

Anderson University
College of Education
Graduate Studies

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Wernsetta Session

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education, Leadership and Learning

Joanna Stegall
Joanna Stegall, PhD
Dissertation Chair

Julie Smart
Julie Smart, PhD
Program Director, Doctor of Education

Jeremy Watts
Jeremy Watts, PhD
Associate Dean, Graduate Studies

**The special education placement decision of an African American male identified as
Emotionally Disturbed: A qualitative single-case study**

by

Wernsetta Session

A dissertation submitted to the faculty at Anderson University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION IN LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Concentration: Curriculum and Instruction

Program of Study Committee:
Dr. Joanna Stegall, Chair
Dr. Mark Butler
Dr. Kylynnedra Wilcots

The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this dissertation. The College of Education will ensure this dissertation is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Anderson University

Anderson, SC

2024

Copyright © Wernsetta Session, 2024. All rights reserved.

DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this dissertation to the parents of African American male children who receive special education services. I encourage you to advocate for your children by asking questions when you do not understand, voicing your concerns, and actively participating in the IEP meeting. Hold school districts and schools accountable for implementing your child's IEP, and make your voice heard.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES	v
LIST OF TABLES	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
ABSTRACT.....	viii
CHAPTER 1. PROBLEM AND SIGNIFICANCE.....	1
Background of Problem	2
Statement of Problem.....	7
Significance of Study	8
Organization of the Study	8
Clarification of Terms.....	16
CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH	20
Court Cases	21
Federal Mandates	22
Education for All Handicapped Children Act.....	23
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	23
Content in Leadership.....	28
Special Education Leadership.....	28
Identification	32
Disproportionality	40
Educational Theory	42
Structural Leadership	43
Multi-tiered System of Support Framework	44
Positive Behavior Supports Interventions.....	45
Response to Intervention.....	56
Foundations of the Methodology	61
Qualitative Research Methods	61
Case Study Research.....	62
Summary	66
CHAPTER 3. METHOD AND PROCEDURES.....	69
Research Questions	69
Research Design.....	70
Primary Information.....	71
Secondary Information.....	73
Research Participants	74
Procedures.....	75
Data Collection	77
Instrumentation	77
Interviews.....	78
Documents and Folder Review	81
Data Analysis Framework.....	83
Ethical Considerations	86

Summary	87
CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS.....	89
Findings.....	93
Theme 1: Team Knowledge.....	95
Theme 2: Decision-Making	101
Theme 3: Advocacy	104
Summary of Themes.....	106
Summary.....	106
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION.....	109
Interpretation of Findings	110
Research Question 1	110
Research Question 2	113
Research Question 3	116
Research Question 4	117
Implications for Theory	118
Implications for Practice.....	121
Limitations	124
Recommendations for Future Research	126
Conclusion	127
REFERENCES	129
APPENDIX A. PHONE SCRIPT.....	143
APPENDIX B. EMAIL LETTR CONSENT.....	145
APPENDIX C. CONSENT LETTER.....	147
APPENDIX D. REVIEW OF STUDENT RECORDS.....	149
APPENDIX E. DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY.....	151
APPENDIX F. CAMPUS STAFF INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	152
APPENDIX G. ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	154
APPENDIX H. PARENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	155
APPENDIX I. COLOR CODING	156
APPENDIX H. APPROVAL FOR RESEARCH (IRB).....	157

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 3.1 Single Case Design Overview	71

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 3.1 Students Demographics for Milky Way Independent School District	72
Table 3.2 Total Number of Students by Primary Disability in Milky Way Independent School District	73
Table 4.1 Types of Student Behaviors During the 2022-2023 School Year	89
Table 4.2 MTSS Behavior Interventions and Tiered Level	91
Table 4.3 MTSS Academic Interventions and Tiered Level	91
Table 4.4 Demographic Distribution of Active Research Participants	92
Table 4.5 Demographic Distribution of Inactive Research Participants.....	93
Table 4.6 Emerging Themes and Subthemes.....	94
Table 4.7 Theme Frequency	106

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank my husband, Dr. Ronald Session, for encouraging me to pursue this doctorate and our children Jackson and Moriah for understanding when I had to do schoolwork. Ronald, you kept me grounded and focused while I was on this journey. You gave me encouraging words when I was frustrated and wanted to cry. You are my best friend, protector, and provider, and I love you always. Jackson and Moriah, I am very proud of the young adults you have become. Thank you for always supporting me. I love you both. Thank you to my mother, Beverly, my number one cheerleader. The morning calls on my way to work kept me grounded and focused on the task. I love you.

