be academically successful. Nearly half of the students across America who are ED do not complete high school (Anderson et al. 2001; Kauffman, 2005; Nelson et al., 2004;
M. M. Wagner 1995). This leaves a high probability of poor outcomes for SWD, especially those labeled ED, and this negatively impacts our society.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative comparative case study is to identify and describe factors that are considered by special education case managers when making a decision to mainstream ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes. An additional purpose of the study was to identify the factors that are common among special education case managers when making a decision to mainstream ED students from a self-contained classroom into general education classes.

**Research Questions**

This qualitative comparative case study was designed around the following research question: *What factors do special education case managers identify as important in mainstreaming ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes?*

**Research Sub-Questions**

Three research sub-questions were developed to better answer the central research question.

1. What factors are common among special education case managers when making a decision to mainstream ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes?
2. What general education teacher-centered factors are considered prior to mainstreaming ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes?

3. What ED student-centered factors are considered prior to mainstreaming ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes?

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant as it is imperative that researchers and practitioners gain knowledge to provide appropriate placement for ED students, which will allow them to succeed in the general education setting. This will positively impact our communities, as ED students will have greater opportunities to become contributing members of society. Through the identification of criteria, it is the hope that policy makers and educators have additional information to aid them in the development and implementation of effective strategies to successfully integrate or mainstream ED students. Evidence indicates that students who have emotional disabilities often do not complete high school, or acquire the necessary academic skills to be successful in life. It is vital that we learn more about how to successfully educate students who have emotional and behavioral disabilities (Lane & Carter, 2006).

Of all the disabilities, ED is one that does not appear physically different. This makes it difficult to communicate how it requires specialized services to the same degree as SWDs that are visible (Hewitt, 2011). This study seeks to understand more about successfully integrating/mainstreaming ED students into the general education setting by developing criteria based on the collective input of special education case managers. Identifying proactive approaches that will provide support
to ED students, general education teachers, and non-disabled students by appropriately placing ED students into general education classes, will minimize disruptions interfering with the learning process when ED students are in the general education setting. There is a need for researchers and practitioners to understand more about the criteria and collaborative efforts leading to the successful integration/mainstreaming of ED students. The data from this study may be used as a tool to guide educators and policymakers in the development of improved social and academic achievement for ED students, via appropriate placement into the general education setting.

Definitions

Emotional Disturbance (ED) Students. For the purposes of this study, SWDs labeled as ED, OHI or SLD who have disability-related behavior and a history of exhibiting inappropriate anti-social behaviors such as conduct disorder, or oppositional defiance in the general education setting, and are subject to negative reactions from their peers and school faculty are considered ED students and may also be referred to as SWDs who exhibit ED type behaviors.

General education class. General education classes, traditional education classes, and regular education classes are often used interchangeably to describe the educational classes of typically developing youth. The adopted curriculum is Common Core State Standards, which describe the academic skills that should be acquired for each grade level (Webster 2017). This study uses general education opposed to traditional or regular education as not to imply that other classes are somehow irregular or flawed.
**Placement.** Determining the least restrictive environment in which to educate SWDs. School districts are required to have optional settings for where and/or how SWDs are taught. In public schools, placement can range from the most restrictive environment—a SCC, to the least restrictive—a general education class where necessary accommodations and/or modifications are in place to meet the needs of the SWD.

**Case managers.** A case manager is most often a special education teacher, but can be another member of the IEP team. For this study the case manager is responsible for making sure the ED student’s special education services and supports are implemented. The case manager provides ongoing IEP progress reports.

**Special Education Teachers.** For this study, special education teachers are credentialed teachers who work with SWDs where special skills and knowledge in the special education field is required. Special education teachers have an over-all understanding of the general education curriculum, setting, and expectations. They ensure legal compliance of IEPs, provide direct instruction and collaborate with general education teachers.

**Integration.** Integration and mainstreaming are often used interchangeably. Integration is an assimilation process, where SWDs are placed into the general education setting or general education classes. Integration provides an opportunity for the SWDs to be educated with non-disabled students while being given special attention, and may include being educated in a separate setting for a limited time or a portion of the day.
**Inclusion.** Inclusion and mainstreaming are often used interchangeably, however they differ in the fact that inclusion is meeting SWDs where they are, and including them in the class through the use of various support systems. As long as the SWD is making any sort of progress, whether socially or academically, they are considered to be successful.

**Mainstreaming.** Mainstreaming is what happens when the SWD has the ability to function as an average student once minor accommodations/modifications have been made. For ED students to be considered successfully mainstreamed, it may look like a decrease in the number of absences from school, fewer disruptive behavior referrals, a demonstrated ability to keep up with non-disabled peers, and better outcomes post high school, relating to employment and independent living (M. Wagner, Newman, Cameto, & Levine, 2006). A minor accommodation could be incorporating a behavior support plan (BSP).

**Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).** FAPE is an educational right of SWDs in the United States of America. IDEA and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 assures that FAPE will adhere to the appropriated individualized education program, and be implemented for all SWDs.

**Individual Education Program (IEP).** An IEP is a legally binding document that is created in an effort to address the unique learning needs of every person who receives special education and related services. The federal law under the IDEA, requires public schools to create an IEP for the purposes of identifying educational goals and appropriate placement, as well as guide the delivery of services and special education supports to improve educational results for SWDs.
Delimitations

The study was delimited to selected special education case managers who work with SWDs who have ED behaviors in northern California.

Organization of the Dissertation

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapter I provides the introduction, background, problem statement, purpose, research questions, and significance of study, delimitations, and definitions. Chapter II provides a review of literature related to the study. Chapter III describes the comparative case study method research design, and the qualitative methods used, and the process of data collection. The data collected and findings are reported in Chapter IV, and a summary of factors, findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further study and action are provided in Chapter V.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review examines the existing literature on integrating/mainstreaming of SWDs, into general education classes. It examines the roles that different stakeholders play in the process and how these stakeholders can positively or negatively impact the mainstreaming process. Most countries in the world have embraced the need to provide equal opportunities for all. Proponents of the concept of inclusion hold the view that children should learn together, share common facilities such as classrooms and interact in a wide array of activities with their peers (Wills & Jackson, 2000). They argue that disabilities should not prevent SWDs from accessing grade level curriculum, and how embracing an inclusive learning environment gives SWDs a sense of belonging as they interact with their peers. The topics in the literature review include ED, FAPE, IEP, transitioning, and role of educator in identification and referring of SWDs.

The topic of ED is described in detail stating some of the possible causes of ED, including biological, familial, school, and community. Often times etiological factors of ED are not known, however there is evidence that suggests that ED can derive from children being exposed to high levels of physical abuse. There is also an apparent link between poverty and ED, as well as biological explanations in some cases. The study will further describe FAPE, and IEPs as they apply at the present time, as well as cover the implementation for mild, moderate, and severe cases and describe ED behaviors. There are a number of other issues that relate to the overall topic as well, including concepts of segregation, integration, mainstreaming, and
inclusion as applicable to SWDs. The process of integration as it is presently implemented is reviewed, and finally, the role of parents and educators who are a part of an IEP team that determines placement of SWDs into general education classes, and the obstructions that constrain the process.

**ED**

ED is one of 13 disability categories under IDEA and include:

- Mental Retardation
- Hard of Hearing
- Deaf
- Speech and Language Impairment
- Visual Impairment
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Specific Learning Disability
- Deaf-Blindness, Multiple Disability
- Autism
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Multiple Disabilities and
- Emotional Disturbance (Special Education-CalEdFacts, 2018).

The term emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD) is often used to describe the ED population. Students suffering from emotional and/or behavioral disorders have been known to face challenges when it comes to negotiation or development of relationships with their peers and adults. Sample (2009) states that most SWDs who
are labelled ED are predominantly African-American males. Both Gargiulo (2010) and Iqbal and Pipon-Young (2009), describe EBD students as usually aggressive, having deficits in performance and lacking social acquisition. The entire process of educating SWDs who are labeled ED or those who exhibit ED type behaviors can be challenging within the public general education setting because of anti-social behavior, conduct disorder, and oppositional defiance associated with ED (K. D. Gans, 1985; Janney & Meyer, 1990; Landrum & Kauffman, 1992). Successful learning in a school environment for ED students becomes a difficult task, as it requires social adherence and meeting demands of the teachers. Without timely interference of unprecedented behaviors of SWDs who are labeled ED, the inappropriate behaviors become firmly established, making the intervention process difficult.

EBD students can be divided into many categories. Anderson et al. (2001) observes variation in intensity of EBD students; the intensity depends on the problem or disability of the student. Gargiulo (2010) notes that depression, mood disorders, frustration, and anger are some of the challenges that EBD students face; however responses to these situations differ, according to behaviors that range from shyness to violence and aggression. According to federal definition, a student may be diagnosed as having ED if the reaction persists for a long period or to the extent that it affects his/her learning ability.

ED is a widely used term which includes: (a) Anxiety Disorder, (b) Oppositional-Defiant Disorder, and (c) Manic-Depressive Disorder. Osborne and
Reed (2011) further define ED as an emotional challenge or emotional disturbance. IDEA defines a child to be ED if they have any of the following characteristics:

- Possesses learning inability which can’t be defined by health, sensory or intellectual factors.
- Are unable to develop a successful relation with peers or teachers.
- Behave or feel inappropriately in normal situations.
- Persistent feeling of depression or discontent.
- Unable to face school or personal problems appropriately.

Students who exhibit continuous inappropriate responses in an educational setting are known as students with ED. According to the IDEA, ED is defined as ...

...a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child’s educational performance because of an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school factors. (U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2018, Code of Federal Regulations, 34, CFR 300.7©(4)(i))

ED also includes schizophrenia but does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an ED (U.S. Government Publishing Office, 2018).
Causes of ED

Causes of ED are explained by professionals in various ways; however understanding aspects of behavioral and emotional issues related to factors such as biological, familial, cultural, school and community, can assist teachers, schools and other related professionals in managing the ED students’ behavior more effectively.

Biological factors. According to Aron and Loprest (2012) and Wigle and Wilcox (1997), biological factors are considered to be related to ED based on the biophysical perspectives, with emphasis on neurological and other related organic concerns. Previous researchers have significantly contributed to the perspective of biophysical concerns, where analysis of risk factors reveal some relationships exists between physical and mental health (Murphy, 1991). Scholarly works on families with a long history of both alcoholism and depression have revealed matters pertaining to genetic predisposition, with medical technology availing greater insights on psychoneurology and the functioning of the brain (E. Avramidis & Norwich, 2002).

According to Ryan (2009) and Wisenbaker (2008), genetic predisposition is used in describing the probability that a given trait present in the parents may reveal itself in their next generation. Although researchers have yet to identify the particular gene that is responsible for this characteristic, its probability suggests that to a greater extent, ED may be inherited (Milsom, 2006). For example, it has been statistically proven that parents of children reported with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are also tested positive with the disorder (Gargiulo, 2010). Other conditions linked to genetic predisposition are alcoholism and substance abuse, manifesting in
children (Salend, 2001). The same applies to children of schizophrenic parents, who are most likely to develop the disorder (Burke & Sutherland, 2004). Deficiency of nutrients can also result in certain illness, which may cause conditions of schizophrenia or depression. Neurological situations and injuries may also result in conditions in people which cause ED.

Technological advancement has made it possible to measure the brain function as well as the degree of neurotransmission, which impacts the efficiency of brain function (Greer & Greer, 1995). It has been established that students with ADHD exhibit a deficiency and imbalance with regard to catecholamine, dopamine and norepinephrine factors (Sørlie & Ogden, 2015). It has further been proven that the lack of efficiency in transmitting neurological impulses impacts on the whole brain attention system including inhibition and motor planning (Monoham & Cronic, 1997). Children with ADHD have reported to have difficulty in executive control, thereby having adverse effects on inhibiting and monitoring of behavior (Stoiber, Gettinger & Goetz, 1998). Neurologically, they have difficulty in making choices and maintaining goals, accomplishing their academic tasks, planning and adapting plans (Brown, Valenti & Kerr, 2015).

**Family and culture.** Family and culture are the major contexts where the process of behavior takes place since no human being is able to live or thrive in a social vacuum (Gresham, 2015). Every individual belongs to an immediate and extended family, as well as a network at the community level. Family and culture create an environment where growth and development of the society members, including students, is shaped and influenced in either positive or negative ways.
Some children are abused emotionally by the environment they’re in. Alegre (2008) observed definite factors within families that can increase the chances of a child developing emotional disorders, such as sexual abuse, emotional maltreatment, or physical abuse. In most cases, a combination of negative experiences aggravates emotional problems, among them poverty and abuse together with related cases of parental stress (Fogg & Harrington, 2009).

Poverty, absence of supervision, inconsistent discipline, and lack of significant positive interactions with desired adult role models are factors contributing to ED among students (Quigney & Studer, 1998). For example, students with violent parents with constant cases of arrest, tend to be violent, subjecting them to distress with teachers and school administrators in general, as well as having trouble with the law. According to K. D. Gans (1987) and M. M. Wagner (1995), there is a clear linkage with poverty, where students from disadvantaged families have been reported with more cases of school dropout compared to their peers from economically stable families.

Parents may subject themselves to alcoholism due to increased economic pressure, or they may work in the labor force and not be regularly available for their children. Parents that are unavailable for their children, or alcoholic parents may not fulfill the physical and emotional needs for their children resulting in home environments that are characterized with disharmony and lack of good interaction between members of the family, which can adversely impact children’s psychological and emotional development (Fatum, 2008). The absence of parents significantly
reduces children’s awareness, exposing them to peer pressure and other influences of the outside world.

**School.** Students who have emotional or behavioral disorders have a tendency to be less active in academics in school. Alegre (2008) observed such children to have lower social skills often leading to rejection by teachers and peers, which further enhances the probability of the child having problems associated with ED. Educators can tremendously influence students either positively or negatively (Cameron & Cook, 2007). The expectations teachers have, various interactions, and the kind of feedback they provide determine the mode and the type of engagement they have with the students. The different actions taken by teachers can either improve or worsen how students with ED respond (Deane, Beirne-Smith & Latham, 2000). For example, an untrained teacher who doesn’t know how to manage the classroom, or a teacher who is insensitive to the individual differences of the students may create a situation where the student becomes frustrated or withdrawn.

Trained teachers who are skilled at managing behavior in a learning environment can successfully undertake a systematic selection of interventions that are in line with the student’s behavior and apply them in a systematic manner (Dahir, 2004). According to Vaughn, Bos, and Schumm, (2007) and Villa and Thousand, (1988), the adoption of effective pedagogical approaches and methods for managing behavior improves the various outcomes of students, including academic achievements. Teachers who have been trained and qualified for their tasks are in better positions to evaluate the relationships they have with students, as well as the
learning environment (Yasutake & Lerner, 1996). By doing so, teachers are able to closely monitor concerns related to ED and other potential concerns (Dixon, 2005).

Generally, students with ED and other related behavioral problems fail to respect the set goals within the school environment (Hastings & Oakford, 2006). Learning difficulties puts students at a disadvantage within the academic framework, since the majority of them have underdeveloped social skills at the time they are admitted into school. Poor social skills may lead to the rejection of the ED students by their peers and teachers. The social rejection leads to further disinterest, in both the class and school environment, as well as results in high levels of underachievement and failure.

**Community.** According to previous researchers in this field, students who engage themselves in both crime and gang violence have a greater probability of exhibiting emotional or behavioral issues and are often reported to have developed ED (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klinger, Pugach & Richardson, 2005). Children and adolescents who develop an addiction to substances usually experience difficulties regarding learning, health-related problems such as ED, and poor relationships (Hewitt, 2011). Other difficulties include poor peer relationships and involvement in the juvenile justice system among other related consequences, both in the community and school framework (Beresford, 2004). With increased substance abuse, a common case at the community level, students with ED are reported to have declined grades, frequent absenteeism, withdrawal from education, and a higher rate of school-dropout (L. Idol, 1997). Previous scholarly work reveals that peer pressure at the community level subjects children to increases in truancy related to substance abuse among
youths (Snow, 2001). ED and other cognitive as well as behavioral problems reported among children and youth in the community adversely impacts their academic performance and school life in general, presenting obstacles towards class and general noncurricular activities in the instructional framework (Brownell, Adams, Sindelar, Waldron, & Vanhover, 2006).

ED and other mental health problems like depression and developmental lags alongside similar cases of psychological dysfunctions arise from substance abuse among school children. School children engaged in substance abuse, expose themselves to a lot of risks compared to nonusers, for ED and other related problems such as depression and personality disorders. At the community level, school children may also indulge in marijuana use, which can interfere with their memory and psychomotor skills.

**FAPE**

Implementation of FAPE calls for understanding the students who are eligible, and how the respective disabilities are defined by the federal law. There are some cases of disagreement with regard to what is implied by *free, public, and education*, with the interpretation of the term *appropriate* differing widely among people (Hewitt, 2011). For the purposes of this study, free ensures that appropriate preschool, elementary or secondary school special education and related services are provided at public expense, without any cost to the family, to meet the educational agency state standards in conformity with the IEP. Appropriate addresses the specific and individual educational needs of the SWD as determined through evaluation and an IEP team discussion of the SWD’s strengths and weaknesses. Appropriate
education is accompanied by services defined to be relevant such as speech therapy, physical therapy, or other services in the field of medical diagnostic and medical counseling that have been proven to be necessary when educating a SWD (Greene & Kochhar-Bryant, 2003). Placement and appropriate services including transportation, supplementary and supportive services or other appropriate services are to assist the SWD in receiving the maximum benefit from special education. Annual goals and objectives are generated for each SWD to work on throughout the year.

Wang (2009) observed that students with emotional and or behavioral disorders may be included in regular classes; however when intensity is severe, SWDs are taught in separate settings, or they may at times be at least partially separated from the general population. Yell, Rogers, and Rogers (1998) argues that students with ED disrupt the functioning of general education classes due to their behaviors and actions. Sometimes SWDs with ED behaviors have been known to harm others or themselves. Osborne and Reed (2011) further classifies behavior disorders in two types: Conduct Disorder and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD). Students with conduct disorder are typically more aggressive, violent and can be harmful to themselves or others. It is preferred that the SWDs who are more aggressive be segregated from the general education population due to the severity of their disability. These students are educated in a more restrictive environment where special education teachers can support them in their learning. Students who have ODD may not exhibit severe behaviors; however they may divulge negative attitudes toward activities and not willingly follow instructions or cooperate. Including these SWDs in a general education class is a challenge due to their refusal to cooperate.
FAPE must adhere to the appropriated individualized education program, and be implemented for all SWDs including mild, moderate and severe ED cases (E. Avramidis et al., 2000).

**Mild cases.** SWDs with ED behaviors should be provided with a positive environment that is highly structured to facilitate growth and foster self-esteem alongside mechanisms for rewarding positive behavior (Hargreaves & Walker, 2014). For mild cases, FAPE is effectively implemented by putting in place rules, routines and appropriate mechanisms aimed for supporting positive behavior (Brower & Balch, 2005). For the mild cases, students show relatively low levels of non-compliance and negativity, but express a willingness to cooperate in the class activities and follow directions (Leyser & Kirk, 2004). Students in this category are rarely violent and non-aggressive, they simply find some difficulties during cooperation, both with their peers and adults (Bainbridge, 2014).

At the beginning of the academic calendar, it is important that the students in this category be taken through set rules and routines, which must be simple and understandable for them (J. H. Floyd et al., 2000). Consequences of failing to adhere to the defined regulations should be embraced with a firm and consistent application whenever they have been broken by the students (Yell et al., 1998). The consequences have to be addressed with high levels of consistency and predictability, and when administered, feedback must be provided to the learners in a calm and clear manner (Cook, 2001). With this approach, the students in this category will understand the necessity of the consequences. Still at the classroom level where the
students are integrated with their peers, teachers should avoid reacting with emotions whenever the rules have not been adhered to (Cassady, 2011).

**Moderate cases.** Though students under this category express less maladaptive behaviors compared to their peers expressing extreme cases, it’s important that their classes be conducted in a special education setting (Campbell, Gilmore & Cuskelley, 2003). This is based on the grounds that they express behaviors that are too maladaptive to be included in the general education classroom with their peers (Soodak, Podell & Lehman, 1998). For this reason, it’s important that the school administration or their instructors set up a token economy, classroom behavior chart, lottery system, and positive peer review (Battaglino, 2007).

Token economy pertains to a mechanism where the students earn points in every situation they express a desired conduct; positive behavior (Maul, 2008). These points are then used in purchasing rewards at the school’s token store. According to Stainback, Stainback and Ayres (1992) and Token Economies (2012), the token economy can only be effective when the institution has set strategies for rewarding the positive behavior in a more consistent manner. On the same note, the entire items stocked in the token store must exhibit high levels of genuineness towards motivating the students (Dingle, Falvey, Givner, & Haager, 2004).

With the classroom behavior chart, the teachers will be able to visually plot the conduct of the respective students within the classroom environment (Gutierrez, 2013). ED students expressing positive behaviors will be able to progress upwards while those with negative behaviors fall downwards on the chart (Fladhammer et al., 2016). This becomes an effective approach of ensuring that each of the student is
accountable for his/her behavior and further helps the teacher not only to monitor, but also reward progress (Breeman et al., 2015).

The lottery system acts in a manner that is almost similar to the token economy. According to Wang (2009) and Welch (1996), just like token economy, students expressing positive conducts are entitled to a ticket with their respective names indicated on it. The tickets are placed in a collective place, and at regular time intervals, a draw is made (Whittaker & Salend, 2001). The students who win the lottery receives a reward of a given price.

With the positive peer review perspective, students are expected to watch their peers and find out a positive behavior (Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 1998). The two students, one with the positive behavior and the other one who manages to identify the positive behavior are entitled to a reward. As a direct opposite of “tattle-telling,” this perspective encourages a sense of collaboration as well as social support in the classroom.

**Severe cases.** Students expressing severe cases are reported to have conduct disorder; expressing persistent behavioral patterns by ignoring the rights of their peers (Kern, 2015). Students under this category are highly impulsive and conduct themselves in socially unacceptable ways (Magg, 2005). Students in this category are more aggressive, violent and can easily harm themselves or their peers. For these reasons, ED students expressing high levels of aggressiveness should be segregated from the general education classes and have a special education teacher assigned to ensure that they are supported, both in their learning and noncurricular activities (Mattingly, 2010). The inclusion of ED students in general education classes,
together with their peers, has always emerged to be challenging for most severe cases because of refusal to cooperate in the classwork activities (Quigney & Studer, 1998).

**ED students.** It is always difficult for teachers to control behavior and work of the ED students, when they are not considered to be productive members within the classroom framework (Anderson et al., 2001). ED students lack the emotional balance that is required for them to effectively handle their social interactions with their peers (Jere, 1988). This has been a challenge for most teachers, especially when students with ED are integrated with non-ED students in the classroom, with the ED students being the minority (K. D. Gans, 1985).

Though these scenarios are always challenging, there are a number of measures that teachers can adopt in order to make things work within the classroom (M. Wagner et al., 2006). The best way of moderating and controlling their behaviors is by implementing a management plan within the classroom, tailored to the objective of meeting the defined needs of the ED students (Lewis, 2006). Some of the strategies that can be adopted in managing inclusive classes include simplicity and clarity, while undertaking classroom activities, rewarding positive behaviors, fair treatment for all, and use of motivational strategies (Handwerk & Marshall, 1998).

The essence of embracing simplicity and clarity while engaging in class activities is to create a conducive environment for ED students to learn (Izaguirre, 2008). They will therefore find it easy to learn rather than struggling to absorb the concepts (McDonnel, 1987). ED students will tend to struggle when the teacher imposes a list of complex activities and expectations for them (Mattingly, 2010).
Teachers should always make the classroom guidelines in a broader and simpler manner (Benz, Lindstrom & Yovanoff, 2000).

Just like for the other categories of students within the FAPE approach, it’s important that teachers reward positive behaviors (Cassady, 2011). Though the students must have consequences for their bad conduct, it’s important that teachers reward the positive behaviors since it’s effective in the long run. According to Alegre (2008) and Special Education-CalEdFacts (2013), scholarly works have proven that ED students usually consider any disciplinary action as a personal attack, thereby learning less from it. It is advisable that teachers make efforts in celebrating the success made by ED students more than punishing them for the mistakes they make (Hutchins, Lee, & Rensaglia, 1997). According to Abrams (2005) and Wills and Jackson (2000), the positive feedbacks, alongside other rewards, ED students start to realize that good behavior comes with some benefits.

**IEP**

In an effort to address the unique learning needs every person who receives special education and related services, the federal law under the IDEA, requires public schools to create a legally binding document referred to as an IEP. The IEP is created by a team that includes parents, teachers, administrators, related service providers, and students (when appropriate). The purpose of the IEP is to identify educational goals and appropriate placement, as well as guide the delivery of services and special education supports to improve educational results for SWDs. An IEP is critical in the education of a child with a disability (U.S. Department of Education...
The IEP is reviewed every year by a team comprised of various members.

IEP Team Members

IEP teams include any number of the following:

- Parents who provide information related to strengths and weakness of the student.
- Special education teacher.
- General education teachers who provide information related to child performance and classroom requirements.
- Classroom Aide who often works with students.
- Administrators who oversee daily functions.
- Academic counselors who provides guidance and schedules.
- Therapists who counsel students individually or in a group.
- Behaviourists’ who provide behavior support.
- School psychologists who assess students.
- Occupational therapists who assess and provides direct services.
- Speech pathologists who assesses and provides direct services.
- Any other service provider who assesses and/or provides direct services.
- Transition services agency member.

Contents of the IEP

The aim of the IEP is to fulfil a child’s specific educational needs by establishing measurable, obtainable, annual goals for the SWD, as well as provide clarification as to what services the school district will provide for the SWD. A brief
description of where and how the services will be carried out by team members is written into the IEP specifying how to best support the SWD in reaching his/her annual goals.

**Present levels of educational performance.** SWD is evaluated by the IEP team regarding the current performance. According to Nickerson and Brosof (2003) IEPs include comments from IEP members. IEPs also include results of standard tests, areas of concern, social skills, and behavioral skills.

**Goals.** The IEP lists measureable goals for the student. Handwerk and Marshall (1998) explain that IEP goals take into consideration the performance of the SWD, as well as the educational requirements, and uses them as the basis for each of the goals that is created and documented in the IEP. Progressive goals are kept relative to behavior, curriculum, social and other educational needs to be addressed. In the case of SWDs with ED behaviors, the social emotional and behavioral goals may look like:

- By this time next year [Jane Doe] will improve her mood and social functioning by verbalizing emotions, identifying and resolving the underlying causes of the depression, and by utilizing self-regulation techniques as measured by teacher-charted observation/data in three of five trials.

- By this time next year [John Doe] will connect his internal feelings to his external behaviors by using self-regulating techniques to improve his mood and social functioning with 80% accuracy in three of five trials as observed by teacher and staff.
• By this time next year [Jane Doe] will increase her level of independence by demonstrating that she can carry out regular social activities via inclusion activities with 70% accuracy while at school, as measured by teacher-charted observation/data in four out of five trials.

• By this time next year [John Doe] will improve his behavior by identifying and verbalizing internal emotional states, by connecting his internal emotional states to his behaviors, and by learning frustration management strategies with 80% accuracy in three to four trials during a 300 minute day.

**Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) services.** Included in the IEP are special education and related services plans and procedures for the SWDs to be placed in the least restrictive (LRE) in accordance with FAPE. According to Wehmeyer et al. (1998) special education provides services to the SWD for improvement in various areas. Services are provided to the student in an effort to accomplish goals identified in the IEP; these services include classroom environment, support, and accessing curriculum. SWDs have a right to related services, so that they receive the maximum benefit from their IEP. Related services, according to IDEA, are to be determined on an individual basis, not by a disability. The service, frequency, and the duration of services are written into the IEP. Related services may include assistive technology or a full-time or part-time aide when deemed appropriate. If a SWD requires a specific service that is developmental, corrective or supportive it is considered a “related” service, and may include, but is not limited to the following:
• audiology
• counseling services
• early identification and assessment of disabilities in children
• medical services (for diagnostic or evaluation purposes)
• occupational therapy
• parent counseling and training
• physical therapy
• psychological services
• recreation
• rehabilitation counseling
• school health services
• social work services
• speech pathology
• transportation

**FAPE setting.** The restructuring of schooling was necessary, so that schools could accommodate every student regardless of their disability, ensuring that all students belong to a community (E. Avramidis et al., 2000). Appropriate placement for the provision of education is determined during the IEP team meeting where the concepts of segregation, integration and inclusion are discussed. SWDs are placed according to their individual needs, and current public general education environments. SWDs who exhibit ED behaviors present educators with the challenge of how to best serve them (Jordan, 2006). When SWDs suffer from a lack of social skills, rebelliousness and/or misconduct, placement into general education classes
could be harmful to the SWDs, and as a result, segregation instead of inclusion or integration may be a more appropriate placement. Segregation is suggested when conditions of the SWD are severe and there is a lack of success despite of extra services and aid.

**Segregation**

Prior to the enactment of EAH in 1975, SWDs were segregated into schools for the handicapped (Battaglino, 2007). Over 1 million SWDs were segregated and excluded from attending adequate, regular public schools, and another 3.5 million SWDs attended public schools without needed supports, and therefore were not able to access the curriculum (Aron & Loprest, 2012). A self-contained setting refers to a special setting for students with any kind of disability. A self-contained classroom (SCC) is the most restricted setting in the public schools. SCCs are staffed with a special education teacher, and at least one para-educator who assists in meeting the educational needs of SWDs. SCCs often contain a span of a few grade levels of students who have similar academic requirements (Bainbridge, 2014). SWDs work at various academic levels, and have different curricula. The design of SCCs came about as a result of the California Code of Regulations (Cf. Title 5) also referred to as The Hughes Bill, and the work of Special Education Consultant and Advocate, Richard LaVoie (Special Education-CalEdFacts, 2013). On July 1, 2013 the State of California Title 5-Section 3052, also known as the Hughes Bill was repealed by Assembly Bill 86 stating that behavior interventions should be in closer alignment with laws and regulations of IDEA.
Fatum (2008) observed segregated classrooms provide individual attention to each student with specific requirements. However, when SWDs are segregated from the general population, and placed into SCCs, they are often stigmatized and they may be held to lower academic expectations (National Education Association [NEA], 2008). Rader (2010) argues SCCs are supervised with trained teachers with respect to special education. A disadvantage associated with segregation is the loss of opportunity for childhood activities for the disabled students. Brower and Balch (2005) further observe that non-disabled children also have advantages by having disabled children in the general education setting, therefore an inclusion setting is beneficial for all students.

**Inclusion**

With the reauthorization of IDEA in 1997, schools were obligated to include SWDs in the general education setting (USDE, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2010). “Inclusion is being a part of what everyone else is, being welcomed and embraced as a member who belongs” (Tomko, 1996, p. 1). In inclusion settings, SWDs as well as students without any kind of disabilities are taught together most of the time. This philosophy is based on social justice and civil rights rather than effective learning in schools. Burke and Sutherland (2004) consider inclusion a philosophy which provides benefits to all students in the class, as there is an increase in classroom expectations for not only the SWDs, but for the general education students as well (Nuttbrown & Clough, 2009). An inclusion type of setting provides diverse social learning abilities to both general education students and disabled students. Simply having the SWDs sit in a general education classroom and
receive watered down content instruction is not enough (Vaughn et al., 2007). Cameron and Cook (2007) observe mind-set to be shared along with physical space.

Inclusion has been criticized mainly due to the inability of the teachers to cope with diversity in the class, and to attend to a child with special needs (Alegre 2008). Teachers have to make accommodations in order to provide the best education possible, to diverse students with a variety of learning styles and abilities. Some schools establish the inclusion education approach by automatically placing SWDs into general education classes, however Wisenbaker (2008) observes that some SWDs reveal behaviors that are inappropriate according to teachers and students in the general education classes. Some teachers reported experiencing a feeling of hopelessness, as they were required to create inclusive settings with limited support and very little training (E. Avramidis et al., 2000; Kalyva et al., 2007). Federal, state, local, and private sources are used to generate provisions for SWDs to receive specialized instruction and related services (Lipsky & Garner, 1997). However, Yasutake and Learner (1996), concluded that general education teachers did not feel adequately prepared to successfully include SWDs into their classes. Brower and Balch (2005) observe teachers may work with SWDs to assist them in adjusting to the general education classroom. Burk and Southerland's (2004) study found that teacher attitudes regarding inclusion and responsibilities between the special education teacher and the general education teacher being clearly defined, produced success in academics. Successful collaborative efforts can also result in successful mainstreaming.
Mainstreaming

Newburn and Shiner (2006) associate the term mainstreaming with LRE, where IDEA ensures SWDs the right to participate in general education classes. Usually an interdisciplinary panel, which includes parents, is given all educational options; where the SWD is observed to be ready to be placed within the general education setting for some specific courses, if not for the entire day. Mainstreaming is a blend of special education with general education. It mainly aims to reduce the inequality between special education and general education. It is the integration of SWDs into general education classes after assessing the child to be ready for adjustment. E. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) noted that SWDs during mainstreaming are locationally integrated, however they are not expected to completely socially and functionally integrate. Functional integration expects the school to change the environment so that the SWDs can adjust. Investigation of best strategies for mainstreaming ED students into general education classes is critical for successful inclusion.

Integration

Mainstreaming and integration are often used interchangeably, but for the purposes of this paper, integration is an assimilation process, where placement of a SWD into general education classes depends on his/her ability to adjust according to their abilities and situations. Gargiulo (2010) observed integration or mainstreaming to be a normalization approach in various ways; location integration refers to placement of SWDs in mainstream institutes; social integration refers to social interaction of SWDs with non-disabled peers; and functional integration refers to
provision of opportunity for SWDs to participate in common experiences and learning. Integration setup provides opportunity for the disabled students to mix with non-disabled students while being given special attention, which may include being educated in a separate setting for a limited time or a portion of the day. According to Gargiulo, integration removes the margin of special children/disabled children and non-disabled children.

The integration of ED students into the general population allows the ED students to observe their peers modeling appropriate behavior, which can assist ED students in developing socially appropriate behavior (Magg, 2005). However, Cameron and Cook (2007) criticize the presence of special children/disabled children in general education classes with respect to their belonging. A study by Gargiulo (2010) reveals that non-disabled students of the class may not consider SWDs to be part of the class.

**Mainstream Training and Support**

Wigle and Wilcox (1997) reported that teachers, as well as administrators were cautious when it came to integrating SWDs into the general education setting. Teachers reported that they did not feel there were a sufficient number of supports to foster successful integration of SWDs into the general education setting. Teachers stated that they had not been properly trained to work with SWDs, nor did they have adequate time to plan for SWDs in a way that would provide them with the ability to successfully access the curriculum (Nimante & Tubele 2010). Studies show that it is imperative for teachers to have knowledge and skills to effectively collaborate, and make the necessary accommodations or modifications according to the IEP in order
for mainstreaming to be successful (Wigle & Wilcox, 1997). Difficulties continue to exist when SWDs in general education classes with a large number of students who are non-disabled (Cassady, 2011; J. H. Floyd et al., 2000). Wehmeyer et al. (1998) observed common inappropriate behaviors exhibited by SWDs are self-injury, destruction of classroom and aggression. Research by Nimante and Tubele (2010) shows that general education teachers are usually not trained to deal with such circumstances. Teaching and preparing lessons for general education classes with ED students who continuously exhibit inappropriate behavior without appropriate support, becomes frustrating and challenging.

The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) is part of the Executive Branch of the California State Government responsible for setting standards for teacher preparation and licensing teachers. Beginning teachers are required to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and abilities consistent with Teacher Performance Expectations (TPEs) developed by the CCTC. TPEs for preliminary special education credentials are currently being revised, however, in June 2016, the CCTC adopted new credential program standards for teacher candidates receiving preliminary multiple subject and preliminary single subject credentials (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing [CCTC], 2016). The new TPEs are not specific to students who have been diagnosed with ED, but they are essential standards and competencies designed to elicit greater attention to skills and knowledge in an effort to better support all SWD.
Examples of the newly adopted TPEs:

- Know how to access resources to support students, including those who have experienced trauma, homelessness, foster care, incarceration, and/or are medically fragile.

- Use a variety of developmentally and ability-appropriate instructional strategies, resources, and assistive technology, including principles of Universal Design of Learning (UDL) and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to support access to the curriculum for a wide range of learners within the general education classroom and environment.

- Promote student success by providing opportunities for students to understand and advocate for strategies that meet their individual learning needs and assist students with specific learning needs to successfully participate in transition plans (e.g., IEP, IFSP, ITP, and 504 plans).

- Plan, design, implement and monitor instruction, making effective use of instructional time to maximize learning opportunities and provide access to the curriculum for all students by removing barriers and providing access through instructional strategies that include:
  - appropriate use of instructional technology, including assistive technology;
  - applying principles of Universal Design of Learning (UDL) and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS);
o use of developmentally, linguistically, and culturally appropriate learning activities, instructional materials, and resources for all students, including the full range of English learners;

o appropriate modifications for SWD in the general education classroom;

o opportunities for students to support each other in learning; and

o use of community resources and services as applicable.

Factors Associated with Effective Mainstreaming

For ED students, successful mainstreaming continues to be a great challenge (K. D. Gans, 1985; Janney & Meyer, 1990; Landrum & Kauffman, 1992). There are several factors associated with mainstreaming, such as: (a) access to curriculum, (b) inadequate support, (c) larger class size, (d) high number of students to cope with, (e) teachers having higher expectations, (f) diverse populations, and much more. According to Burke and Sutherland (2004) general education systems for SWDs become difficult at times, as SWDs require more time and individual attention while there is a curriculum load and intense competition. Gargiulo (2010) suggests placement of SWDs in SCC for some period of time during the school day. A study conducted by E. Avramidis, Bayliss, and Burden (2000) discovered that behavioral and developmental concerns relative to SWDs, hinder the learning process of students in the general education classes, thus removal of SWDs during critical classes becomes compulsory. Newburn and Shiner (2006) observe SWDs to be better off when grouped according to their specific requirements and placed in SCCs, as
teachers in SCCs are specialized to meet specific requirements of SWDs; also SCCs are limited to few grades and smaller curriculum.