To my committee chair, Dr. Joanna Stegall, and my committee members, Dr. Mark Butler and Dr. Kylynnedra Wilcots, for your guidance and support throughout this research. In addition, I would like to thank my family, friends, Anderson University classmates, and professors for this experience. Because of you, I am a better person. Lastly, thank those who volunteered to participate in my case study. With your willingness to participate, this dissertation was possible. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” 2 Timothy 4:7

ABSTRACT

This case study examined the school-based interventions used to determine a self-contained special education placement for a fourth-grade African American male student with an emotional disturbance disability. The study aimed to answer four research questions, which included the academic and behavioral school-based interventions provided to the student before a referral to special education evaluation, the perception of the student by the special education teacher and diagnostician, the role of the campus administrator in determining placement, and the parent's perception of the referral process.

The study used a single case study research methodology and included four active participants. Data collection instruments included individual interviews and content analysis, including a review of academic records, special education records, discipline reports, and Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) committee notes. The theoretical framework used was the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), and data was analyzed using Glaser and Strauss's (2017) constant comparative method.

The findings revealed that upon entry into the school district, the student began receiving Tier 2 interventions. However, the infrequency of data collection, lack of progress monitoring, and inconsistent documentation of the duration and frequency of the interventions did not support the placement recommendation of the IEP team. Therefore, the study recommends in-depth training on implementing MTSS interventions and using data to support special education placement decisions. Additionally, the study supports the need for continued research using the data collected from implementing interventions

to help IEP team members determine appropriate placements for African American students.

CHAPTER 1. PROBLEM AND SIGNIFICANCE

The focus of this qualitative case study is on the issue of emotional disturbance disability identification in African American male students disproportionately placed in self-contained special education programs. Cruz and Rodl (2018) conducted a systematic review of the literature that focused on the disproportionality of African American male students and how race and behavior contribute to placement in special education. Researchers found disproportionality occurs when the probability of being labeled with a disability results in placement into special education classes by a group's gender, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic strata" (Cruz & Rodl, 2018, p. 50). When considering disproportionality, current data support an increase in students receiving special education services since the 2021-2022 school year (Institute of Education Sciences, 2023).

In the 2021-2022 school year, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) reported that 7.3 million students, which accounted for 15% of the total student population, received special education and services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The data showed that African American students represented the second-highest group at 17%, followed by American Indians and Alaska Natives at 19%. Pacific Islanders and Asians were the two lowest student groups, with 11% and 8% of the population, respectively. When considering the data by disabilities, the Office of Special Education Programs (2020) reported that African American students were more likely to be identified with an intellectual disability at 9.6% and emotional disturbance at 7.14% when compared to other disabilities like speech-language impairments or autism.

As a result of schools placing students into special education, federal mandates were put into place, which require local education agencies (LEA) to monitor disproportionality by race or ethnicity in the areas of identification, placement, and discipline. The LEA must also use federal funds to implement early interventions to address the "root causes of the problems" (Cruz & Rodl, 2018, p. 50). Although the determination to place African American male students in special education is in the nascent stages, this specific case study focuses on the interventions provided to one male student in a suburban North Texas school district and the results of those interventions he received before the Individual Education Program team determined a self-contained behavior program.

This study is of great significance as it investigates the effectiveness of the MTSS academic and behavioral interventions provided at tiers one and two before transitioning the student to tier three by initiating a referral for special education evaluation. The MTSS framework aims to provide academic and behavioral interventions in a tiered manner. The first chapter of the dissertation presents a comprehensive background of the problem, the problem statement, the study's significance, organization, and limitations. It concludes with a thorough clarification of terms. The study anticipates that it will offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of the MTSS framework and contribute towards developing efficient interventions for students with emotional disturbance eligibility for special education before being referred to special education.

Background of Problem

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2024) defines *special education* as "specially designed instruction so the child can meet the educational

standards that apply to all children" (National Council on Disability, 2018, p. 18).

Children identified as having a disability must have an individualized education program (IEP) designed by the IEP team, which includes goals that will allow the student to gain access to the general education curriculum and will also meet the needs of the child's disability (National Council on Disability, 2018).

Members of the IEP team include a campus administrator, a parent, at least one general education teacher, at least one special education teacher, and someone who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results, such as the diagnostician or licensed professional in school psychology (LSSP). Other IEP team members can include someone with knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including any related service providers and, when appropriate, the student (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2024).

The IEP is a written document that includes the student's present academic achievement and functional performance levels, goals and objectives, accommodations, supplemental aids, and related services. The IEP document helps the student access the general education curriculum. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2024) states that each local education agency must ensure that students are educated in their least restrictive environment (LRE) and are as close to home as possible (National Council on Disability, 2018). Besides developing a plan for the students, the IEP team must also determine the placement of the student (United States Department of Education, 2024). In addition, IDEA promotes using assessments to ensure that educators comply with the LRE mandates (Prager, 2015).

One preventive measure adopted by IDEA is the implementation of a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). MTSS provides a framework for individualized, evidence-based interventions for students with academic, social-emotional, and behavioral concerns in a tiered format (Nitz et al., 2023). Alsalamah (2020) stated, "Schools are required to provide students with evidence-based interventions and support to prevent and address behavioral and educational challenges" (p. 68). Positive behavior intervention support (PBIS) and the response to intervention (RTI) are two frameworks that schools can adopt to provide interventions.

This tiered support includes whole group expectations and instructions at Tier 1. Intensive behavioral expectations in small groups at Tier 2 and Tier 3 provide individual support such as functional behavior assessments (Alsalamah, 2020). When students receive early interventions, it can help identify those who meet the eligibility criteria for special education.

Early interventions can also reduce the number of students referred to special education. The RTI model would shift the focus from an "at-risk perspective to a deficit model perspective" (Alsalamah, 2020, p. 69), meaning students could remain in the general education classroom with interventions. In addition, Alsalamah (2020) believed that when general education teachers are not culturally aware, preconceptions about students' academics and behavioral expectations may appear.

In a study conducted by Hughley and Larwin (2021), they found that White teachers perceived Black students as having disabilities "1.42 to 1.56 times more than White students" (p. 11). Arguments about cultural perception and misunderstandings can affect placing students in restrictive environments, leading them to take special education

classes, which is considered a "dead-end" (Cruz and Rodl, 2018, p. 50). because they only teach prerequisite skills in the fundamental curriculum. In their meta-analysis, Liang et al. (2022) found that schools are disproportionately placing African American students in special education and restrictive learning environments under the label of EBD. Research supports that students identified as EBD have a higher dropout rate of 5.9% compared to other ethnicities (Institute of Education Sciences, 2023).

IDEA provides 13 categories of disabilities for which a child can qualify for special education services, including emotional disturbance. *Emotional disturbance* is a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance: a) An ability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors. b) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers. c) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances. d) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression, and lastly, e) A tendency to develop physical assumptions or fears associated with personal or school problems (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2024).

Placement is not a physical location but falls on the continuum of "alternative options provided to students for students with emotional behavior disorders" (Yell et al., 2020, p. 292). Students who receive instruction in the self-contained classroom spend most of the instructional day outside the general education classroom receiving instruction from a special education teacher (Barrett et al., 2020). The push for students to receive instruction in the least restrictive environment has proved successful, as placements in settings like pullout, separate classes, and separate schools showed a

decrease for students identified as emotionally disturbed as students identified as emotionally disturbed decreased (Williamson et al., 2020). Leva and Beasley (2022) reported that intentional and unintentional racial practices resulted in racial trauma and internalized oppression, especially among Black and Brown students. They contended that racial practices by teachers in the classroom happened in seven areas: labeling, classroom procedures, expectations, referrals, recommendations, pedagogy, assessments, and grading.

When considering assessments, concerns about the representation of students with ED raised questions about "racial bias, cultural fairness, appropriateness of assessment instruments, and the adequacy of special education programs" (Lambert et al., 2022, p. 109). The researchers conducted a study to compare the behavior and emotional characteristics of Black students with ED to those of their Black peers in general education without ED, their White peers in general education without ED, and their White peers with ED. The findings showed that Black students with ED had different behavior and emotional needs than their Black peers without ED. However, there were more similarities with their White peers with ED. The researchers suggested factors like "prejudice, discrimination, and test bias may be operative in the screening and identification of Black students" (Lambert et al., 2022, p. 114). Previous research on Black students identified as ED showed poor instruction, and the study found consistent results. The researchers recommend implementing a multi-tiered support system and providing culturally responsive interventions within the MTSS framework.