Cameron and Cook (2007) consider teaching SWDs in general education class a challenge when disturbed behaviors are exhibited. This indicates that the mainstreaming of SWDs who continuously exhibit negative behaviors can be a problem for teachers and result in an interruption of the learning process for general education students. Should ED students have the ability to complete their education in a general education setting? A survey by Murawski and Spencer (2011) report completion of high school by SWDs is 50%. The study indicates that SWDs don’t have a high probability of success, especially those who exhibit ED behaviors. The law looks to provide equality for ED students; however if learning tends to be disrupted in the general education class as a result of ED behaviors, the SWD who exhibits ED behaviors should be restricted to a separate setting (Nimante & Tubele, 2010) such as a SCC.

SCCs

SCCs generally have fewer students than general education classes. According to Torres (2009), SCCs are developed for students with special needs. Usually a class holds around 10 students who are taught by teachers that are specially trained. At least one para-educator also works in a SCC to provide support in teaching. SWDs may be taught in a SCC to receive disability related support and assistance. According to Long (2000), SCCs are to provide a supportive environment for behavioral, social, academic, or personal development. SWDs who have difficulty coping in the general education setting may be educated in SCCs.
In the past, students with any kind of disability were educated in SCCs for the entire academic period; however now the trend has changed. Wisenbaker (2008) observes IDEA to emphasize the placement of every child in the LRE, which indicates that every child has the right to be educated in a general education class for at least a portion of the day; however the duration may depend on the level and severity of the SWD. IEPs provide a criteria for which a child may be integrated into general education classes. The IEP provides a specific program and guidance on how to best support the SWD whether the SWD is educated in a SCC, or if the SWD is transitioned into a general education class.

**Transitioning**

Transition refers to change in placement of a SWD from one setting to another. Transition for the purpose of this study will generally refer to SWDs transferring into or out of a SCC. ED students are often placed into SCCs, special classes or special settings when they are unable to cope up with complexities of general education classes. Placement into a SCC is designed to prepare the SWDs for transition; however Geenen, Powers, Vasquez, and Bersani (2003) and Lane and Carter (2006) observe transitioning to the LRE often depends on the special education teacher. Cameron and Cook (2007) point out that the federal mandate is to transfer SWDs into general education classes as soon as possible; however criteria of transitions are not specifically defined. Due to lack of a defined measure of transitioning, ED students may never be prepared to be transitioned into an integrated setting. Several scenarios have been observed by E. Avramidis et al. (2000); in some cases SWDs and teachers have been frustrated in efforts to prepare the SWDs to be
transitioned into general classes; conversely, sometimes students are ready to be transitioned, but are not recognized by the teacher, so the student ends up missing out on integrated classes. Greene and Kochhar-Bryant (2003) suggests development of a checklist, which may describe the ability of a child to be transitioned or not. This list could also provide guidelines to the special education teacher in preparing the student for transition.

The main objective of the IDEA is to place students in the LRE. However integration, or the process of transitioning SWDs into general education classes requires guidelines for the special education teacher and the IEP team when making decisions. Not only is information related to student readiness unavailable, but there is also no set of procedures related to transitioning SWDs. Researchers are often perplexed when it comes to mainstreaming and transitioning, so this prohibits them from making any specific list as guidelines. Griffith (2011) observes transition to be considered as a specific topic for research; however E. Avramidis et al. (2000) find several complexities associated with decision making regarding transitioning and mainstreaming. Transitioning and mainstreaming related research can examine the effects of SWDs in either SCCs or general education classes, so that behavior change or behavior development can be analyzed to assist in determining when a student is ready to transition. Transitions can be from general education classes to SCCs, or from SCCs to the LRE, in every case SWDs need assistance with adjusting. The Council of Exceptional Children aims to train and assist teachers so that SWDs adjust in the LRE. Although SWDs are supported for adjustment in mainstream classes, L. Idol (2006) observes placement in mainstream classes is considered to be “stop over”
rather than permanent placement. Dixon (2005) on the other hand observes failure of IDEA, as SWDs placed in special classes are rarely moved back to general education classes. Administrators and special education teachers are gate keepers of SCCs, and they often determine if SWDs stay or leave a SCC. These gatekeepers are referred to as “facilitator for passage” as they are supportive in preparing the SWDs for the LRE. Conversely administrators and special education teachers may be considered an obstacle if they don’t make adequate efforts for the SWD to move to the LRE. This indicates that administrators and special education teachers play a vital role in the development of SWDs, and determine when transition is considered. Dixon suggests decision makers have a planned process for the placement of SWDs into general education classes to promote success. Ludlow (2012) suggests mirroring of both transitioning stages for a successful transition. For example if SWDs considered for placement from a SCC into a general education class, are provided a regular class environment while in the SCC, decision makers may be able to understand the possible challenges and reactions that SWDs may face when transitioning. L. Idol further observed a limited set of procedures, to guide decision makers for effective transition of the SWDs. Dixon suggests that the SWDs fulfil the minimum criteria of the general education class to be placed with non-disabled peers. Social and academic skills must at least be present to some extent for SWDs to be integrated into a general education class.

**Attitude Towards Integration/Mainstreaming**

Placement of SWDs who exhibit emotional and/or behavior disorders in SCCs is a topic of debate among researchers and scholars. Furthermore teachers and other
stakeholders are found to have considerable reservation regarding segregating SWDs. Kalyva, Gojkovic, and Tsakiris (2007) notes human rights activists criticize such actions; however a study by L. Idol (1997) observes a range of reactions by teachers, administrators and psychologist for mainstreaming SWDs. Positive or negative perceptions about SWDs being integrated/mainstreamed, highly depends on the type of disability and intensity of the SWDs reactions. Stainback and Stainback (1992) observed influence of type of difficulty also affects perceptions of the decision makers for integration. Background of the decision makers are also considered to be an important factor in perception (E. Avramidis et al., 2000). For example, pre-school teachers were observed to have most the positive attitude towards integration, on the other hand teachers of higher grades opposed the concept of integrating SWDs with their non-disabled peers. However school heads, psychologist, and resource teachers varied in their perceptions of integration. E. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) conducted a study in Australia and found the reverse condition. Teachers were observed to be more inclined towards integration; however their perception varied with type of disorder.

It is interesting to note that staff who were not directly connected to the SWD supported integration more than staff with direct contact with the SWDs (Kalyva et al., 2007). This indicates that advisors and administrators support integration more than teachers. However perception further varies with the type of teacher; for example head teacher and teachers with special training are more inclined towards integration, rather than general education teachers. Campbell, Gilmore, and Cuskelly (2003) further observed, higher acceptance rate of teachers who have special training
for special children rather than teachers from the mainstream classes. Kalyva et al. (2007) observed attitudes towards mainstreaming was further affected by the presence of law and general concept about segregation in that particular country. A study by Morin (2001) showed attitudes towards integration to be different in various countries; Germany and the USA being most supported towards integration; where the USA has adequate laws towards integration, however Germany lacked laws. On the other hand teachers in Taiwan, Israel, Philippines, and Ghana were less supportive towards integration. E. Avramidis et al. (2000) observed probable reasons to be lack of training. This was affirmed by Campbell et al. (2003) who observed negative attitude towards integration to be associated with understanding and training. Integration held without appropriate plans and adequate campus modifications may not be effective.

Teachers of general education classes may also resist integration, as they are not sure about the situation and may not be confident to handle the situation. However, teachers may welcome SWDs if no additional support or management is required. Friend et al. (2010) affirmed this phenomenon by observing teachers to consider the disability of the SWDs while considering placement into general education class. The students who were welcomed by the teachers were those whose disability were mild and didn’t hinder classroom activities. On the other hand students with severe ED behaviors were not favored to be placed with their non-disabled peers. Students with intellectual or rigorous physical disabilities were preferred not to be included in general education classes. Campbell et al. (2003) explains these attitudes to be related with the classroom activities. Rate of confidence
in self-ability of the teachers directly affected perception of integration. Teachers with high confidence were found to be willing to assist and develop a SWD. Friend et al. observed teachers with special training to be more confident in his/her abilities to handle and accommodate SWDs as compared to general education teachers without special training. Campbell et al. observed a lack of effort to achieve positive learning outcomes, result in lower learning opportunities for the SWDs. Ultimately, negative perceptions of teachers and administrators towards integration affect SWDs, and those who exhibit ED behaviors are often perceived negatively.

**Important Factors for Successful Integration**

Friend et al. (2010) indicated learning at early stages is critical for overall success. Integration is a complex process; however consideration of some factors may increase success rate. Friend et al. identified seven factors that if utilized correctly, successful integration may be possible.

**Teacher training.** Teacher perception has been positively associated with the ability of teachers to cope with teaching challenges associated with ED. According to Hargreaves and Walker (2014) it is important for the teachers to have special learning tools, learning style, and lesson plans to assist ED students. Effective collaboration must be established between teachers and paraprofessionals to prepare the ED students to be in the LRE. Teachers must be appropriately trained to understand preferences, strengths, and interests of students which have emotional and/or behavioral disabilities.
**Support services.** Students transitioning into the LRE need appropriate support and services that are subject to revision according to the change in placement and requirements of the ED students.

**Classroom modification.** Classrooms must be appropriately modified to accommodate children with emotional and/or behavioral disabilities. Non-disabled students must be prepared to greet and welcome the new student. Moustakas (1990) observed successful adjustment of SWDs when other students are cooperative.

**Student preparation.** ED students having been away from general education classes may find it different from the SCC setting, which is usually more attended by support staff and is relatively small. Scotch (1989) observed larger size classes with regular activities may be a difficult environment for ED students to adjust to. ED students being prepared for general education classes must be familiar with the normal routines in the classroom. SCCs curriculum is usually modified for convenience of the ED students; however getting accustomed to regular curriculum requires time and support. Once the ED student is moved he/she must be given an opportunity to adjust instead of quickly moving them back to the SCC.

**Parent role.** Parents play a vital role during the process of integration. Parents can support the ED student with counseling, and encouragement, as well as work along with the teachers for effective transitions. Parents typically are more familiar with the needs of their children, so they can offer useful assistance and advice to the school, administrators, and teachers. Salend (2001) asserts that parents in America have always played an important role in the lives of their children, especially those who have a disability (Whittaker & Salend, 2001). Salend states that
some parents prefer for their children with disabilities to be placed in special schools, as they feel insecure with the idea of integrating the SWDs with the non-disabled children who are in general education classes. There are some non-disabled students who in their life, may not have come across an ED student, so in placing an ED student in the same classroom, the non-disabled students may tend to isolate the ED student. This can create a sense of resentment, or a feeling of rejection resulting in an uncomfortable environment where ED students are looked down upon.

Some parents feel that school personnel may mishandle their children due to lack of understanding of the students’ special needs. In such cases, the parents develop negative attitudes often underestimating the abilities of their children and they are uncomfortable with the idea of integrating/mainstreaming. They would rather their child be segregated rather than included. Then there is a sect of parents who perceive that mixing ED students with non-disabled students may not go well with the parents of the non-disabled students (Leyser & Kirk, 2004). These type of parents tend to be resistant to the idea of integrating their children with their peers (Stoiber et al., 1998), this acts as a hindrance to the program of mainstreaming.

On the opposite end, there are parents who hold integration in high regard as they believe it establishes positive interactive relationships of good rapports between the ED students and their non-disabled peers (Lewis, 2006). They are of the view that integration provides an avenue for their children to develop skills on how to handle their life.

Generally, parents play an important role in placements. Parent attitudes regarding the process of integrating can determine whether or not ED students
succeed or fail. With a positive attitude, parents can offer useful advice and assistance to teachers, administrators, and their children. There is a need for more education regarding the impact of parents in favor of integrating ED students into general education classes.

**Academic counselors.** Often referred to simply as counselors in this study, play an important role in the lives of ED students in schools (Milsom, 2006). Counselors provide academic, career, and personal/social guidance. They help mollify the negative perceptions held by stakeholders including teachers, parents, and even ED students themselves. The role of counselors in integrating programs has increased tremendously in the United States (Dahir, 2004). School counselors offer invaluable skills and knowledge in working with ED students. Quigney and Studer (1998), outline five main roles carried out by counselors:

- Counselors offer individual counseling programs to students, parents and teachers.

- Counselors arrange special meetings where they meet with teaching staff and administrators to talk about the needs of the students.

- Counselors design and utilize conflict resolution techniques to resolve disputes involving the students.

- Counselors have diverse skills and training in the welfare of ED students, and are in a position to help schedule classes, programs, and services.

- Counselors provide career counseling and education to the students.

Greer and Greer (1995), assessing the needs of SWDs, noted that the input of counselors in the integration process would increase significantly. Counselors would
be expected to head the multidisciplinary team, coordinate input from various disciplines, to represent information to parents and link the cooperation between parents and the team. With this important role the counselors play during the integration process, Greer and Greer argue that they need to be adequately prepared with the necessary expertise in the area and must have sufficient training. They must be aware of the special needs of the ED students and be familiar with a wide array of issues that affect such children.

**Therapeutic/mental health counselors.** May also simply be referred to as counselors, however these individuals carry out therapeutic/mental health counseling services for students. In this study they are professionals who assist ED students who have emotional and/or behavioral disorders. The role of the therapeutic/mental health counselor in a school setting is to provide support to students who need assistance with any obstacle that may hinder the student’s access to education, or interfere with the student’s ability to attend and participate in classes as a result of self-regulation/anger issues, depression, or communication challenges.

**Administrators.** School administrators shoulder the chief responsibility of ensuring that inclusive programs are fully integrated into their school system. Administrators design appropriate policies and mechanisms geared towards full execution of the program by implementing procedures for transitioning students that includes information exchange between teachers from different types of classes and parental involvement. Administrators ensure that ED students receive any required special assistance such as modifications and accommodations, in addition to monitoring effective curriculum. For example, adequate and spacious classrooms,
well trained teachers, and experienced counselors to direct the process. Some school administrators do not welcome the idea of integration (Hastings & Oakford, 2006). In their view, the program is too costly to implement; it requires fundamental transformations of their systems; it demands employing new staff members to assist in the integration process of bringing in ED students who exhibit behavioral characteristics that might disrupt the daily routine of the school.

Administrators work in close association with the IEP team, which includes parents, in the placement process. Administrators seek consultations from parents on the extent of the student’s disability, and maybe on the past behaviors of the student (Monoham & Cronic, 1997). They also work closely with special education teachers and school counselors in designing IEPs that best suit the special needs of ED students. The effectiveness of the process of mainstreaming works best when there is positive and strong willingness from the administration to integrate mainstreaming programs. Administrators must be prepared to provide financial as well as other resources to support the program and also work closely with the special education teachers and other stakeholders (Deane et al., 2000).

**Role of Teachers in Identification and Referring SWD**

Gargiulo (2010), observed that teachers or paraprofessionals are usually the ones who identify and provide support to students with emotional and or behavioral disorders. Individuals with emotional disabilities are difficult to objectively identify and classify (Token Economies. 2012). Through their educational training and experience in special education, special education teachers are able to design appropriate teaching methodologies in order to cater to the educational needs of ED
students. General education teachers have far less training in working with ED students, however the success of the entire process of integrating ED students with their peers in general education classes, depends on the willingness, training, and preparedness of the teachers. Consequently, there is often reluctance on the part of school personnel to label a child ED (Kaufman & Schmidt, 2005). Schools and teachers play a significant role in the identification of emotional and or behavioral concerns with a student.

The Role of Teachers

Teachers play a vital role in the entire process of mainstreaming ED students into general education classes. Since teachers know the specific demands of such students, they offer a lot of support to the students both in and outside of the class. It has been stated that when mainstreaming, students have to show that they have the ability to keep up with their peers and stay on track with the work designed for them by their general education teacher (Pugach & Warger, 2001). Therefore, based on the attitude of the teacher, an ED student can be assessed as qualified or not, to be placed in a general education classroom setting. Teachers respond differently to the idea of moving ED students into general education classes (Soodak et al., 1998). Some teachers do not perceive it as something novel (Jere, 1988). They perceive it as a challenging issue that is difficult because it requires a response to a variety of needs. ED students require special attention and may require more time while in class as compared to their peers. Teachers who are assigned to general education classes may not possess special skills, making it difficult for them to handle the unique needs of...
ED students. This often leads to the development of negative attitudes towards the idea of integration (Ryan, 2009).

ED students may display some peculiar behaviors while in class. Abrams (2005), for instance, asserts that students with emotional disorders can exhibit very unique and bizarre characteristics. They may be verbally and physically aggressive, some may be hyperactive, oppositional or defiant. Some may appear to be depressed, restless, frustrated or demonstrate a lack self-control, and teachers feel unprepared to encounter such a plethora of issues in their classes (E. Avramidis et al., 2000). This often creates bias when assessing a student’s qualification to be admitted into general education classes. Research has shown that there are a good number of teachers who have positive perceptions to the idea of admitting such students into the mainstream classes. In most cases, the teachers develop positive attitudes with increased interactions with such students (Hutchins et al., 1997). The more exposure teachers have when working with ED students ultimately instils a culture of perseverance in them resulting in more effort being placed in helping them satisfy their educational needs (Cook, 2001). The teachers asserted that their positive attitude developed as their experience advanced in the process. Villa and Thousand (1988) note that teachers change their attitude towards integration as their level of competence improves. As the process of implementation advances, the teachers start developing an increase in their mastery of skill necessary to teach such students with a wide array of abilities. LeRoy and Simpson (1996) argue that the competence of the teachers is a reflection of the attitude they exhibit. Training of teachers changes their attitudes towards integration. When teachers receive adequate training, they get equipped with
the skills and knowledge necessary to handle the needs of SWD (LeRoy & Simpson, 1996). The training teachers receive assists them in understanding the behavioral characteristics, which may be exhibited by the students, as a result, teachers are better equipped to manage students with various needs, and the teacher’s level of confidence improves.

Increasing the placement of ED students into general education classes first requires a change in the negative attitude of teachers. Welch (1996) recommends that schools create a good nurturing environment for their teachers in order to influence their willingness to accommodate ED students into general education classes. The schools have to assure security of the teachers from the many risks associated with behavioral characteristics of the students. Secondly, training needs to be provided to general education teachers regarding general skills on how to work with ED students. With time, the well trained teachers will develop a positive attitude towards having ED students integrated with their peers, as they feel capable and more comfortable with working with them (Murphy, 1991). Last but not least, the number of students recommended to move from self-contained classrooms to general education classes by teachers will improve when there is cooperation and corroboration among teachers, parents of the students, and school administrators.

The Role of Case Managers

Case managers are often special education teachers (also referred to as education specialists) who are credentialed to work with SWDs, however case managers can be another member of the IEP team. The case manager is responsible for making sure the ED student’s special education services and supports are in place.
The case manager generally works directly with the ED student and is the person responsible for communicating with all members of the IEP team. Case managers complete appropriate forms, obtain releases of information from private and/or public entities, develop assessment plans with appropriate staff, and schedule IEP team meetings with parents and all other team members. The case manager informs parents/guardians of legal rights, chairs the IEP team meeting, facilitates the development of the draft IEP, obtains required signatures of team members affirming the IEP as a legal document, makes copies of all records for the parents/guardians, and they communicate with student’s general education teachers and all service providers any pertinent content of the IEP and they follow up on progress. The case manager ensures that the IEP is implemented directly following its development, and they provide recurrent IEP Progress Reports.

Summary

The above discussion shows that ED students who have emotional and/or behavioral disabilities are often educated in different classroom settings. Brown, Valenti and Kerr (2015) observes the placement to be according to the intensity of the disability. Fladhammer et al. (2016) and Breeman et al. (2015) observe federal laws to dictate that every student has the right to be in the LRE, however placement must be according to each ED student. There are advantages and disadvantages of every classroom arrangement, such as segregation, integration, and inclusion. Both non-disabled students and ED students can benefit from inclusion, however the perception of inclusion has been both supported and criticized. ED students are often transitioned from one type of classroom to another, for example from a SCC to a
general education class, or from a SCC to another type of mainstream setting, but some ED students exhibit inappropriate emotions and/or behaviors while in the mainstream setting. Breeman et al. observes that the decision of transition is made by a team which includes special education teachers, general education teachers, para-educators, service providers, parents, and administrators; however Sørlie and Ogden (2015) argue that a lack of appropriate planning or criteria when transitioning ED students from a SCC to a general education class can be extremely challenging as there are several complexities. SCCs are special settings for ED students who have special requirements and need special attention (Gresham, 2015; Kern, 2015). A chart in the form of a synthesis matrix was created using various subtopics to organize the literature related to the study (see Appendix A). Whereas literature exists in the area of integrating disabled students into general education classes, more is required to address the challenges that exists when the disabled student exhibits behaviors associated with ED.

This study intends to investigate the factors that are associated with successfully mainstreaming ED students from a SCC into general education classes.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter describes the methodology for the research study examining factors associated with mainstreaming ED students into general education settings. For the purposes of this study, students who have disability-related behavior and a history of exhibiting inappropriate/anti-social behaviors including conduct disorder, or oppositional defiance in the general education setting, and are subject to negative reactions from their peers and school faculty are referred to as ED students. An overview of the problem statement, purpose, and research questions is presented. A detailed description of the selected research design, population, sample, and research process is presented. Data collection methods, as well as instrumentation and the process for assuring optimal reliability, validity, and credibility are also described. Finally, the data analysis process and limitations are described for examining the process of mainstreaming ED students into general education classes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative comparative case study is to identify and describe factors that are considered by special education case managers when making a decision to mainstream ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes. An additional purpose of the study was to identify the factors that are common among special education case managers when making a decision to mainstream ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes.
Research Questions

This qualitative comparative case study was designed around the following research question: What factors do special education case managers identify as important when mainstreaming ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes?

Research Sub-Questions

Three research sub-questions were developed to better answer the central research question.

1. What factors are common among special education case managers when making a decision to mainstream ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes?

2. What general education teacher-centered factors are considered prior to mainstreaming ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes?

3. What ED student-centered factors are considered prior to mainstreaming ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes?

Research Design

A qualitative, comparative, descriptive research method will be used in this study to identify and describe the factors considered by special education case managers in the placement of ED students into general education classes. Qualitative research can be defined as “a type of research that refers to an in-depth study using face-to-face or observation techniques to collect data from people in their natural settings” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 489). It is important to understand that
the goal of qualitative research is to understand people, and fieldwork can be a component of this research. Qualitative research has various inquiry approaches (M. Q. Patton, 2002). When looking at qualitative research, it can be said that it is “based more on constructivism, which assumes that multiple realities are socially constructed through individual and collective perceptions or views of the same situation” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 12). Special education case managers deal with ED placement issues on a continuing basis. Each case has factors that define it and identifying and describing those factors can only happen through an interactive process. This level of inquiry cannot be accomplished with a survey or by observation but requires that the individuals involved be directly interviewed. Therefore, the interview method is the best and most appropriate method for this study.

Methodology

The progression began with the submittal of a plan to obtain approval from the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (BUIRB). Evidence was provided regarding the successful completion of ethical training from National Institutes of Health (NIH) (see Appendix B). These measures were taken to ensure the protection of human subjects. The researcher agreed to adhere to all ethical and moral guidelines pertaining to research, a plan was submitted to BUIRB as a qualitative comparative case study to identify, describe and compare factors considered by special education case managers when making a decision to mainstream ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes.
For this study, a comparative case study will be used. M. Q. Patton (2012) stated, “In a case study, the emphasis is on obtaining thorough knowledge of an individual situation is the focus. Researchers do not confine themselves to asking a limited number of questions on a one shot basis as they would in a survey” (p. 9).

A case study allows the researcher to comprehend factual situations and incidences deeply while incorporating critical situational conditions due to their importance to the situation (Yin, 2009).

Case studies can be described as intrinsic, instrumental, and collective (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This study focuses on an instrumental case study because there is a central theme that is being studied. Instrumental case studies are used to “focus on in-depth understanding of the entity, issue, or theme” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 345). There is a need to develop an understanding of the factors considered by special education case managers in the placement of ED students into general education classes. Through the use of interviews, insight and knowledge will be obtained on this topic. Using a case study allows for the presentation of specific detailed experiences as opposed to broad findings (Stake, 1995). In this case study, special education case managers will be interviewed and the findings will be presented for comparison.

Population

A population is defined as a group of elements or cases, involving individuals, objects or events that have specific criteria for which we can generalize the results of the research (McMillan & Schumacher 2010). The population for this study is special education case managers in Contra Costa County who make decisions to mainstream
ED students from SCCs, into general education classes. There are 22,300 special education teachers, 2,340 academic counselors, and 3,170 special education administrators in the state of California (CDE, 2018).

**Target Population**

The target population delineates those units for which the findings of the research are meant to generalize (Cox, 2008). The target population for this study is special education case managers who make decisions to mainstream ED students into general education classes within Contra Costa County in northern California. There are roughly 1,200 special education teachers, 228 academic counselors, and 471 site administrators in northern California’s Contra Costa County (NCES) (see Table 1 and 2).
## Table 1

*Selected special education statistics for public school districts in Contra Costa County, 2015-2016 School Year*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts in Contra Costa County</th>
<th>Number of Individual Education Programs</th>
<th>Number of Special Education Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acalanes</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antioch</td>
<td>2,496</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brentwood Elementary</td>
<td>1,224</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron Elem</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canyon Elementary</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COE</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Sweat</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knightsen Elementary</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafayette Elementary</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty</td>
<td>1,124</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martinez</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moraga</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt. Diablo</td>
<td>3,847</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakley Elementary</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orinda Elementary</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsburg</td>
<td>1,204</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Ramon</td>
<td>2,571</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walnut Creek Elementary</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West CC</td>
<td>4,254</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>20,573</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,229</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Data sorted in ascending order with Districts in Contra Costa County controlling the sort.*
Table 2

*Selected staff FTEs for school districts in Contra Costa County, 2015-2016 School Year*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts in Contra Costa County</th>
<th>Total Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Number of Guidance Counselors</th>
<th>Country Costa County Site Administrators</th>
<th>Student/Teacher Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acalanes</td>
<td>270.00</td>
<td>16.80</td>
<td>9.70</td>
<td>20.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antioch</td>
<td>676.42</td>
<td>32.80</td>
<td>47.23</td>
<td>26.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brentwood Elementary</td>
<td>347.97</td>
<td>6.80</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron Elementary</td>
<td>92.79</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>23.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canyon Elem</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COE</td>
<td>213.26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22.50</td>
<td>19.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Sweat</td>
<td>78.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>22.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knightsen Elementary</td>
<td>25.50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>21.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lafayette Elementary</td>
<td>154.92</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty</td>
<td>365.70</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>22.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martinez</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>22.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moraga</td>
<td>89.99</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>20.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt. Diablo</td>
<td>1361.79</td>
<td>37.65</td>
<td>96.00</td>
<td>23.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakley Elementary</td>
<td>195.60</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>12.80</td>
<td>25.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orinda Elementary</td>
<td>108.28</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>23.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitts</td>
<td>491.97</td>
<td>14.40</td>
<td>32.64</td>
<td>22.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Ramon</td>
<td>1,322.88</td>
<td>41.67</td>
<td>81.50</td>
<td>24.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walnut Creek Elementary</td>
<td>154.10</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>8.83</td>
<td>23.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West CC</td>
<td>1,304.18</td>
<td>35.40</td>
<td>81.05</td>
<td>23.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,445.35</strong></td>
<td><strong>227.82</strong></td>
<td><strong>470.75</strong></td>
<td><strong>23.06 average</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


aData sorted in ascending order with Districts in Contra Costa County controlling the sort.

Sample

The collective group of participants from whom the data are collected is referred to as the sample (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009). The sample for this study was selected using both purposive and convenience methods. The purposive method identified participants that met selection criteria and the convenience method allowed the researcher to select those qualified participants that were most accessible for the study.
According to M. Q. Patton (2002), the purposeful sampling model allows the researcher to purposely identify and select individuals who would be vital sources of information. The participants with various levels or positions along a continuum of interest have the capability of enhancing the understanding of a phenomenon. M. Q. Patton (2015), states purposeful sampling in qualitative studies is considered more of a strength than in quantitative studies as it permits a more in-depth understanding based on information-rich data derived from the perspective of the participants. In this study, the purposive sample includes special education case managers in Contra Costa County.

McMillan and Schumaker (2010) describe convenience sampling as selecting subjects based on the convenience of the researcher. Restricting the target population to special education case managers in Contra Costa County allows the researcher to narrow the overall population and then, following identification of individuals who meet the participation criteria in each group, those most accessible to the researcher will be selected.

The sample for this study is eight special education case managers in Contra Costa County, for a total of eight participants.

The criteria for selection of case managers was:

1. Five or more years of experience as a teacher and at least two years in the placement of ED students into general education classes.

2. Direct current involvement in the placement of ED students into general education classes as specified by their principal.
Sample Selection Process

M. Q. Patton (2015) described purposive sampling as a strategic selection of “information-rich cases to study, cases that by their nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry question being investigated” (p. 215). Purposeful sampling is used when the researcher chooses participants who are representative of the broad topic and who have relevant information regarding the topic of interest (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The purposeful sampling approach made it possible for the researcher to gain insight on a topic that is relevant to all participants.

Purposive Stakeholder Sampling was chosen for this non-probability study as special education case managers in northern California are responsible for appropriate placement when mainstreaming ED students into general education classes. The following process was used for selection:

1. District employees provided a list of case managers who met the criteria for participation. A list of potential participants meeting the selection criteria were identified.

2. Potential case managers throughout Contra Costa County who met the selection criteria received an email requesting their participation in the study (see Appendix C). Participants were provided an explanation of the study, and full disclosure of any risk involved in participating in this study (see Appendix D). Participants were made aware of their option to discontinue involvement in this study at any time without being penalized (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) (see Appendix E).
3. Special education case managers who agreed to participate were asked to suggest other case managers who met the selection criteria.

4. A list of special education case managers that met the selection criteria and were willing to participate was created.

5. Eight special education case managers were selected based on accessibility to the researcher to participate in the study.

6. If a selected participant declined, a replacement was selected using the same process.

7. Once informed consent was given, and it was established that participants’ privacy and confidentiality will be maintained, an agreed upon time and location was scheduled for an initial interview.

**Instrumentation**

**Instrument(s)**

When piloting qualitative research, the researcher is known as the instrument (M. Q. Patton, 2012, 2015). Due to the researcher being the instrument in a qualitative study, Pezalla, Pettigrew, and Miller-Day (2012) contended that the unique personalities, characteristics, and interview techniques of the researcher may influence how the data is collected. As a result, the study may contain some biases based on how the researcher influenced the interviewee during the qualitative interview sessions.

The researcher was/is employed by Pittsburg Unified School District in Pittsburg, California. As a result, the researcher brought a potential bias to the study based on personal experiences in a similar setting to those which were studied. The
researcher conducted qualitative interviews with the research participants. The interview questions and responses were conducted over the phone and were recorded digitally via a hand held recording device.

The second instrument will be a set of interview questions developed from the literature on ED students (see Appendix F). The questions were developed specifically for the research questions using the matrix found in Appendix G.

**Reliability**

Reliability refers to the consistent measurement for which the results are similar over different forms of the same instrument or occasions of data collection (McMillan & Schumacher, 2009). Because interviews are the primary data collection tool, the researcher, who will conduct the interviews, becomes the data collection instrument. In addition, the interview questions are directly linked to the research questions to assure validity.

**Field Test**

To protect against researcher bias and to assure reliability, the following steps were be taken:

1. Field test interviews were conducted with non-participating case managers. Both in-person and telephone interviews were tested. Feedback was received from the field test subjects regarding the clarity and how understandable the directions and questions were.

2. An observer watched the researcher deliver the field test interviews to give feedback regarding biased behavior or comments. This feedback was
received and, additional field test interviews were conducted to remove biased behavior.

3. The researcher video recorded herself delivering the field test interviews to have a means of self-review.

Adjustments were made to the instrument based upon the feedback.

**Validity**

Validity refers to the degree to which scientific explanations of phenomena are accurate; the truthfulness of findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In this instance, because the data are comprised of the opinion of the participants, the validity of the data comes from the level of expertise of the participants. Each participant had to meet the selection criteria vetting their experience and expertise prior to inclusion in the study. Triangulation of these sources of data supported the validity of the data (M. Q. Patton, 2002).

**Data Collection**

Telephone interviews were conducted to eliminate researcher’s biased behavior, and the fact that face-to-face interviews were less feasible. All participants signed an audio release giving consent for the interview to be recorded (see Appendix H). The 30 minute interviews were used to portray multiple views of the same path (Stake, 1995). Multiple evidence of perspectives—theory triangulation, as well as methodological triangulation will be used to validate data (Q. M. Patton, 1987). Following agreement to participate, each participant was contacted, provided assurance of confidentiality, and an individual interview scheduled. The researcher continuously tracked and organized findings by placing them into bins on a database
to improve the reliability of the study (Yin, 2009). Researcher continuously recorded reflections and upload the reflections, as well as the interviews into a database. The researcher ensured that purposeful sampling strategies were appropriate for this comparative case study, and that the data was properly collected, and well managed (Russell, Gregory, Ploeg, DiCenso, & Guyatt, 2005).

**Data Analysis**

An explanatory research technique tool was used to identify themes that emerged from data analysis, conclusions were drawn, and implications were made. The explanatory design was chosen as it is effective in looking to generate new knowledge as well as validate existing knowledge. The structure for reporting the comparative case study involved the analysis of similarities and differences of participant perspectives. Direct interpretations were used to aid in gaining various perspectives and to seek patterns and relationships. The researcher incorporated the process of member checking, where participants will be able to review rough drafts of the researchers’ interpretations of the data where their action or words are featured to ensure accuracy. New information may also be added when participants are provided the opportunity to discuss and clarify the researchers’ interpretation. A comparison of relevant factors between participants was used to present the findings.

**Inter-Coder Reliability**

According to M. Q. Patton (2015), inter-coder reliability referred to the extent to which two or more independent coders agreed on the coding of the characteristics of the interviews or artifacts and reached the same conclusion. Ten percent of the data collected from the interviews, artifacts, and observations were presented to an
outside researcher, who was also a doctoral candidate, who confirmed the themes, trends, and frequency counts of the data collection. According to Neuendorf (2002), “given that a goal of content analysis is to identify and record relatively objective characteristics of messages, reliability is paramount. Without the establishment of reliability, content analysis measures are useless” (p. 141). Two non-participating colleagues with special education expertise reviewed the data analysis and coded 20% of the data to provide triangulation of the analysis. Bias were addressed. The coding of the researcher and the Inter-Coder raters were compared for assurance. This provided an Inter-Coder reliability function to assure that any bias the researcher had was countered by outside analysis.

**Research Sub-Questions**

1. What factors are common among special education case managers when making a decision to mainstream ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes?
2. What general education teacher-centered factors are considered prior to mainstreaming ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes?
3. What ED student-centered factors are considered prior to mainstreaming ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes?

**Limitations**

Researcher bias was a potential limitation therefore, deliberate efforts were made to confirm the researcher’s interpretations, and any potential biases were
disclosed. An additional limitation is the level of experience and expertise of the participants.

While strict selection criteria and screening was used to identify and select the sample, some limitation could be present in the participant pool. The foremost limitation would be generalizing the findings of this sample population, and making an inference that findings were applicable to all case managers across America who are mainstreaming ED students into general education classes.

The overall size and geographical location of the sample could be a limitation as generalization is limited by these factors.

**Summary**

This chapter provided a framework for the methodology of studying factors associated with mainstreaming ED students into general education settings. The study looks at transitioning ED students from a SCC into general education classes. An overview of the problem statement, purpose, and research questions were presented along with the research design, and a description of the population. The process of data-collection and instrumentation were provided. Reliability, validity, and credibility were established. The data analysis process, as well as the limitations were described for determining factors associated with mainstreaming ED students in this comparative case study.

Chapter IV is a presentation of the findings of this study, where critical inferences, conclusions and recommendations are made as a result of the analyzed data. Chapter V is the conclusion and proposed recommendations, stating how the findings from the research may be an applicable portion of continuous scholarly
research and analysis, and how ED students and society as a whole can benefit from the finding in this study.
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Introduction

The data collected and findings in Chapter IV are derived from a qualitative comparative case study around the following central research question: What factors do special education case managers identify as important in mainstreaming ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes?

The following three research sub-questions were developed to better answer the central research question.

1. What factors are common among special education case managers when making a decision to mainstream ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes?

2. What general education teacher-centered factors are considered prior to mainstreaming ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes?

3. What ED student-centered factors are considered prior to mainstreaming ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes?

Chapter IV includes a description of the sample, presentation of the data, considerations relating to the emotional disability and a summary of results.

Description of the Sample

The sample was composed of eight participants, with five women and three men of which each was been assigned an alias name in line with keeping their identity confidential. Each of the participants were selected because they had a position in which they oversaw students diagnosed as having an ED condition within
the special education context. The participants in the sample made or contributed to decisions in relation to students diagnosed as having an ED condition in east, central, and west Contra Costa County in California. The participants work with students who range from five years to 22 years of age, providing a wide range of potential issues and difference. The experience level of the participants ranged from five years to 27 years of working in special education, specifically with students with ED.

Position titles included Program Directors, Behavior and Clinical Service Providers, Program Specialists, Principals, Vice Principals, and Special Education Teachers.

Details can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3

Details of Sample Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alias</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Years of Education Experience</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juanita</td>
<td>Program Director at a non-public school</td>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>September 01, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dora</td>
<td>Special education teacher at a high school</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>September 05, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theresa</td>
<td>Special education teacher at a high school</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>September 18, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forrest</td>
<td>Vice president of behavior and clinical services</td>
<td>21 years</td>
<td>September 29, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quincy</td>
<td>Special education teacher at a high school</td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>September 28, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentoya</td>
<td>Special day class teacher</td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>October 13, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Octavia</td>
<td>Principal at an elementary school</td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>October 26, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seth</td>
<td>Program specialist in the special education department of a public school</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>October 27, 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Juanita is a Program Director at a non-public school who has 16 years of extensive experience working with students with ED (Juanita, personal communication, September 1, 2018). The campus where Juanita works aims to provide students with ED the supports and tools that they need to successfully integrate into general education classes in public schools (Juanita, personal communication, September 1, 2018).

Dora is a Special Education Teacher with five years of experience in working with students with ED in a high school that operates from within a strategic inclusion model (Dora, personal communication, September 5, 2018). The students with ED who Dora works with have one to two periods of special education support during their day, and general education classes for the remaining periods.