Statement of Problem

The study aims to highlight the issue of the disproportionality of African American males with emotional behavior disorders in self-contained behavior programs within special education. The research will focus on identifying the specific school-based interventions provided to the student at Tier 1 and Tier 2 levels and how the outcomes of those interventions influenced the placement decision of the student in the self-contained behavior program. The study will employ an active approach to identify and analyze the interventions provided to the student and how the effectiveness of those interventions contributed to the decision to place him in the self-contained behavior program. A multi-tiered support system is provided in general education to assist students struggling academically and behaviorally (Hazelkorn et al., 2010). The campus leader actively monitors policies, practices, and procedures to ensure they follow the MTSS framework. Strong leadership is vital to implementing a multi-tiered support system in education.

Leadership

To be a leader in the twenty-first century, one must experience fundamental changes. Rost (1993) defines leadership as "an influential relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their moral purposes" (p. 102). Rost challenges leaders to define leadership from an industrial and post-industrial perspective. His work is significant and is a guiding principle for leadership development (Rosari, 2019). Leaders must be intentional about their work and consider how it will affect a person's life, behavior, and attitude. These real intentions are purposeful and occur in the future. The leader's decisions affect the teachers, staff, and students under the same

leadership. Understanding the impact of a leader's intentional work on their team is crucial, as it affects the entire organization.

Significance of Study

The study is significant because it spotlights the interventions and the results of the interventions provided to students before making a special education placement. It delves into the IEP team members' reason for placing students with EBD in the self-contained setting. Implementing a multi-tiered system of support can serve as a remedy for social, emotional, and behavioral problems displayed by students who are considered at-risk (Saeki et al., 2011). Tiered level one interventions like the Good Behavior Game target students' social skills and aim to decrease disruptive behavior. At tier two, implementing a check-in check-out (CICO) intervention has been shown to increase student academics and decrease problem behavior.

The special education referral process consists of making a referral, completing the assessment, and conducting an IEP team meeting to determine placement. Lastly, the interviews and content analysis findings will show what school-based interventions teachers used to support the placement decisions for a special education self-contained placement. It is important to note that the study's significance is rooted in its potential to shed light on the interventions provided to students before making a special education placement.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation employs the qualitative research method of case study research. This method involves an empirical inquiry investigating a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within a real-life context (Joyner et al., 2018). According to Leko et al. (2021),

qualitative research" is not designed to establish causality or generalizable truths but rather explore specific cases and issues in depth" (p. 278). This type of research significantly impacts teaching and learning, as well as different approaches to learning for students who receive special education services and special education teacher quality (Leko et al., 2021). The following research questions will guide the research and help uncover the insights necessary to understand the special education referral process.

Research Questions

- Research Question 1: What academic and behavioral school-based interventions did teachers provide to the student before referring him to special education testing, and what were the responses to those interventions?
- Research Question 2: How did the teacher's perception of the student affect the IEP team's decision to place the student with emotional disturbance in a self-contained classroom?
- Research Question 3: How does the campus administrator perceive her role as the leader of the IEP team when determining placement for students with emotional disturbance?
- Research Question 4: What was the parents' perception of the special education referral process for their child who was referred for special education testing and identified as emotionally disturbed?

Setting

The study occurred in a suburban public school district in North Texas. For this case study research, the pseudo name is Milky Way Independent School District (MWISD). The United States Census Bureau (2023) showed the city's population as

72,602. The property value in this city is \$417,140 < \$44,556 (Texas Education Agency, 2023.). The district provides educational opportunities to a diverse population of approximately 35,000 students in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grades.

During the same school year, the district served approximately 3,747 students in the special education program. Students receive instruction at 49 different schools across the district. It employs approximately 4,714 teachers and staff members. There is one pre-kindergarten academy, 24 elementary schools (grades K-4), seven intermediate schools (grades 5 -6), seven middle schools (grades 7-8), two STEM academies, five traditional high schools, one career and technology academy, and alternative school and an early college high school. There are over 100 languages spoken in this district.

The schools in MWISD provide a continuum of services for students who receive special education services. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2024), each public agency must ensure that a continuum of alternative placements is available to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education and related services. Students who attend MWISD can receive services in the inclusion setting, where the special education teacher provides services in the general education classroom. In the resource room, students are in the "special education setting for less than 50% of the regular school day" (Texas Administrative Code, 2021). Lastly, to receive services in the self-contained classroom, students are pulled out of the general education setting and placed in a separate classroom for more than 50% of the day (Texas Administrative Code, 2021).