Theresa is a high school special education teacher who has worked with ED students for seven years. She stated that students with ED end up in her class, and on her caseload, because the class that is primarily for students with ED is constantly full of students with the most acute needs (Theresa, personal communication, September 18, 2018). There is only one class for students with ED for the entire district, and that class has a maximum of 15 students (Theresa, personal communication, September 18, 2018). There are kids who are on her caseload that should be in the class designated for students with ED, but there’s just not enough room (Theresa, personal communication, September 18, 2018). Students are usually with her for only one period, but they are block periods lasting 90 minutes (Theresa, personal communication, September 18, 2018).
Forrest is Vice President of Behavior and Clinical Services and has worked for over two decades extensively with students with disabilities who have ED or ED type behaviors, such as aggression, defiance and disruption (Forrest, personal communication, September 29, 2018). His role now is oversight and support of several different campuses where he provides support, training, and consultation, across the board—ranging from kindergarten up to age 22 (Forrest, personal communication, September 29, 2018).

Quincy is a special education teacher at a high school with a total of 10 years as an educator, half of which were working with students who have ED behaviors (Quincy, personal communication, September 28, 2018). For three of the five years of working extensively with the ED population, Quincy worked in a more restrictive setting that was deemed appropriate for students who had severe social-emotional anxiety or other mental health needs (Quincy, personal communication, September 28, 2018).

Sentoya is a high school Special Day Class (SDC) teacher with 15 years of experience; five of which have been working with ED students. The inclusion model at her school site uses supplementary SDC classes where students with ED as well as others, receive counseling and support, and all other classes for ED students at Sentoya’s site are in the general education setting (Sentoya, personal correspondence, October 13, 2018).

Octavia currently works as a Principal at an elementary school, and she has three years of extensive experience working with the ED student population at the junior high level in addition to working with the ED students at the elementary level.
for a number of years. At her school site, the current practice for placement of students with ED into general education classes uses a well-structured process for the transition of the students into the mainstream. This school site prioritizes the integration of students with ED into the general education setting as much as possible. Whether that is full inclusion or partial inclusion is determined by program assignment, and assessed at regular intervals (Octavia, personal communication, October 26, 2018).

Seth is a Program Specialist for the Special Education Department in a public school district (Seth, personal communication, October 27, 2018). He has a 14 years of experience in working with students with disabilities who have ED, or ED type behaviors across a variety of ages in a variety of settings, including non-public schools, community schools, juvenile hall, special education settings and general education settings extensively (Seth, personal communication, October 27, 2018). The practice for placement of students with ED into general education classes in the district where he currently works is based on the least restrictive environment premise, with integration to general education whenever it is possible to do so (Seth, personal communication, October 27, 2018).

**Presentation of the Data**

**Research Question 1**

Research Question 1 asked: *What factors are common among special education case managers when making a decision to mainstream ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes?*
Each of the participants in the sample discussed their process for reviewing ED student histories to determine if a general education placement would be appropriate. The review of the process included assessing the student in terms of self-regulation and self-awareness, assessing legal requirements, and risks to the student and for the general education class. The following subthemes emerged from the discussions with participants in relation to the first question regarding the common factors among case managers: (a) considerations relating to the emotional disability (including the self-awareness and self-regulation of the student with ED and potential for disruption), (b) the law, (c) determining which classes to target for the transition, (d) preparation for the transition, (e) the need for interventions to support the student in the general education classroom, and (f) challenges and risks. It is clear that the participants were supportive of the direction of legislation which impacts the placement of students with ED, however the reality of making such determinations required attention to the details on a case by case bases, as well as the structure of programs and supports that were available.

**Considerations relating to the emotional disability.** There are a number of common factors among special education case managers when making a decision to mainstream ED students from a self-contained classroom to general education classes. Of primary importance is the student’s level of self-awareness and self-regulation and the potential for disruption. Juanita described the general approach followed at her school and others: “Our site's current practice for placement of students with ED into general education classes is we review academic, behavioral,
and social-emotional domain.” Juanita, pointed out that being an informed case manager is vital, and relayed that

It's really important to look at the student as an individual, and look at what has been that student's experience both in school and outside of school, and an intervention would be based on being trauma-informed, and aware of cultural sensitivity.

**Self-regulation and self-awareness.** Many participants highlighted that self-regulation and self-awareness levels were important contributors to success in the general education classroom for students with ED. Self-awareness was also brought up in the context of consulting with the student about their readiness for general education (Theresa). Most participants promoted direct discussion with the student regarding the topic.

Many students are very in tune, so it's important to check-in with them because they are very in tune with what their own needs are. They can tell you, ‘I need a smaller class,’ or ‘I need a shorter day,’ or whatever it is…you need to have those discussions with them and explain things to them. (Juanita)

Quincy agreed, and added that “If you have a student who is relatively self-aware, they will engage in some of the interventions that you want to put into place—and try to help them access their education as much as possible.” Clearly, not all students with ED are going to be at that level in terms of self-regulation and self-awareness, and in fact they may be the opposite. This carries risks of greater student anxiety and greater risks of disruptive behavior.
Disruption posed by the student with ED. The extent to which the student with ED would represent a disruption was another consideration which many participants voiced. Juanita noted that

There are some cases where it is not helpful for a student to be in the gen ed setting because they may be present in the environment, but if they're not engaged in the learning and they are causing disruption for the rest of the students, it's not serving the student with ED well, and it's not serving the other students in the class.

Seth felt similarly, and advised that “if their behavior needs are so great that they need frequent intervention throughout a single period… at that point it's probably beneficial to have them in a smaller setting.”

Disruption by the student with ED had the potential to disrupt the classroom for other students. Seth explained what could happen from time to time when an ED student is Fighting or just provoking others, and it’s harder to maintain them in a general education environment, so fairly often we have students attend a smaller setting where they can get additional behavior support through either mental health assistants or district-type professionals, and specialized academic instruction in their core areas of need, as well as therapy, all kind of rolled into one setting, which is the counseling enriched classroom.

Theresa had seen negative interactions between the ED behaviors and classroom integration, noting that “the biggest one I see, defiance. Not going to class
at all, not doing what the teacher asked, it really disrupts a classroom dynamic and it makes it really hard to support.”

It is clear that students who needed a smaller setting in order to receive the attention that they required were simply not good candidates for the integration into general education classes. Similarly, Quincy felt that a student whose social challenges or anxiety would create obstacles to fitting in, may have challenges when integrating into a general education environment. A further point was simply the fact that supports in the ED environment were limited in terms of the number of students that the typical general education teacher had in the classroom (Seth).

Disruption represents one of the most difficult factors to consider. This is part because disruption to the classroom is not recognized as a reason to retain a student in special education. When a student who does not have a disability is disruptive in the class, this does not create a reason for the child to be placed into a special education setting, for example. At the same time, the operational functioning of the classroom and a school must not be ignored, and the disruptive aspects of the student with ED can often be seen as directly related to their disability. This conception, however, must be assessed against the legal requirements of the education system.

The law. The IDEA authorizes the funding source for nearly seven million SWDs across the nation. Public schools may choose not to adopt the inclusion model that automatically places SWDs into general education streams, but IDEA does create standards and criteria for placement. For example, the law states that SWDs are to be placed in the LRE, to the maximum extent appropriate (Lipkin & Okamoto, 2015). This provides SWDs the opportunity to be educated with their peers. Students with
ED often lack social skills, and many of them tend to exhibit inappropriate behaviors. When Students with ED are integrated and placed into general education classes, it can become problematic if the student with ED is disruptive, and this was recognized in the IDEA (IDEA, 2004). In general, participants had similar reactions in relation to the considerations which IDEA creates for educators making decisions about students with ED and the appropriate setting.

One participant stated that “the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act gives all special educators the primary responsibility to put kids in the least restrictive environment that also represents free and appropriate public education” (Quincy). Forrest also agreed with the general sentiment, and expounded on what all of the participants acknowledged was law by stating that “as much as possible, we should be providing their education with their non-disabled peers.” Educators were very clear on the provisions of legislation that applied in the case of students with ED, and what was expected from them as case managers.

While the placement of students in general education is the ideal, as noted in the common factors considered by case managers, the behavior of the student with ED was often not conducive to class functioning. To that end, difficult decisions needed to be made in relation to the law and its guidance to place children into general education, even while the supports that they needed, and the best result for the general education classroom, might be for the student to remain in the more restrictive special education environment. Despite the seeming oppositional nature of the law in terms of both accommodating students with special needs and promotion of the least restrictive environment, not all respondents found this to be a matter of
difficulty. Forrest explained that “It should be a constant priority when you are serving students separated from their non-disabled peers, to work towards moving them into a less restrictive environment.” In other words, the imperative of IDEA was not that children must be placed in general education, but rather that a continuous process should be undertaken to increase the readiness of a student with ED for the general education environment, and that all steps to achieve this goal should be undertaken to the extent possible. There is no question that this is not always possible, and often the transition occurs gradually beginning with a separate setting leading to periods of time spent in the general education stream.

**Determining classes.** Once the decision has been made to integrate an ED student into a less restrictive environment such as partial or full integration into general education class, there are a number of issues which the case manager must further determine, including the fit with the receiving teacher and division between general education and special education scheduling.

Octavia stated, regarding strategy, that “trying to find the match with the teacher and the type of students who are in that class, it's very important to try to keep the balance.” Dora talked about her collaboration with counselors; she is “overly mindful of personalities of the general education teachers who would be a good fit… as best we can, kind of hand select their schedules; put certain classes in the morning, certain classes in the afternoon. Certain classes that might cause more anxiety, maybe right before or after learning skills (class), just to better prepare the students for those situations” (Dora). Forrest had considerable experience supporting educators in this area, and his counsel was to
Start with one class that maybe this is a student who's really good at math, or this is a student who really likes art or PE, and so, starting with classes where the student is very likely to be successful, and then gradually moving the student into classes that are more demanding.

PE was mentioned more than once as possibly a general education class that students with ED could begin mainstreaming into early on, however one opinion differed. According to Seth,

A lot of people seem to think that PE should be one of the first ones, and I completely disagree, I think it should be like the last one. It's unstructured, it's competitive, it brings out the worst in adolescents, and I do that one last. I try to start with the core classes.

Quincy reported using a similar approach based on the individual strengths and preferences of the student, and noted that “It's a decision that is introduced to the team; once everybody has been considering it for a little bit of time” (Quincy). Once everyone has considered all of the information and circumstances, the team can begin to look at another factor, that being preparation for a successful transition.

Determining which classes to start with for a graduated transition to the general education environment clearly encompassed conflicting approaches, however the commonality in responses was that it was dependent on the student, and the student’s potential for success in that environment. There was also general agreement in relation to starting with a test of the student in the general education environment through the incorporation of general education for part of the day, and it is easy to see why this is one of the best tests of the potential success of the student for making a
more complete transition. Success in the test of general education fit is best supported, however, by preparation.

**Preparation.** Preparation for the transition was an essential aspect, according to several participants, although they focused on different aspects, including familiarity with student history and achievements. The commonality was the need for all stakeholders to be involved, including the student, the parents, and the receiving general education teacher. Octavia expressed the concern that “we don't ever want to just randomly place an ED student like we would a typical student. We don't want to encounter a lot of problems, so we carefully look at what we can do to minimize any conflicts.” Juanita, indicated that “Knowing the student's history, and knowing that they have a trauma history, and the gen ed's ability to be trauma-informed… that is going to be really important for the ED student.” Others, however, indicated the importance of ensuring that the student felt prepared and comfortable with the change. One participant, a program specialist, provided the core of the challenge; students with ED were the least likely to get a diploma, they're the most likely to be incarcerated. Often they don't have any learning disabilities, in fact, more of them than not have above average IQs, however… they're unable to access their skills because of their emotional needs, and that goes back to hierarchy of needs, if you don't feel emotionally safe you can't learn a thing. (Seth)

The importance of the student’s comfort level was reiterated by other participants, and Octavia added that parents or guardians needed to be active
participants in creating that feeling of comfort, and easing the transition. Octavia claimed that things would work best

if we educate parents, and we help them see that our ultimate goal is to mainstream their child, and we let the parent know that they have a very important role in the process, and that we are here to support the student. It's a team decision in determining which class or classes would be best.

It was not always easy to determine when a student was prepared. There was a lot of interest in a tool or instrument that would help to standardize the determination of readiness for educators in this position of making a decision about integration. Forrest reflected that “sometimes we have some criteria we're looking at that will let us know that ‘Johnny’ is ready to go back into a less restrictive environment.” Octavia agreed strongly on this point, and counseled that

We need to go by some sort of instrument that will increase the chance of the student being successful. The starting point is providing evidence as to why we feel the student is ready for this class or that class.

There were several indications that discussions of norms of students in general education and similar preparations were part of transition for integration preparations. Juanita, described that

As they're moving up to that transition, walk them through some scenarios and talk to them about ‘what happens when someone talks about your clothes?’, or ‘what happens when someone steps on your shoes?’… how do you handle those frustrations and navigate that?
Seth provided comments at a different level, in relation to preparation, stating, You don't prepare on a student by student basis, you more prepare on a school basis and you try to build the capacity and plan for educational opportunities for our students with emotional disturbance in order so that we're ready when a student comes to us with needs.

This makes a lot of sense, and clearly it is a benefit to all stakeholders when this occurs. Unfortunately, not all of the case managers have experienced a school that was ready on that level for the transition of students with ED.

Even while the law requires placing students in the least restrictive environment while providing for special needs, there is not accepted standardized criteria. Determining such criteria would help to determine whether the student with ED could appropriately be placed in general education. In the meantime, the interventions and development of the IEP for the student with ED in the general education classroom can be important supports.

**Interventions.** As indicated earlier, students with ED may have comorbidities with learning disabilities or other supportive needs, which can be addressed through an IEP. In terms of intervention, “The IEP meeting process can often be successful in identifying additional supports for the students” (Dora). As Sentoya explained

That may look like a student needing speech therapy or behavior support. Whatever intervention will help aid the student in being successful is important. Many of the students with ED could benefit by having [mental health] counseling, and they should be able to have access to a counselor, and be serviced by a counselor.
Another consideration was English as a Second Language (ESL) status. “If the student happens to be an English Language Learner that is an influence that has to be considered as well” (Quincy). The main focus, however, was the need for continued supports for behavioral and emotional issues. Forrest informed us of what was necessary when he stated that, “some very targeted behavioral and social/emotional intervention is important. Helping the student learn replacement behaviors, so that they have ways to get their needs met in more socially appropriate and more adaptive ways.”

While all educators are responsible for identifying the students who need additional supports, and then determining the best course of action in the form of an IEP, there is a limit to what can be implemented in the average general education classroom with just one teacher. As Seth expressed,

Typically in a general ed setting, in a classroom of 30, I don't want to have more than three or four IEPs in the room without pushing in some additional support for those kids. So class size and peer group, I do consider those things, but sometimes I don't have a choice.

One participant believed that there had to be a great effort, and a willingness to try and try again.

You have to try everything! You have to try everything from counseling to a behavior plan, to incentive systems and maybe incentive tokens and behavior contracts, and different reward systems and privileges. There's a whole host of interventions you can try before giving up on a specific setting like general ed. (Seth)
Seth further stated

My personal philosophy is that systems fail, kids don't fail. If we're getting a negative outcome with a student it's probably because we haven't either built the capacity of our team, or we haven't been creative enough in our approach to address their needs. I have worked in non-public schools, community schools, juvenile hall and general ed settings, and I have seen students with the same types of needs in all of those settings meet success or find failure.

While this was easily stated, of course the team that is trying to support the student may not itself have the supports needed.

Another area of broad agreement was the need for continued psychological supports in the school setting. Dora explained that special education teachers work closely with the psychologist and the counselors, and we have intervention specialists’, so it's definitely a team approach… they can always leave their general ed. class and come to the skill building class, where they can work on something independently, or if they do need support, having the flexibility for multiple settings to get through the day.

While preparations required effort and attention to challenges as barriers, successful integration for the student with ED can still be an achievable goal. As Octavia described,

Through a very well structured program, students with ED can successfully be mainstreamed. The program is very closely monitored. If there is at any point in which the student is not assimilating well, there will have to be adjustments made in accordance with the student.
The general feeling of participants was that the inclusion of students with ED in the general education setting required continued attention to the student’s disability and the extent to which inclusion was resulting in successful integration and accommodation, or whether it was creating major challenges and risks in the classroom.

**Challenges and risks.** The theme of participants which had clear priority across the sample were the challenges and risks perceived during the placement consideration process. These were the (a) risks of harm from aggression or violence, (b) risks to the academic achievement of the student or the classroom, and (c) concerns about the social wellness of the student with ED.

**Risk of harm.** The potential of harm or violence towards themselves or others, or the potential of the student with ED for victimization, was another factor. Theresa specified the first consideration of case managers regarding students with ED is “can the student be in a general education class without hurting someone, themselves or the teacher?”

**Harm to others.** Behavioral patterns that included fighting or provoking fights were also a point for consideration which made integration more challenging and even unsafe for teachers and the other students in the classroom. Dora felt that aggression was relatively rare in the students that she served who were diagnosed with ED or had ED type behaviors, and she said that none of her students with ED had been aggressive or defiant, and that she was more concerned in fact with their inhibition of ability to perform in the general education curriculum as the greater threat.
**Self-harm.** Self-harm is an area which requires attention. Students with ED may or may not pose a threat of harm to themselves, however for those students who do, the general education environment may not be conducive to wellness because of the increased anxiety, and further the severity of issues going beyond what the general education teacher can manage. Quincy was also concerned about the history of the student and the severity of ED, noting that where there was suicidal ideations or attempts, the danger of the transition had to be assessed in terms of whether sufficient supports could be provided to the student. Others noted that in such situations, the student with ED may in fact be a target for bullying and other victimization in the general education environment.

**Victimization of students with ED.** Students who behave or seem different are often targets for bullying, and reactivity can increase the likelihood of being victimized. The study and research of bullying in the school environment has identified several factors that increase the likelihood of being victimized as including (a) reactivity or responsiveness to being provoked, (b) not following the group norms of the school culture, or (c) being identified as different such as the label of special education student (Hymel & Swearer, 2015). Participant Forrest had real concerns that students with ED were targeted for bullying. Forrest indicated his concern about the reactivity of students with ED, noting that

Some of our students with ED end up getting bullied. Either because they're separated, or sometimes because their behavior in the general ed. class sets them apart, and then they end up being the target of bullying. So, that's a
factor, I think, that needs to be considered because that's gonna affect them emotionally.

The best interests of the child can be a difficult concept to adhere to in the context of students with ED who have the, per the law, the right to be in a regular/general education classroom. The general education environment can be a potential stressor, and while more time in general education predicts a greater understanding of social norms and expectations, if the student cannot reasonably be expected to get through the transition and achieve some level of social wellness, then there is a potential danger to the student and to their mental health.

**Risk to academic achievement.** The risk for the student is that the transition to general education can impair, rather than support, academic achievement. This can occur because of the anxiety of the transition or the setting, because they are behind their peers academically, or because of a need for supports that are not available in the general education environment. Juanita also noted that remediation was sometimes needed as a supplement, however she limited the remark with the caution that

If they are three or four grade levels behind, either because they have moved around a lot or have behavior that interferes with accessing curriculum, then they're not going to be able to experience a lot of success in the academic general ed. setting.

The idea that a student who could not keep up academically was a bad fit to general education was unanimous. Despite this, Seth added that it was important to continue to monitor this aspect since “we are going to need to pull them out and do
some remediation if their skills are so far behind, if their essential skills are so far
behind that it would be unfair not to.”

The risk of academic achievement is the one student factor that is the most
easily measured and monitored, and it is therefore not a surprise to learn that it is the
one which case managers can respond to. Case managers seek to reduce problem in
relation to academic achievement in the first place, first by ensuring that the student is
ready academically, and second by providing supports that may include continuing
special education modules in the student’s schedule. Even where there is a good
social fit, a motivated receiving teacher and a student who is equally ready to
participate in general education, a failure to meet minimal academic expectations may
be reason to access to the special education environment for some portion of the day.

**Social wellness.** The social wellness of the student was important to ensuring
the best possible education environment for the student with ED, as well as the
suitability of the student for general education. As described in preparation, after
spending time in special education, there is a need to help students to make the
adjustment to general education by providing information about norms, and this is in
fact an important intervention that many case managers and special education
teachers felt required more structure and support, such as Octavia’s belief that “we
want the students with ED to learn the norm behavior, so they have to be exposed to
it, but before we place them into mainstream classes, we need to equip them… that
has to be explicitly taught.” In other words, the social wellness of students is ideally
reinforced by the general education environment. In fact, social wellness can be a
real point of difficulty for case managers. Students who create disruption, are easily
provoked or reactive, or whose anxiety will increase to a severity that makes them a
target are not ideal candidates for full-inclusion into general education.

**Benefits of exposure to social norms.** Still, creating better environments and
students with ED who were ready to work in general education required exposure,
despite the risk of disruption according to one expert.

I think that's the main thing they are perceived as being disruptive. But, I
think the advantage of having them in general education class is they're more
likely to have positive models of their peers in terms of appropriate behaviors.
(Forrest)

This sentiment was also voiced by Sentoya, who presented the positive impact
of students with ED being integrated into general education classes by saying that
Integrating students with ED with their non-disabled peers allows them to be
more likely to lead a typical lifestyle after high school… so the integration
goes beyond the classroom. It really assists the ED student in his or her
ability to behave appropriately in society.

**Substance abuse and social issues.** Theresa brought up a final point for
consideration in making the determination if general education was a viable option.
Students who were addicted to

drugs and alcohol and things like that can be an issue too depending on what
they're on, or if they are taking something before school. It's really hard,
again as a school, to control substance abuse if it's happening at home or if
they see it in their home, things like that. (Theresa)
While worth considering, there are no easy solutions. On one hand, a recovering addict might benefit from being in a general education classroom, while a student whose supports were impacted by substance abuse at home might not be in such a position. Neither Theresa nor the other participants provided details regarding addiction, yet it is a confounding factor for special education as well as integration.

**Summary of Identified Case Manager Factors**

In terms of special education case manager centered factors, all eight of the participants agreed that on-campus mental health counseling is imperative for the ED students’ success. Seven of the eight participants stated that a confidant, and a well devised de-escalation plan needs to be in place and clearly communicated to all involved. Seven participants stated that capacity building and training should be incorporated for schools that serve ED students especially for receiving teachers, and other staff members who will regularly interact with ED students. Six of the participants stated that explicitly teaching the ED students appropriate behaviors and replacement behaviors for responding to situations was a factor. Five participants stated that some sort of system or tool should be used as a guide to indicate and/or provide evidence of ED students’ readiness to transition into general education classes. Five of the participants stated that parents are integral members of the IEP team, and their buy-in is essential (see Table 4).
Table 4

*Frequency of Identified Factors by Case Managers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Factor Description</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Support</td>
<td>Counseling/accommodation/needs/support</td>
<td>8/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De-escalation</td>
<td>Trusted relationships/outlet to release/check-ins</td>
<td>7/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan/Confidant</td>
<td>Trusted relationships/outlet to release/check-ins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Training</td>
<td>Build capacity/training/biases awareness</td>
<td>7/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicitly Teach Social Skills</td>
<td>Replacement behaviors /role play/modeling</td>
<td>6/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition Readiness Tool</td>
<td>Level system/petition/readiness evidence</td>
<td>5/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Support</td>
<td>Parents as involved team members are integral</td>
<td>5/8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 2**

Research Question 2 asked: What general education teacher-centered factors are considered prior to placing ED students into general education classes?

General education teacher-centered factors that are considered prior to placing students with ED into general education classes for this study were categorized as (a) receiving teacher, (b) preparedness, (c) compassion and community capacity. For a general education placement intervention to be successful, ensuring communication and expectations of the receiving teacher is essential. Dora affirmed the importance of communication by saying

Just having the open lines of communication with the general education teachers, the administration, and the support staff, so that should something come up, everyone has a plan of how to implement support, and how to deescalate a situation or provide a safe space for the student.
Receiving teacher. The receiving general education teacher needs to be prepared and willing to include the student with ED in their classroom. This is not, however, always the case. One participant provided the ideal by saying that I'd prefer to seek out a gen ed. partner that understands how important their role is in supporting the student. I always approach from an individual basis, rather than speak in generalities. Any generalities I could make—it would be the teacher maintains class culture and climate, that's inclusive. (Quincy)

Dora emphasized the importance of

Just including the teachers in the student expectations and guidelines, procedures so that everyone is somewhat on the same page in providing support for that student…We do a lot of teacher conferences with myself or the psychologist just to explain some of the concerns that might come up, so that the teachers feel prepared to accept these students into their classes.

Preparedness. In terms of preparation, common issues were the competency of the teacher, the extent to which the teacher was prepared to manage expected issues in transition and the level of communication between the case manager and the receiving teacher. Juanita, reflected that it was important to be “thinking about the expectations of the general education class if they had one teacher and 26 kids, is their teacher going to be able to handle the disruptive behaviors or whatever it is?”

Seth spoke with scrutiny when he stated that:

I would say that we shouldn't consider receiving teachers beyond—have they received the training to be able to implement these plans? I hope that all of our general education teachers can build the capacity to support our kids and
that I can treat all teachers equally, I don't want to have favorites, and I don't
want to have all my ED kids with one teacher because that's a great teacher,
because that teacher's going to burn out. If we need to build the capacity,
great, let's do that, but placement shouldn't be personality based.

Theresa brought attention to the fact that “There needs to be support for the
general education teacher as well, in order (kind of) to educate them too on how to
deal with students with ED and how to then integrate the students into classrooms.”
It appears that sometimes those supports including an understanding of diversity and
requirements of legislation such as IDEA. Quincy and Octavia conveyed that
teachers in general education often were biased against students with ED, including
labeling and negative expectations. Octavia explained a harsh reality by saying
“Unfortunately, a lot of teachers have the perception of, ‘Oh, the student is a troubled
kid, he's going to be disruptive, he's going to destroy my class.” Octavia further
noted that it went beyond the competency of the receiving teacher to whether they
were compassionate towards students with ED. Juanita, expressed something similar
when she said that “sometimes, teachers have preconceived notions of how the
student is going to perform or behave in their classroom before even working with the
students.” Octavia added that

There are a lot of teachers who don't want to be bothered with students with
ED. We need the teachers to realize that not only does this student have a
right to be taught in the general education setting amongst their peers, but
these are kids.
There was a general belief among case managers that teachers needed more help to have the capacity and willingness, but also to realize their responsibility and expectations in relation to receiving a student with ED. Seth conveyed the following criticism of giving up too easily, or not being open to students with ED in the general education system, when he said that

I have found these factors to support the successful integration of students with ED into general education classes because when a child has a rapport with the case manager, with the teacher, when the child is well-prepared, when the special ed. teacher is well-prepared, the receiving teacher is well-prepared, these all help lead to success.

Theresa shed some light on what happens in a lot of cases by stating

Often times kids are placed in general ed. and then teachers find out that the students have all these issues and they don't even know how to work with them. There needs to be support for the general education teacher in order to educate them on how to deal with the kids and how to then integrate them into their classroom.

According to Sentoya

Sometimes an accommodation may be simply allowing the ED student to have a break when they need a break, or allowing them to walk when they just need to take a walk. If the ED student is requesting to take a break or take a walk, it should be granted.

As Forrest described, “general education teachers need to be prepared to accommodate students with ED.”
Finally, the level of communication between the case manager and the receiving teacher was extremely important. This provided the chance to transfer specific information about the student as well as knowledge about the techniques that have been used, success factors and also the community contacts that the teacher may need in order to reach out for supports. As Seth explained, “as much as possible I'll notify the teachers, I'll share their accommodations, modifications say, ‘This is the behavioral plan,’ I'll give them all a contact list of all the players in the kid's life. Any relevant background.”

The preparedness of the receiving teacher does not occur in isolation, and it can be assumed that factors at the school level can support or undermine the preparation and supports that a general education teacher receiving a student with ED may have access to. The case manager is responsible for building the bridge through meetings, communication and other actions that can help to ensure that the student has a successful transition.

**Compassion.** One factor that some participants felt strongly about was the compassion of the receiving teacher. This is one that can be difficult in terms of practical implementation, since teachers are not necessarily compassionate, and not necessarily very open to receiving students with ED into their classes. Despite this, it was nearly unanimous as an identified critical factor.

Octavia specified that “It is so important for receiving teachers to have compassion because the students feel it… they need to feel as though even when they take a step back, they still have people working with them.” When describing teacher-centered factors, Quincy provided a full vision by acknowledging that
if I were trying to describe general characteristics that I would look for in that
kind of teacher, it would be a willingness to communicate, an understanding
that it is going to take a little bit of extra time, a little bit of extra work on their
part to support the student, has a sincere desire to serve the ED student as they
would serve any other student.

On one hand, particularly in light of responsibilities and requirements of
educators, one would assume that such behavior should be expected of the receiving
general education teacher; on the other hand, the realities of class size, other students
and their accommodations, as well as bad experiences of general education teachers
with students with ED can all result in a less than welcoming experience for the
student in transition.

Theresa voiced some practical aspects of compassion, including “having a
safe space where a student can get away, or also having multiple adults that the
student is comfortable confiding in and talking to, I think that's really important.”

Compassion is not a typical competency of teachers, but case managers try to
identify the teachers who have compassion because they believe that it creates a
better environment for the student with ED transitioning to the general education
class. There are of course concerns at the broader level, including some teachers
having all of the students with ED, creating potential greater burdens on these
teachers. Ideally, all teachers are motivated and prepared to accept students with ED
and other students with disabilities who are making the transition to the
regular/general education classroom environment.
Community capacity. Community capacity was an ongoing theme in responses, particularly in relation to preparation and transition. According to Sentoya,

Students need to feel like they are a part of the school community, and everyone has a hand in that. It can be the cafeteria worker, the school security, the principal, the secretaries, the counselors, the teachers, it’s everyone's responsibility to make students feel like they are a part of the school community.

Parental involvement is a very relevant consideration in determining whether a student is prepared to make the transition to generation education. As Dora points out

It's important to kind of judge parent involvement for acceptance or parent denial of the concerns that are attached to a student diagnosed with ED. More so just having the open lines of communication with the gen ed teachers, the administration, the support staff, so that should something come up, everyone has a plan of how to implement support and how to deescalate a situation or provide a safe space for the student.

Summary of Issues Relating to the Receiving General Education Teacher

All eight participants agreed that the most important general education teacher-centered factor for ED students to successfully transition into general education classes was effective communication between everyone who will regularly work with the ED student regarding his/her needs and how to best work with him/her. Seven of the participants stated that general education teachers, and all staff must work to create a welcoming culture and climate. Seven of the participants stated it is
necessary for the general education teacher, and school staff to create emotional safety and have compassion for ED students and their needs. Six of the participants stated that the demographics of the class, the class workload and clear expectations are all important factors to consider when placing ED students into general classes (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Frequency of Identified Factors for Receiving Teachers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Factor Description</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear Communication</td>
<td>Trials/Plan/ Communication/Preparation</td>
<td>8/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Community</td>
<td>Culture and climate embrace by everyone in school</td>
<td>7/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Safety</td>
<td>Compassion/ No bullying/Welcoming environment</td>
<td>7/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Class size/Peers/Expectations</td>
<td>6/8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 3**

Research Question 3 asked: “What ED student-centered factors are considered prior to placing ED students into general education classes?”

Thematic content in relation to student-centered factors which drove decision making in relation to general education placement was generally in response to the third question in relation to what should be considered regarding personal factors of students with ED in making such a change. Three themes emerged, those being (a) academic factors, (b) behavioral factors, and (c) student confidence in terms of preparation and state of readiness.

**Academic strengths and weaknesses of the student with ED.** The students’ level of academic achievement was a major consideration, but students were divided.
For some, their disability had interfered with their instruction, or otherwise had impeded progress. Theresa noted that of these, “the biggest one I see is attendance. Whether it's anxiety or depression they aren't coming to school, so if they are missing all the instruction, that immediately puts them at a loss.” Dora made a similar statement, that

the biggest challenge to that is just the amount and the rate of being absent.

All of the students I've had with ED are chronically, chronically absent, and so that makes returning to the general education classes very challenging and difficult.

As described by others earlier, an important consideration was that students with ED were just as likely as any other student to have learning disabilities, resulting in issues of co-morbidity (Forrest).

Many educators described that students with ED “are very capable academically. They are on the level with their peers” (Sentoya). This defined the student with ED that was more likely to have a successful transition, because, as Sentoya described,

It is very important to make sure that the ED student can keep up with the general ed. peers, whether it's with support or without support. They have to be able to keep up with their peers. Otherwise, you may see some behaviors as a result of their inability to keep up.

**Behavioral strengths and weaknesses of the student with ED.** There was general agreement by participants which is summarized by Juanita, who noted that in relation to behavior and making the decision to integrate,
it's really just looking at the level of intensity, the frequency, the causes or the potential harms of those behaviors, and having systematic supports in place to address them. Can those behaviors be effectively managed in the general education classes?

One of the most important points, however, in relation to the behavior of ED students, was voiced by just one participant, who said that

Behavior is not an eligibility criterion for special education. Behavior is something that all students can exhibit at different points in time, and we need to build the capacity of our teachers to address it in the general education setting. (Seth)

Forrest felt that the behavioral issues were correlated with academic issues, and that this could result in an unsuccessful integration, stating that

it's because of their behaviors and missing school and things like that, related to the ED, that they are significantly behind their same age peers in terms of academics… in a general education classroom, sometimes that results in the students just falling further and further behind.

Quincy felt that it was very student specific, in that “there are students who… have difficulty wading through other powerful emotions like anger happiness, sadness, so those behavioral things can manifest in the classroom, and sometimes it's positive, and sometimes it's negative.” Ultimately, Quincy felt that assessment should focus on the non-typical behaviors of the student with ED, and these had to be looked at in the context of whether the student would be accepted by classmates.
Poor self-care and social skills, for example, required caution in terms of integrating a student with ED. Quincy said that

If you're being asked to interact with your peers and your peers don't want to interact with you, because you either say things that are off-putting and out of place for the situation, or maybe you're not hygienic enough and people don't wanna share personal space with you, those are behavioral issues besides the communication one.

**Student preparation and perception of readiness.** Students need to be in a state of readiness prior to any transition to the general education environment, including awareness of the potential for such a transition and what it would entail, and motivation for the change to be successful.

**Student expectations and perception of readiness.** The ideal preparation plan results in the student also perceiving themselves to be ready for the transition, including expectations in the classroom socially and academically. Quincy also voiced the need for student preparation saying “so the student knows what the expectations are, talking to the parents, talking to the whole IEP team and making sure that everybody's expectations align.” Similarly, Juanita said

Set realistic expectations with the students, and with the family that the student is coming from, in terms of what's that going to look like, looking at both the positive side of returning to the gen ed. setting, and also look at some of the struggles… Skills have to be taught very systematically, to help them work through whatever struggles they're working through, so that they can tune into those things.
Sentoya added that
Part of the preparation for placing an ED student into a general education class is to make sure the ED student is not only receptive or has a positive attitude about entering the gen ed. class, they also have to understand what is expected of them, so one way to prepare the ED student would be to explain what would be expected of him or her, what the rules and the expectations are in terms of the workload.

Teaching the student with ED about the expectations and social norms in the general education social environment was a core issue in preparation for more than half of the participants.

**Anxiety and self-sabotage.** Self-sabotage, anxiety and regressive behavior following the suggestion of integration into the general education setting often indicated that the student did not feel prepared to make the transition. Juanita described this anecdote in relation to a student with ED: “After he knew that we were beginning to have those conversations, we saw him self-sabotage and he began to get into arguments, and was refusing to do work... He really just spiraled.” In some cases, the student feels positively towards a transition to general education, but then experiences ambivalence as the change becomes more real. Said a high school level SDC teacher,

It's really important for the ED student to be able to talk about being placed in the general ed. class because sometimes we see, as the time nears for them to go in the general education class, they start to have anxiety… when the time comes, they have a change of heart. (Sentoya)
A similar sentiment was voiced by Juanita, who relayed her experience with students engaging in self-sabotage as the deadline neared for the transition to general education integration. In her opinion,

I have seen more often than not that students will have some sort of regression, a major regression. We'll start seeing inappropriate behaviors resurface, being disrespectful towards staff members, getting into fights with peers, no frustration tolerance, work refusal… Some of it is out of being scared and having anxiety, some of it is out of fear. They want to leave, but they don't really want to leave, so rather than saying, ‘I really don't want to leave,’ they begin acting out. (Juanita)

Not all children were meant for integration into the general education setting, and specialized contexts existed to help support the education of students who had needs that could not be met in mainstream education (Quincy). Forrest provided this from his personal experience: “And then, as they're getting closer, maybe we have a setback… often related to some anxiety.”

**Expectations of setbacks in transition.** The point that was being made across several interviews was the fact that anxiety of the student with ED about the transition should be expected, given the nature of ED. This anxiety predicted that there would be some issues, and rigid criteria for making the transition would prevent students from moving into that less restrictive environment by not providing for the intensity of anxiety that might be experienced by the student during the transition time. Forrest advised that “there are going to be, very likely, some setbacks. We need to address what's behind those setbacks and keep moving forward rather than going back to
square one.” It was clear that this was a point of frustration for case managers, since it represented a preventable potential challenge to successful transition, particularly since a child with a great deal of readiness and motivation could be challenged by minor setbacks, resulting in a return to special education and potentially a feeling of failure or distress. As Juanita continued the story of one student before a planned transition, it was clear that for many students with ED, there have been failed attempts to transition into the general education setting, and these too can have an impact on the student’s readiness. Repeated attempts to transition a student can be exhausting and emotional for the student, and this too becomes an influence on the next attempt. On the other hand, without persistence, a successful transition to general education may not happen at all.

**Summary of Student Perception**

There is no question that social role modeling is important for students with ED. As Juanita stated,

It's good to have peer models of neurotypically-developing students and how they're handling social and emotional skills, but a student has to be in a place to be able to receive that information and pick up on social cues in that type of setting.

The preparation for transition to general education includes all stakeholders, and the student with ED is very much part of the team that will determine the success of the plan.