Participants

The study participants included Jane, the campus diagnostician who conducted the evaluation; Emma, the current special education teacher; Mrs. Snow, the current campus administrator; and Ms. Smith, the parent. The general education member of the initial IEP team was no longer an employee of the school district. Participants received a \$10.00 gift card for their participation.

Anderson University's Institutional Review Board approved the research study, and Milky Way ISD approved the Research Proposal Form to start data collection. The parent consented to reviewing the student's academic and special education records. Data was collected through four semi-structured individual interviews and content analysis.

Data Collection

There are different forms of data collection in qualitative research. Common forms of instrumentation used to collect data include interviews, observations, surveys, and content analysis. This research study utilized interviews and content analysis to collect data.

Interviews

Once the researcher obtained consent, the following IEP team members participated in individual interviews: the campus administrator, the parent, the special education teacher, and the diagnostician. The respondent interviewing approach was applied to ensure a structured interview format. The respondent approach uses a pre-planned selection of questions, and the interviewer sets the agenda for the interview. The respondent's role is to answer only the questions asked (Atkins & Wallace, 2012).

The researcher used a laptop for each interview to keep data organized and enable recording. The interviewing instrument allows the interviewer to engage with the participants face-to-face and ask probing questions (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). The interviewee provided personal experiences related to the questions.

There are some limitations to using interviews as an instrument of choice. Building trust is a limitation. It can be challenging because the participants must familiarize themselves with the researcher. Participants received an explanation of the research project before signing an informed consent letter. Another limitation is transcribing the interviews, which can be an "arduous and lengthy task" (Atkins & Wallace, 2012, p. 85). When transcribing, it is important to include verbatim responses from participants and allow them to review their responses.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a data collection method involving searching through one or more written documents and various forms of communication, such as written, audio, or video (Thomas, 2011). An advantage of content analysis is the ability to scan and view large documents electronically. Viewing the documents from a laptop provides the opportunity to use features like Find. The Find feature in Microsoft Word allows users to search for a common language, words, and phrases within the documents. Limitations to using content analysis are that it is time-consuming and "the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the results of analysis depend on how well the analyzed documents represent the researcher's field of interest (Thomas, 2011, p. 60).

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of a research study define the parameters placed on the methodology. The case study includes the following limitations connected to the data collection methods of interviews and content analysis. When conducting interviews, the researcher constructs theories based on the interviewee's responses to the questions. The IEP team members participated in individual interviews. Allowing the researcher to document the individual perspectives and insights of each participant. Each member provided their personal experiences and role as an IEP team member. Their personal experiences limited the study from having a global perspective of the IEP process. The responses applied only to Milky Way Independent School District (MWISD), a suburban school district, and are not representative of other districts. The small sample size of four participants provided a narrow perspective. The interview responses can negatively impact the generalizability of the study.

The last limitation of the data collection method is the folder selection method and the IEP documents. The criteria for folder selection limited the number of folders in the selection pool. Having a criterion, eliminated folders of students with disabilities other than emotionally disturbed, females, students who receive special education services in other self-contained programs, and students who received a complete full initial individual evaluation (FIIE) in another academic school year. Therefore, it limits comparing one folder to other folders in the school district. Limiting the number of folders also provides a single point of view for placement decisions. The folder selection criteria and the IEP documents are also limitations.

The IDEA provides school districts with clear guidelines on what to incorporate in IEP documents. The researcher analyzed the information in the special education folder, limiting the data collection process to its contents. If additional documentation, such as teacher anecdotal notes, intervention strategies, and previous conversations, is not included in the special education folder, it can further limit the data collection process.

Summary

The study focuses on the placement decision for an emotionally disturbed African American male student. The researcher conducted a content analysis of the student's special education folder, academic records, MTSS committee notes, special education records, and parent information. The primary objective was to determine school-based interventions provided before referring the student for special education evaluation.

The investigation also explores how the teacher's perception of the student influenced the IEP team's decision to place him in a self-contained classroom. Additionally, it examines the campus administrator's perception of her role as the leader of the IEP team when determining placement for students with emotional disturbance. The study also investigates the parent's perception of the special education referral process for her child identified as emotionally disturbed and referred for special education testing.

The researcher conducted individual interviews with required members of the IEP team. The campus administrators provided campus-level policies, practices, and procedures while explaining the roles and responsibilities of IEP team members. Lastly, the student's parent whose folder was selected shared her perspectives on the special education process.

The study's instruments include interviews and content analysis. Limitations of the study include having only one student identified as EBD as the focus of the case study, including actual IEP team members who made the IEP placement decision, the timeliness of special education evaluations, and parent participation. Chapter 2 provides a review of peer-reviewed literature on placement decisions of African American males with emotional disturbance.

Clarification of Terms

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)- according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2024) this term is defined as having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness concerning the educational environment due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and Adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Emotional Disturbance (ED)- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2024) defines emotional disturbance as a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance: An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia.

The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance under paragraph (c)(4)(i) of this section.

Full Initial Individual Evaluation (FIIE)- According to The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2024), Each public agency must conduct a full and individual

initial evaluation before the initial provision of special education and related services to a child with a disability under this part. Request for initial evaluation. Consistent with the consent requirements, either a parent of a child or a public agency may request an initial assessment to determine if the child is a child with a disability.

IEP Team – According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2024) the IEP Team for each child with a disability includes The parents of the child and not less than one regular education teacher of the child (if the child is, or maybe, participating in the regular education environment); Not less than one special education teacher of the child, or where appropriate, not less than one special education provider of the child; A representative of the public agency who— Is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities; Is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum; and Is knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the public agency. An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results, which may be a member of the team described in paragraphs (a)(2) through (a)(6) of this section, At the discretion of the parent or the agency, other individuals who have knowledge or unique expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel as appropriate; and whenever applicable, the child with a disability.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) – is a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised by this section and that includes the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, goals, and objectives, accommodations, and supplemental and related services that will allow

the student to access the general education curriculum (*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2024*).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that provides free, appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures that special education and related services are provided to those children (United States Department of Education, 2024).

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) – The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2024) defines LRE as, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled. Special classes, separate schooling, or another removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Other Health Impairment (OHI) – The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2024) defines OHI as having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness concerning the educational environment, that is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Overidentification- to engage in excessive or inappropriate psychological identification (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Perception - a result of perceiving: observation (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Special Education Disproportionality- the extent to which membership in each group affects the probability of being placed in a specific special education disability category (Bal et al., 2019).

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

The disproportionality and overrepresentation of African American males identified with emotional disturbance disabilities is a topic that permeates the educational atmosphere. Researchers have conducted qualitative and quantitative research about the various reasons for disproportionality. In this literature review, the macroscopic topic of the interventions that occur before making a referral to special education evaluation results in placement in special education.

In Chapter 2, the researcher provides a comprehensive overview of the history and background of special education. The chapter discusses the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which ensures that children with disabilities receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in their least restrictive environment. The author also reviews relevant literature on structural leadership in special education leaders and examines placement decisions for African American male students with emotional disturbance. Additionally, the chapter discusses the disproportionate representation of this specific group of students. The researcher explains the educational framework of the study, which employs a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS). Overall, Chapter 2 provides a clear and detailed analysis of the relevant literature, providing a solid foundation for the research study.

The approach used for the literature review included a keyword search in various databases. The keywords included but were not limited to the following words: African American boys, African American males in special education, Black males, disproportionality, emotional behavior disorder, emotionally disturbed, FAPE, IDEA, Interventions, Least restrictive environment(LRE), Most restrictive environment (MRE),

multi-tiered system of support (MTSS), overidentification, overrepresentation, perception, positive behavior supports (PBIS), response to intervention(RtI), self-contained, Special Education, special education placement decisions, Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3

The researcher began the study using the following databases: Google Scholar, ERIC, EBSCOhost, SAGE databases, Onesearch, ProQuest, and Semantic Scholar. The study includes peer-reviewed research articles from 2013-2024 and older court cases that discussed the background and history of special education. The articles used have laid the foundation for this literature review.

Court Cases

The Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) opened the pathway for African American children and children with disabilities to have equal educational opportunities. Seventy years ago, the United States Supreme Court decided it was unreasonable to expect children to succeed without education (Herzik, 2015). The court ruled that racial segregation was unconstitutional. As a result, African American children were allowed to attend once-segregated schools and had equal access to free appropriate public education (FAPE) alongside their White peers.