All of the participants agreed that academic ability was definitely an ED student-centered factor that should be considered prior to placing ED students into
general education classes, because if the ED student is not able to keep pace with peers, he/she may begin to exhibit inappropriate behavior. All of the participants stated that behavior was a factor that should be strongly considered because although the ED student has a right to be in the least restrictive environment, if his/her behavior is continuously disruptive and interferes with other students being able to learn after supports have been exhausted, then perhaps a smaller setting is a more appropriate setting for him/her. Six participants stated that the often times the ED student is able to express his/her needs and those are definitely factors that should be considered when a student is advocating for himself/herself. Also, six of the participants stated that level of preparedness and the confidence level of the ED student is a factor that should be considered prior to placing the ED student into a general education class (see Table 6).

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Factor Description</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Ability</td>
<td>Strengths/ability/remediation</td>
<td>8/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>Ability to self-regulate/self-monitoring/coping</td>
<td>8/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-advocacy</td>
<td>Self-advocacy/ability to express needs</td>
<td>6/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Self-esteem/anxiety</td>
<td>6/8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

According to all participants in this study, successfully transitioning students with ED or ED type behaviors into the general education setting takes a lot more than simply opening a class to integration. In order for successful transitions to occur, case managers in unison with the IEP team members take several things into consideration. In determining if general education placement is deemed safe and
appropriate, the process begins with adhering to legal requirements, assessing the student’s ability to self-regulate, assessing the student’s academic ability, anticipating challenges and calculating risks to the ED student, and everyone in the general education setting. All participants stressed the importance of communication and preparation for the transition from a more restrictive environment into a least restrictive environment of a general education class, with access to counseling, and appropriate interventions to support the ED student in the general education setting. All participants agreed that ED students should—to the fullest extent possible—be integrated into general education classes, after a number of things are taken into consideration, as it relates to the emotional condition of the ED student, his/her self-awareness, and his/her potential to exhibit behaviors that disrupt the learning environment. Through the IEP process, a well-informed IEP team, which includes parents and (when appropriate) students, develop a program to accommodate the ED student’s needs based on a case-by-case review of the ED student’s history, his/her strengths and available programs and supports.
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS

Introduction

Chapter V is the conclusion of this qualitative comparative case study analyzing the perspectives, feelings, and beliefs of eight special education case managers who work with students who have been diagnosed as ED, or exhibit ED type behaviors in Contra Costa County, California. A summary of the research along with findings, conclusions and recommendations is presented. The significance of this research is that through the identification of factors considered when mainstreaming ED students, policy makers and educators will have additional information to aid them in developing and implementing strategies for successful mainstreaming. The chapter ends with recommendations for further research.

The following conclusions are limited to generalizing the findings of this sample population, and making an inference that findings are applicable to all case managers across America who are mainstreaming ED students into the general education classes. Yet the recommendations are relevant and may be helpful to those who work with ED students.

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The findings conclusions, and recommendations for this study are presented by research question. They are presented in this format to directly align each finding with the conclusions and recommendations derived from it. At the end of the section for each research question the major recommendations for that research question are provided.
Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked: What factors are common among special education case managers when making a decision to mainstream ED students from a SCC into general education classes?

Finding 1. In terms of special education case manager centered factors, all eight of the participants agreed that on-campus mental health counseling is a factor for the ED students’ success.

Conclusion 1. All of the participants agreed that on campus mental health was a factor for ED students’ success. Despite one in five people in the world having encountered some sort of emotional illness during some point in their life, and just as many adults living in the United States with a mental illness, 46.6 million in 2017, according to the National Institute of Mental Health, discussing mental health is still taboo.

Recommendation 1. It is imperative that campuses where ED students attend school have full-time trained therapeutic counselors readily available. Case managers should work to gain the assistance of the parents and staff in supporting and encouraging the ED student to participate in mental health counseling, so that the students will be able to embrace counseling as prescribed in their IEP.

Finding 2. Seven out of the eight participants stated that training and knowledge to develop a well thought out de-escalation plan was a factor.

Conclusion 2. Often teachers and aides who directly support the student have little, if any training on how to work with ED students. This research supports conclusions of Hargreaves and Walker (2014) - it is important for the teachers to have
special learning tools, learning style, and lesson plans to assist ED students. Participants believe that teachers and staff are not adequately trained, and have not been provided with the necessary support to effectively work with ED students, which coincides with what was published by the Council for Exceptional Children (2001) that there is high turnover, burnout and attrition due to stress associated with poor teaching conditions for teachers who work with special needs populations.

**Recommendation 2.** Providing a sufficient number of trained staff to work with ED students would permit the development of well thought out preventative measures and de-escalation techniques that could be carried out in an effort to keep everyone safe.

**Finding 3.** Seven of the eight participants agreed that a trusted relationship between ED students and an adult was a factor. ED students’ need to have an adult who they can trust and confide in.

**Conclusion 3.** It can take a long time for an ED student to gain the trust of an adult, and with a high turnover of staff who works directly with ED students, developing trusting relationships can be difficult. Check-ins have been proven to be effective in reducing inappropriate behavior (Campbell & Anderson, 2011). In the event the ED student needed an outlet to release, there needs someone who the ED student could turn to. This can be quite challenging as the number of ED students in the SCCs often exceed eight, preventing staff from allocating a sufficient amount of time to build a rapport with ED students.

**Recommendation 3.** Provide greater support to teachers in an effort to retain them, so they can build trusting relationships with ED students and have check-ins
this way the ED students can share their feelings and receive open honest feedback, which could prove vital in preventing crises.

**Finding 4.** Seven of the eight participants stated that another factor is capacity building via training for all staff to acknowledge their biases, understand more about ED as a disability, and learn how to effectively work with ED students.

**Conclusion 4.** If school staff had a better understanding of emotional disturbance, schools would be better equipped to support ED students and have better responses to any challenges that would arise.

**Recommendation 4.** Adequate training would provide teachers with the confidence that is necessary to accommodate the ED student and keep everyone safe. Leaders should respond to building capacity minimally by providing in-service training to all members of the school community, and more extensive trainings those who work directly with ED students on a regular basis.

**Finding 5.** A factor that six out of eight participants mentioned was explicitly teaching appropriate behavior to the ED student prior to transitioning, as that would increase the likelihood of successfully mainstreaming.

**Conclusion 5.** If ED students have never witnessed or been exposed to appropriate responses for when they are aggravated, or experiencing a stressful situation, by practicing appropriate responses ahead of time, the ED students’ will be better prepared to handle circumstances that could otherwise result in negative outcomes.
“If a child doesn’t know how to read, we teach.
If a child doesn’t know how to swim, we teach.
If a child doesn’t know how to multiply, we teach.
If a child doesn’t know how to drive, we teach.
If a child doesn’t know how to behave, we…..
teach?….. punish?

Why can’t we finish the last sentence as automatically as we do the others?”

-Tom Herner (NASDE) Counterpoint 1998 p. 2

**Recommendation 5.** ED students can be taught refusal skills, de-escalation techniques, and a variety of ways to respond appropriately. By anticipating what may trigger ED students’ they can be taught appropriate responses through role play or another age appropriate activity such as playing with puppets where various scenarios are acted out and appropriate responses are practiced.

**Finding 6.** All five of the participants who worked extensively with ED students (at one point or another), stated that having some sort of transition readiness instrument to measure or indicate through evidence that the ED student (with accommodations) would be a good prospect for being successful in the general education class was a factor.

**Conclusion 6.** The instrument would be utilized to motivate the ED student to develop skills and competencies in line with expectations for the general education class and in life. The instrument would monitor academic, behavioral and social abilities with and without accommodations, as well as establish clear consequences for behavior. ED students would earn points or have points deducted based their
actions. This would increase the ED students’ ability to self-monitor, and be held accountable for their actions. The ED students would simultaneously have direct instruction curriculum presented to them relative to self-regulation. Components of the curriculum would include ED students understanding when they feel any sense of anxiety, or when they are becoming aggravated and they need to take a break. Once the ED students understand their needs, they will be able to advocate for themselves and express how they would be best supported. The challenge would be that a levels system may take a while to progress through, and IDEA rights state that SWDs need to be educated in the least restricted environment. The challenge with starting students in the least restrictive environment without having established that they have met some criteria for mainstream readiness, may result in disruption of learning for the ED student, as well as the non-disabled students in the class.

**Recommendation 6.** It is important to understand and take into consideration, the ED student’s level of confidence, as well as their feelings regarding transitioning into general education class(es). This information would provide evidence of the ED students’ ability to work independently, the propensity to be responsible, ability to keep up with peers, behave appropriately, and have positive social interactions. The IEP team would determine the accommodations the student would need in order to increase the chance of being successful in the general education setting.

**Finding 7.** Five of the eight participants stated that parental involvement is a factor in successful mainstreaming. Parental involvement is a factor as parents playing a vital role during the process of mainstreaming, as parent attitudes regarding
the process of mainstreaming can determine whether or not ED students succeed or fail.

**Conclusion 7.** Parents can encourage ED students to attend school, and participate in counseling, as they work with the teachers to successfully mainstream their child. Parents can also benefit from training that should be available to teachers especially around replacement behavior and evidence based practices such as restorative justice and Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS).

**Recommendation 7.** Parents should be considered a vital part of the IEP team as they are able to provide input, and can offer useful assistance and advice, as they are familiar with the needs of their children.

**Summary Research Question 1**

When staff and parents work together to provide the ED students with adequate emotional support in the form of counseling, and have a well thought out de-escalation plan, after explicitly teaching ED students appropriate behavior, in addition to using a tool to determine when an ED student is more likely to find success in a general education class, an ED student will have the greatest chance of successfully mainstreaming into general education class(ess). ED students need to be able to check-in with a trusted adult regularly, and this could be accomplished by building capacity via training, as training would allow the perceptions of teachers and other staff to be positively associated with teaching ED students. Explicitly teaching ED student’s appropriate behaviors and how to respond in certain situations in addition to having a readiness tool to use as a guide to measure when ED students would likely be successful in the general education class are also factors.
Major Recommendations for Research Question 1

- It is imperative that campuses where ED students attend school have full-time trained therapeutic counselors readily available.

- Personnel who work directly with ED students should incorporate specific behavioral skills in the daily curriculum designed to allow ED students to succeed in general education classes. These skills should include self-regulation, refusal skills, and de-escalation techniques.

- A readiness checklist should be developed based on the findings from this research to assist personnel in determining ED students’ readiness for participation in general education classes. A possible checklist “READY PAGE” based on the finding of this research can be found as Appendix I. The acronym READY PAGE can be used as a tool to discuss the likelihood that an ED student, or a student who exhibits ED type behaviors will find success in the general education class. During a meeting, IEP team members should present information and data that has been collected on the student, and use that evidence coupled with observations to come to an agreement on the rate that a student will receive in each category of the READY PAGE. The READY PAGE has categories that considers the student’s ability to self-regulate emotions, thoughts and behavior; the student’s ability to adjust to various circumstances with emotional intelligence by reducing or managing stress, having the ability to focus, calming themselves and using executive functioning for higher order thinking, goal setting, and reducing ADHD symptoms; the student’s
ability to keep up with neuro-typically developing peers (academically or vocationally); the student’s level of confidence, determination and desire to succeed in the general education class; and the use of psychosocial and life skills, which includes communicating effectively, having empathy, and interpersonal attitude. Yes factor input can come from anyone in the school community including SCC peers during group meetings if applicable. During group students are encouraged to point out positive things, and if something noteworthy is stated about the student being scored, it can be included in the discussion for determining the Yes factor rate. The READY PAGE should be reviewed two weeks prior to any progress report, or report card being distributed, so that “ready” students can be mainstreamed into general education class(es) at the beginning of the new marking period.

If an ED student receives eight points out of a possible score of 20, the READY PAGE would indicate where the student and staff could look to as areas of focus for improvement. If the student scores 10, it suggests that the student should be able to find some level of success in the general education class, and the process should begin for mainstreaming the student from the self-contained class to a general education class, with support for continued growth in lower scoring areas. Scores 11 and above indicate that the student has demonstrated his/her ability to be in the general education setting by exhibiting appropriate behavior more often
than not. The higher the score, the more likely it is that the ED student will find success when mainstreamed into general education class(es).

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked: *What are general education teacher-centered factors are considered when mainstreaming ED students from a SCC into general education classes?*

**Finding 1.** All eight participants agreed that the most important general education teacher-centered factor for ED students to successfully transition into general education classes was effective communication.

**Conclusion 1.** It is extremely important to maintain on-going communication between home and everyone who will regularly work with the ED student. Communication is vital, as information should be shared and linked, so that the entire IEP team is aware and prepared on how to best support the ED student. When members of the team have a thorough understanding of the needs of the ED student, and information about various interventions are documented, the team can take the information and develop ways on how to best support the ED student in successfully mainstreaming. Mainstreaming ED students without appropriate plans and adequate campus modifications may not be effective.

**Recommendation 1.** Team members need to be united and communicate effectively as communication is crucial when supporting ED students. The contact information and the preferred way to be contacted should be established, recorded and update as necessary, so that the team members will be coherent and informed of
any recent and pertinent information. Positive gems or information should also be eagerly shared.

**Finding 2.** Seven of the participants stated that climate is a factor, and that general education teachers, plus all staff must work to create welcoming culture. School climate is a factor as when positive relationships are fostered, and students are supported socially and emotionally, in addition to being supported academically, students are afforded greater opportunities to be successful (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004). When students, especially students of color, are properly supported and held to high standards, they have significantly better outcomes (Klem & Connell, 2004).

**Conclusion 2.** Successfully mainstreaming ED students into general education class(es) has a lot to do with teacher attitude. LeRoy and Simpson (1996) stress that a teachers’ attitude is a direct reflection of their competence. Teacher-student relationships are a factor as the foundation for all other aspects of classroom management.

**Recommendation 2.** Train teachers who work with ED students to teach engaging lessons in highly structured environments, as ED students tend to respond better to structure and classroom management where procedures and rules are clearly established and have consequences. Provide positive feedback and praise as ED students, as they tend to respond well to positive reinforcement, praise, and over-all good rudimentary teaching principles. Become familiar with a committee called the school Conditions and Climate Work Group (CCWG) that was formed to explore best practices regarding climate, so students will have a greater opportunity to be successful. Become familiar with a useful apparatus—the California School
Dashboard, that holds the state accountable, as they are able to assess and keep track of school climate.

**Finding 3.** Seven of the participants stated it is necessary for the general education teacher, and school staff to create emotional safety and have compassion for ED students and their needs.

**Conclusion 3.** Students who do not feel emotionally safe often prefer not to attend school. Some districts have interventions designed to decrease the amount of time students are away from the learning environment. One such intervention is having a wellness center on campus where direct services are offered for students experiencing emotional difficulties that impact their school attendance and access to learning. A student can go to the wellness center for a short period of time to get support and then return to class opposed to missing the entire day of school because they are having emotional difficulties. ED students are often cognitively able to keep up with their peers, however if they are often absent because of emotional difficulties, suspension or any other reason, they will lose instructional time and fall behind. Students who fall behind their peers can result in the student dropping out of school, becoming entangled in the justice system, and ultimately being a threat to public safety.

**Recommendation 3.** Gather information for Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) regarding school strengths, and areas where improvement is needed. Get information from the CDE to implement evidence based practices such as having wellness centers on campus, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), and family
engagement to reduce bullying, and harassment, as well as implement evidence based behavioral strategies such as PBIS and Restorative Justice.

**Finding 4.** Six of the participants stated that demographics of the class, the class workload and expectations are all important factors to consider when placing ED students into general classes.

**Conclusion 4.** Coming from a SCC where the student to staff ratio may be as low as 1 staff to 3 students and being in a general education class where there may only be 1 teacher for 30 students is a huge difference in the amount of time a teacher can allocate to a student who needs some sort of support. As a student in a general education class, students for the most part are expected to be able to keep up with their peers with little or no assistance outside of modeled instruction.

**Recommendation 4.** When mainstreaming an ED student into a general education class, consider the size of the class and opt for a class with fewer students. Encourage the ED students in general education classes to take detailed notes especially when they don’t understand, so that it will inform whomever they get support from. If ED students are mainstreamed for the majority of the day and have the SCC for a couple of periods, the student can get support with the assignment while they are in the SCC without being embarrassed, and receive counseling services during that time as well.

**Summary Research Question 2**

In terms of teacher-centered factors, on-going effective communication is imperative between everyone who will regularly work with the Ed student. Teacher attitude is directly related to the level of training the teacher has to work with ED
students. It is important for the climate of the school to be welcoming and inclusive for ED students and all students to feel comfortable. It is important for the ED student to feel safe, otherwise they may not want to come to school and fall behind their classmates and end up dropping out of school and increasing the probability that they will be involved in the criminal justice system. When considering mainstreaming ED students into general education classes, consider the number of students in the class as an ED student coming from an SCC may not be used to having such a high student to teacher ratio after being in an SCC for a length of time.

**Major Recommendations for Research Question 2**

- Effective communication among IEP team members is crucial when supporting ED students. The IEP team members need to be coherent and informed of any recent and pertinent information.

- ED students tend to respond better to high structure and classroom management where procedures and rules are clearly established and have consequences. ED students, also respond well to positive reinforcement, praise, and over-all good rudimentary teaching principles.

**Research Question 3**

Research Question 3 asked: *What ED student-centered factors are considered prior to mainstreaming ED students from a SCC into general education classes?*

**Finding 1.** All of the participants agreed that academic ability was definitely an ED student-centered factor that should be considered prior to placing ED students into general education classes.
**Conclusion 1.** ED students who are not able to keep pace with their peers, may begin to exhibit inappropriate behavior. When an ED student is not able to keep up with their neuro-typical peers, it may result in them appearing defiant because they are not being productive, or it may lead to them misbehaving to disguise their inability to perform at the level of their peers.

**Recommendation 1.** Assess ED students’ abilities, strengths, and weaknesses in order to gain an understanding of what would be the best fit when mainstreaming them into classes, is curtail for the ED students’ success in keeping up with their peers. If ED students are able to find some level of success in the general education setting, it can boost their self-esteem and confidence, and perhaps prevent them from having to act out in an effort to mask their shortcomings. Take advantage of the time that the ED students spend in the SCC with a smaller staff to student ratio to work with them on remedial skills that cannot be addressed in the general education classes. Students show significant gains and are able to lessen the gap between them and their peers when working in small groups as the SCC would afford.

**Finding 2.** All of the participants stated that behavior was a factor that should be strongly considered prior to placing an ED student into mainstream classes.

**Conclusion 2.** Although ED students have a right to be in the least restrictive environment, if ED students are not able to self-regulate and behavior is continuously disruptive interfering with other students’ ability to learn, after all supports have been exhausted, the IEP team may decide that perhaps a smaller setting such as a SCC is a more appropriate environment for them.
Recommendation 2. Assess a students’ ability to self-regulate and follow the procedures prior to mainstreaming. Take advantage of opportunities to work with ED students in the SCC, and provide them with counseling and guidance on how to behave appropriately. Through an emotional intelligence teaching process, ED students can learn how to express their needs. Positively reinforce their appropriate behavior, so that they can eventually return to the general education setting without exhibiting overtly defiant or disruptive behavior.

Finding 3. Six participants stated a factor is the ED students’ ability to express their needs and advocate for themselves.