The *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) included a consolidation of four cases addressing racial segregation. The case included *Briggs v. Elliott*, *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*, *Gebhart v. Belton*, and *Boling v. Sharp*. These four cases were the foundation of public schools' separate but equal doctrine today (Yell, 2022). The cases allowed children without disabilities access to education, but children with disabilities did not gain the same access. As a result, Pennsylvania Association for

Retarded Citizens (PARC) initiated a landmark lawsuit in 1972 that challenged the exclusion of children with disabilities from public education.

The Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) included a group of parents whose children were diagnosed with an intellectually disabled (ID). These families filed a case against the Pennsylvania school district for denying education to their children. In 1971, Pennsylvania had a law that allowed public schools to deny services to children if they were uneducable and untrainable (Herzik, 2015). When determining the ruling, the judge referenced the *Brown v. Board of Education* case and determined it was unconstitutional to deny children with disabilities an education. The state was required to provide free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to students with intellectual disabilities in the general education setting (Yell, 2022). The fight for equality for children with disabilities continued in the country.

The parents of seven children with various disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, emotional disturbance, epilepsy, and hyperactivity, filed the *Mills v. The District of Columbia (1972)* case. The judge in the case ordered the school board in the District of Columbia to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to students with disabilities (Yell, 2022). The difference between the *Mills* and *PARC* cases is that the ruling was for children with all disabilities. The verdict in the *PARC* case was specific to children with intellectual disabilities.

Federal Mandates

The *PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (1972)* and *Mills v. The District of Columbia (1972)* laid the foundation for the United States Congress to pass laws that required states to offer children a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). The first

law was known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EAHCA), which was later amended and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990. EAHCA and IDEA laws ensured that children with any disability received FAPE in their least restrictive environment.

Education for All Handicapped Children Act

The purpose of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EACHA) 1975 was to "a) ensure children with disabilities received a free appropriate public education, b) protect the rights of students and their parents, and c) assist states and localities in their efforts to provide such services" (Yell, 2022, p. 57). The Education of the Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975 resulted from the PARC and Mill cases. Children with disabilities were excluded from receiving a FAPE, and under EAHCA, funding was being provided to states to ensure "students with a disability received an education that was individually designed to address his or her unique needs" (Yell, 2022, p. 57) The law required states that received federal funds to provide educational services to children with disabilities at no cost to the parents, forging the first step towards delivering FAPE to students with disabilities. The EAHCA was amended, renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990, and later reauthorized in 2004.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires states that accept federal funding to provide free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to children with disabilities in their least restrictive environments (LRE) (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2024). To receive services under IDEA, students must meet eligibility requirements for one of the 13 disabilities listed under the law. The Individuals

with Disabilities Education Act is divided into four main parts: Part A, Part B, Part C, and Part D. Part A includes terms about IDEA and provides facts about how to educate students with disabilities. Part B outlines what states and local education agencies are to provide to students with disabilities. States and local education agencies are to provide each student with an individualized education program, the parents receive a copy of the procedural safeguards, and the IEP team makes placement decisions.

Part C of IDEA focuses on infants and toddlers from birth to age two. These provisions allow states to offer early interventions to infants and toddlers with developmental delays. The law's Part D funds national activities that provide services such as parent training programs, personnel development, technology, and media. The last provision of IDEA is Part E, which created the National Center for Special Education Research within the Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (Yell et al., 2017). One of the principles under Part B of IDEA is providing students with a free, appropriate public education.

Free Appropriate Public Education

Under Part B of IDEA, states are responsible for identifying any child between the ages of three and 21 who has a disability or is suspected of having a disability and offer an evaluation for special education services known as child find. If a child is found to have a disability, they are entitled to a Free Appropriate Public Education that includes special education and related services. These services should be provided at no cost, supervised, and directed by public authorities, meet the state education agency's standards, cover preschool, elementary, and secondary education in the child's state, and be in accordance with an IEP that fulfills the requirements of the IDEA. (Yell et al., 2017). The IEP is specially designed for the student and includes standard-based goals

and present academic achievement and functional performance levels, allowing the student to make meaningful progress in their least restrictive environment.

Least Restrictive Environment

The IDEA "emphasizes that being educated in the least restrictive environment. LRE means, when appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private establishments or other care facilities, receive educational services with children who are not disabled, in special classes, separate schooling or another removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational settings occurs only when the severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily" (*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, 2024). Without provisions for LRE after the passing of the IDEA, states were left to define what LRE meant for their school districts (United States Department of Education, 2024), which resulted in various interpretations of the law.