Conclusion 3. ED students should be taught how to advocate for themselves and inform teachers and others as to their needs in order to feel safe and be successful. Self-advocacy is powerful and whenever it is appropriate for ED students to be a part of their IEP meetings, they should be able to sit at the table with the IEP team and express what supports they feel they need in order to be successful.

Recommendation 3. The goal is for the ED student to be self-sufficient and able to lead an independent life where they are mentally and emotionally stable functioning members of society. In order for ED students to find success in this, we need to teach them to understand their needs, and how to navigate through life with their disability. Whenever appropriate, in addition to writing ED students IEP goals related to self-regulation, we need to move towards including goals that help instil in the importance of self-advocacy, self-efficacy, and decision-making.
**Finding 4.** Six of the participants stated that level of preparedness and confidence level of the ED student is a factor that should be considered prior to placing the ED students into a general education class.

**Conclusion 4.** There are times when decisions are made regarding students that bring them anxiety and leads them to an inability to find success in what could otherwise be a successful transition. When ED students have demonstrated their ability to self-regulate and adhere to rules and follow procedures they are often deemed “ready” to be mainstreamed. A number of participants have shared that they have witnessed ED students doing exceptionally well, and then reverting back to inappropriate behaviors, as the time nears for the IEP team to consider mainstreaming them into general education classes. Reasons for the regression may include but are not limited to—a history of not being successful in the general education setting, or the ED student not willing to be uncomfortable in an unfamiliar environment.

**Recommendation 4.** When appropriate (in terms of age and mental ability) let the ED students know that they have voice and they are a part of the decision-making process as it is them who will be directly affected. We should work on emotional intelligence and self-esteem, so that they become comfortable in environments where they may not be comfortable. Role playing or mock situations could prove quite effective in teaching appropriate behavior and response.

**Summary of Research Question 3**

Student-centered factors include the academic ability of the ED student as when the ED students are not able to keep up with their peers, they more be inclined to misbehave rather than look as if they are unable to complete the task. The
behavior of the ED student is also a factor as if the behavior of the ED student is such that it is interrupting the learning environment to where others in the class are missing instruction, then perhaps a more restrictive environment where the ED student could receive support with counseling and positive reinforcement is more appropriate. ED students should not only receive support with self-regulation, but with encouragement to advocate for themselves. It is also important for the ED student to have confidence and high self-efficacy to be successful in mainstream general education classes and in life.

**Major Recommendations for Research Question 3**

- It is important to mainstream ED students into general education classes where they are able to keep up with their peers, as when they are not able to keep pace with their peers, they may exhibit inappropriate behavior to disguise their inability to perform at the level of their peers.

- ED students have a right to be in the least restrictive environment, but if their behavior is continuously disruptive interfering with other students’ ability to learn after all supports have been exhausted, a SCC may be the least restrictive environment for them.

**Summary**

Nationwide there are more than 335,000 students (about 6% of students with disabilities) identified as having an emotional disturbance (Samuels, 2018). According to all participants in this study, successfully mainstreaming students with ED or ED type behaviors into the general education setting takes a lot more than simply opening a class to integration. In order for successful transitions to occur,
case managers in unison with the IEP team members take several things into consideration. In determining if general education placement is deemed safe and appropriate, the process begins with adhering to legal requirements, assessing the student’s ability to self-regulate, assessing the student’s academic ability, anticipating challenges and calculating risks to the ED student, and everyone in the general education setting. All participants stressed the importance of on-going effective communication and preparation for the transition from a more restrictive environment into the least restrictive environment of a general education class, with access to counseling, and appropriate interventions to support the ED student in the general education setting. All participants agreed that ED students should—to the fullest extent possible—be integrated into general education classes, after considering the emotional condition of the ED student, his/her self-awareness, and his/her potential to exhibit behaviors that disrupt the learning environment. Through the IEP process, a well-informed IEP Team, which includes parent and students (when appropriate), develop a program to accommodate the ED student’s needs based on a case-by-case review of the ED student’s history, his/her strengths and available programs and supports.

School climate should be such that it is comfortable for all students including ED students, making them feel welcome, accepted and included. School climate is extremely important as ED students who do not have positive relationships with their teachers and staff are more likely to have higher rates of absenteeism, are more likely to behave inappropriately and more likely to under achieve academically. When students feel safe socially and emotionally, they have increased chances of being
successful. Adequately trained teachers have better attitudes regarding ED students being mainstreamed, as they are more willing and better prepared to receive them. When teachers who are interested in ED students have high expectations of them, the ED student will often rise to the level of expectation. The entire school and parents should have at least a basic training where they can learn about people with disabilities, and learn about people who are different from them. ED students should not only be encouraged to self-regulate, but they should be encouraged to have confidence, and the knowledge to self-advocate. As ED students understand more about themselves, and what they need to be successful, they should be taught how to appropriately express those needs.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

**Future Study Recommendation 1**

The researcher was not able to locate much training outside of Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) that people often refer to as the restraint training, no matter how many times CPI instructors insist that it is a non-violent crisis intervention program and not restraint training. The researcher attended the training numerous times over the years, and although it is helpful with de-escalating crises, a training is needed so that teachers can teach engaging lessons, and maintain highly structured environments, with positive reinforcement or other types of intervention strategies. Researcher recommends for future research, a study regarding evidence based model trainings that are available to assist with building the capacity of existing teachers and staff, so that they have the knowledge to competently utilize effective strategies to
manage classroom environments, and provide the support and structure that benefit ED students as well as all other students.

**Future Study Recommendation 2**

In 2016, the CCTC was responsible for setting standards for teacher preparation and licensing, adopted new credential program standards for teacher candidates receiving preliminary multiple subject and preliminary single subject credentials. The new TPEs are not specific to ED students, but they are essential standards and competencies designed to elicit greater attention to skills and knowledge in an effort to better support all students with disabilities.

It is recommended that a future research study would assess the perceptions of teachers who have successfully completed the TPEs that were adopted in 2016, to determine whether or not those teachers feel as though they were adequately prepared with the knowledge to competently utilize effective strategies to manage classroom environments, and provide the support and structure necessary for ED students’ success in general education classes.

**Future Study Recommendation 3**

ED students are often held to lower academic expectations, despite having the cognitive ability to be academically successful. Nearly half of the students across America who are ED do not complete high school (Anderson et al., 2001; Kauffman, 2005; Nelson et al., 2004; M. M. Wagner, 1995). Perhaps if going to college was presented as an expectation of the ED student, more ED students would attend college.
It is recommended that a future research study examines the results of ED students who attend college after teachers and staff have expressed their expectation of ED students to attend college, or study ED students who have been able to participate in college readiness programs such as Advanced Via Individual Determination (AVID). AVID focuses on preparing students for college. In addition to aiding students with improved reading and writing abilities, AVID assists students in developing skills such as critical thinking, teamwork, and organization, that are essential skills for a successful college student.

**Future Study Recommendation 4**

A few of the ideal general characteristics of general education teachers mentioned in this study were that teachers have a willingness to communicate, they are open and have an understanding of ED students’ needs, and they possess a sincere desire to serve the ED student in the same way that they would serve any other student. A study to identify the characteristics of general education teachers who successfully incorporate ED students into their classes could provide vital information as to the characteristics that should be developed in general education teachers in order to build capacity.

**Future Study Recommendation 5**

Part of this study stated that adequately trained teachers and staff who maintain a warm school climate, and have positive relationships with ED students increases the chance of ED students being successful in general education classes. A study to identify the characteristics of school campuses that successfully incorporate
ED students into their general education classes could produce information that would guide administrators in developing a plan for greater support for ED students.

**Future Study Recommendation 6**

Physical Education (PE) class was mentioned more than once as possibly a general education class that students with ED could begin mainstreaming into early on, however one opinion strongly differed. A study to identify the benefits and drawbacks of ED students participating in general education PE classes could assist case managers and IEP team members in making decisions regarding placement of ED students into general education PE classes.

**Future Study Recommendation 7**

All of the participants agreed that on-campus therapeutic/mental health counseling is imperative for the ED students’ success, therefore it is important for ED students to be able to build a rapport with a therapeutic/mental health counselor in order to adhere to counseling services as prescribed in their IEP. A study of therapeutic/mental health counselors’ ability to build rapport with ED students who have experienced high turnover of therapeutic/mental health counselors, would make an interesting study that could result in obtaining information that could guide administrators in developing greater support for ED students.
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(UMI No. 3384998)


APPENDICES
## APPENDIX A

### Literature Matrix

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APPENDIX B

NIH Certificate of Completion

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that
Pamela Butler-Harris successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course
"Protecting Human Research Participants."

Date of completion: 07/28/2013.

Certification Number: 1218964.
APPENDIX C

Letter of Invitation

Study: Integrating/mainstreaming Emotional Disturbance (ED) students into general education classes.

August ______, 2018

Dear Prospective Study Participant:

You are invited to participate in qualitative comparative case study to identify and describe factors that are considered when making a decision to place students who are labeled as ED or those who exhibit ED type behaviors, into general education classes. The main investigator of this study is Pamela Butler-Harris, Doctoral Candidate in Brandman University’s Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program. You were chosen to participate in this study, because you are a Special Education Case Manager who makes decisions to place students who are labeled ED into general education classes.

Approximately eight participants from Contra Costa County in the form of eight special education case managers will participate in this study. Participation should require about 30 minutes of your time and is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this qualitative comparative case study is to identify and describe factors that are considered by Special Education Case Managers when making a decision to place students who are labeled ED or those who exhibit ED type behaviors, into education. An additional purpose of the study is to identify the factors that are common among Special Education Case Managers when making a decision to place students who are labeled ED or those who exhibit ED type behaviors, into general education classes.

PROCEDURES: If you decide to participate in the study, you will be interviewed by the researcher for approximately 30 minutes in person, over phone, or via Adobe Connect. During the interview, you will be asked a series of questions designed to allow you to share your experiences as a Special Education Case Manager when making a decision to place students who are labeled ED or those who exhibit ED type behaviors, into general education classes. The interview session will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

RISKS, INCONVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS: There are minimal risks to your participation in this research study. It may be inconvenient for you to arrange time for the interview questions, so for that purpose interviews will be scheduled at your convenience.
POTENTIAL BENEFITS: There are no major benefits to you for participation, but your feedback may help regarding successfully integrating/mainstreaming ED students into general education classes. The information from this study is intended to inform researchers, policymakers, and educators.

ANONYMITY: Your responses to interview questions will be kept confidential and it will not be possible to identify you as the person who provided any specific information for the study. You will be assigned a random numerical code and anyone who helps me transcribe responses will only know you by this code. Records of information that you provide for the research study and any personal information you provide will not be linked in any way. At no time will your actual identity be revealed.

You are encouraged to ask questions, at any time, that will help you understand how this study will be performed and/or how it will affect you. You may contact me at 1(323) 509-1685, or by email at butl5703@mail.brandman.edu. You can also contact Dr. Phil Pendley by email at pendley@brandman.edu. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study or your rights as a study participant, you may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

Respectfully,

Pamela Butler-Harris
Doctoral Candidate, Brandman University
APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA  92618

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: Factors considered by special education case managers when making a decision to place ED students into general education classes.

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Pamela Butler-Harris, Doctoral Candidate

TITLE OF CONSENT FORM: Consent to Participate in Research

PURPOSE OF STUDY: You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Pamela Butler-Harris, a doctoral candidate from Brandman University. The purpose of this qualitative comparative case study is to identify and describe factors that are considered by Special Education Case Managers when making a decision to place students who are labeled Emotional Disturbance (ED) or those who exhibit ED type behaviors, into general education classes. An additional purpose of the study is to identify the factors that are common among Special Education Case Managers when making a decision to place students who are labeled ED or those who exhibit ED type behaviors, into general education classes.

PROCEDURES: By participating in this qualitative comparative case study, I agree to participate in an individual interview regarding integrating/mainstreaming ED students into general education classes. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes and will be conducted by in person, over phone, or via Adobe Connect. During the interview, I will be asked a series of questions designed to allow me to share my experiences as a Special Education Case Manager when making a decision to place students who are labeled ED or those who exhibit ED type behaviors, into general education classes.

I understand that:

a) There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that the Investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher.
b) The possible benefit of this study to me is that my input may help add to the research regarding successfully integrating/mainstreaming ED students into general education classes. I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation.

c) If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Pamela Butler-Harris, Doctoral Candidate at butl5703@mail.brandman.edu or by phone at [redacted]. The dissertation chairperson may also answer questions: Dr. Phil Pendley at pendley@brandman.edu.

d) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide to not participate in the study and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. I understand that I may refuse to participate or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the Investigator may stop the study at any time.

e) I understand that the interview will be audio recorded. The recordings will be available only to the researcher and the professional transcriptionist. The audio recordings will be used to capture the interview dialogue and to ensure the accuracy of the information collected during the interview. All information will be identifier-redacted and my confidentiality will be maintained. Upon completion of the study all recordings, transcripts and notes taken by the researcher and transcripts from the interview will be destroyed.

f) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent re-obtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641. I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the Research Participant’s Bill of Rights.

______________________________________
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party

_______________________________________
Signature of Principal Investigator

________________________________________
Date
APPENDIX E

Research Participant’s Bill of Rights

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research Participant’s Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

Brandman University IRB  Adopted
November 2013
APPENDIX F

Interview Protocol -Script and Interview Questions

Interviewer: Pamela Butler-Harris

Interview time planned: Approximately 30 minutes

Interview place: Participant’s school site or other convenient agreed upon location

Recording: Digital voice recorder

Written: Field and observational notes

Make personal introductions.

Opening Statement: [Interviewer states:] I truly appreciate you taking the time to participate in this interview. To review, the purpose of this study is to identify and describe factors that are considered by Special Education Case Managers when making a decision to place students who are labeled Emotional Disturbance (ED) or those who exhibit ED type behaviors, into general education classes. An additional purpose of the study is to identify the factors that are common among Special Education Case Managers when making a decision to place students who are labeled ED or those who exhibit ED type behaviors, into general education classes. The questions are written to elicit this information.

Interview Agenda: [Interviewer states:] I anticipate this interview will take about 30 minutes today. As a review of the process leading up to this interview, you were invited to participate via letter, and signed an informed consent form that outlined the interview process and the condition of complete anonymity for the purpose of this study. We will begin with reviewing the Letter of Invitation, Informed Consent Form, Brandman University’s Participant’s Bill of Rights, and the Audio Release Form. Then after reviewing all the forms, you will be asked to sign documents pertinent for this study, which include the Informed Consent and Audio Release Form. Next, I will begin the audio recorder and ask a list of questions related to the purpose of the study. I may take notes as the interview is being recorded. If you are uncomfortable with me taking notes, please let me know and I will only continue on with the audio recording of the interview. Finally, I will stop the recorder and conclude our interview session. After your interview is transcribed, you will receive a copy of the complete transcripts to check for accuracy prior to the data being analyzed. Please remember that anytime during this process you have the right to stop the interview. If at any time you do not understand the questions being asked, please do not hesitate to ask for clarification. Are there any questions or concerns before we begin with the questions?
Background Questions:

1. Title:

2. Years in current position:

3. What is the total number of years that you’ve worked with SWDs who have ED type behaviors (are aggressive, defiant and disruptive)?

4. What age group do you currently work with?

Content Questions:

1. Please describe your site’s current practice for placement of ED students into general education classes.
2. Please describe your philosophy of integrating ED students with their non-disabled peers?
3. Please identify and describe academic factors you perceive as important in the decision to place ED students into general education classes.
4. Please identify and describe behavioral factors you perceive as important in the decision to place ED students into general education classes.
5. Please identify and describe psychological/emotional factors you perceive as important in the decision to place ED students into general education classes.
6. Please identify and describe active interventions you perceive as important in the decision to place ED students into general education classes.
7. Please identify and describe receiving teacher factors you perceive as important in the decision to place ED students into general education classes.
8. Please identify and describe receiving class factors you perceive as important in the decision to place ED students into general education classes.
9. Please identify and describe preparation factors you perceive as important in the decision to place ED students into general education classes.
10. Please identify and describe any other factors you perceive as important in the decision to place ED students into general education classes.
11. Please identify and describe the process for determining which general education classes the ED students are placed into?
12. What recommendations can you make to increase the likelihood of successfully mainstreaming ED students into general education classes?
13. Have you found that these factors support the successful integration of ED students into general education classes?

Key: SWD=Students with disabilities, SDC=Special Day Class, SCC= Self-contained classroom, ED= Emotional Disturbance
APPENDIX G

Interview Question Development Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Interview Question(s)</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. How do special education case managers identify and describe the factors that are considered by special education teachers when making a decision to place ED students into general education classes? | 1. Does your site have SDC/SCCs where Emotionally Disturbed students are taught?  
2. How many students in the SDC/SCC are considered to have Emotionally Disturbed behaviors?  
3. Please describe your site’s current inclusion practice?  
4. Please describe your perception of integrating Emotionally Disturbed students with their non-disabled peers?  
5. Please identify and describe academic factors you perceive as important in the decision to place Emotionally Disturbed students into general education classrooms.  
6. Please identify and describe behavioral factors you perceive as important in the decision to place Emotionally Disturbed students into general education classrooms.  
7. Please identify and describe psychological/emotional factors you perceive as important in the decision to place Emotionally Disturbed students into general education classrooms. | Literature Matrix factors: academic, behavioral, psychological/emotional, interventions, receiving teacher, receiving classroom, preparation, placement process. |
8. Please identify and describe active interventions you perceive as important in the decision to place Emotionally Disturbed students into general education classrooms

9. Please identify and describe receiving teacher factors you perceive as important in the decision to place Emotionally Disturbed students into general education classrooms

10. Please identify and describe receiving classroom factors you perceive as important in the decision to place Emotionally Disturbed students into general education classrooms

11. Please identify and describe preparation factors you perceive as important in the decision to place Emotionally Disturbed students into general education classrooms

12. Please identify and describe any other factors you perceive as important in the decision to place Emotionally Disturbed students into general education classrooms

13. Has your site been able to successfully mainstream Emotionally Disturbed students?
14. Please identify and describe the process for mainstreaming Emotionally Disturbed students from a SDC/SCC into general education classes?

15. Please identify and describe the process for determining which general education classes the Emotionally Disturbed students are placed into?

16. Please identify and describe the percentage of time each Emotionally Disturbed student spends in general education classes?

17. What recommendations can you make to increase the likelihood of successfully mainstreaming Emotionally Disturbed students into general education classes?
APPENDIX H

Audio Release Form

RESEARCH STUDY TITLE: Integrating/mainstreaming Emotional Disturbance (ED) students into general education classes.

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA  92618

I authorize Pamela Butler-Harris, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate, to record my voice. I give Brandman University and all persons or entities associated with this research study permission or authority to use this recording for activities associated with this research study.

I understand that the recording will be used for transcription purposes and the information obtained during the interview may be published in a journal/dissertation or presented at meetings/presentations.

I will be consulted about the use of the audio recordings for any purpose other than those listed above. Additionally, I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising correlated to the use of information obtained from the recording.

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have completely read and fully understand the above release and agree to the outlined terms. I hereby release any and all claims against any person or organization utilizing this material.

____________________________________________  __________________
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party  Date
## READY PAGE

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<td></td>
<td>&lt;60% of time</td>
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<td>&gt;75% of time</td>
<td>&gt;89% of time</td>
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