In the *Board of Education v. Rowley (1982)* case, the United States Supreme Court determined that school districts were required to provide students with disabilities an educational advantage (Marsico, 2018). Amy Rowley, a deaf student who received special education services, was provided instruction in the mainstream setting with her non-disabled peers. The IEP team developed an IEP that included supplemental aids and services, including an FM hearing device, tutoring for one hour from a deaf tutor, and speech therapy for three hours per week. The parents requested a sign language interpreter for all of Amy's academic classes instead of the other services. The school district declined the parents' request. As a result, the courts determined that the school district needed to provide the student with a chance to attain [her] full potential equal to

the opportunity provided to other students (Marsico, 2018). In addition, the court defined FAPE in six different ways based on its opinion. It required school districts to provide students with disabilities access to any needed educational benefits and adequate access to education (Marsico, 2018).

The student's IEP team determines where the student will access their educational, supplemental, and related services, known as placement. When determining LRE, the courts provided various opinions on the matter. In *Roncker v. Walter (1983)*, the court developed a two-part test that included the following questions: "Could the educational services provided in the segregated setting be feasibly provided in a nonsegregated setting? (If so, the segregated placement is inappropriate. 2) Is the student being mainstreamed to the maximum extent appropriate?" (National Council on Disability, 2018, p. 19). These questions helped to guide when determining the appropriate placement for students and separating student services from the setting.

In *Daniel R.R. v. State Board of Education (1989)*, the court used the two-part test from *Roncker* but added a question that asked if the student received instruction in a mainstream setting to the maximum extent appropriate (National Council on Disability, 2018). When mainstream students receive special education services and supplemental aids in the general education classroom with their non-disabled peers, a continuum of alternative placements is considered if a student cannot receive instruction in the LRE.

These placements could include but are not limited to the general education classroom, push-in, resource room, or itinerant instruction (Yell et al., 2017). IDEA (2024) says each public agency must ensure that a continuum of alternative placements is available to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education and related

services". In the case of *Greer v. Rome (1991)*, the student's placement in a self-contained classroom before having the opportunity to have access to the general education setting. The court determined that the IEP team must consider the LRE for students before placing them in a more restrictive environment (MRE).

When the IEP team cannot provide services in the LRE, they must ensure the student receives the necessary support by incorporating supplemental aids and services (Yell et al., 2020). Depending on the severity of the student's behavior or disability, school districts may remove the student from the general education classroom if the classroom is "not appropriate for the student" (Yell et al., 2017, p. 62). If there are behavior concerns, school districts may consider a more restrictive environment for the students' and others' safety.

In *Light v. Parkway (1994)*, the student was "violent, dangerous, and disruptive" (Douvaris & Hulsey, 2002, p. 4). She received services in the general education classroom. The school removed the student from the classroom due to her causing harm to her classmates on 30 different occasions, which resulted in them receiving medical attention from the school nurse. The mother wanted her to stay put and be able to return to the general education classroom.

The court's decision to remove her signaled that inclusion placement was not a right for every student. The court noted that all the circumstances surrounding the student are considered when making placement decisions. For some students, the general education setting is the appropriate placement; for others, the general education setting is not appropriate. In that case, local education agencies must provide proven research-based interventions as part of the evaluation procedure (McLeskey et al., 2012).

In summary, the concept of LRE has evolved through various court cases and interpretations. The IEP team plays a crucial role in determining the placement of students with disabilities, and a continuum of alternative placements must be available to meet their needs. The IEP team, when considering more restrictive info, the environment must thoroughly consider the individual circumstances of the student and provide supplemental aids and services to support the student's access to the general education setting to the maximum extent appropriate.

Content in Leadership

The campus administrator is a required member of the IEP team (IDEA, 2024). The administrator plays a crucial role in guiding the IEP team to develop an individualized student plan. Their expertise and leadership are essential in ensuring the plan meets the student's needs and complies with relevant laws and regulations.

Special Education Leadership

Templeton's (2017) study examines how different levels of knowledge and skills in special education impact special education leadership among principals. The study compares principals with expert knowledge about special education and those with average knowledge. Four principals from Alabama participated in the study and self-reported their level of expertise. Templeton compared the knowledgeable and skilled pair of principals, A and B, to the pair of principals, C and D, who had average knowledge and skills in special education. Data was collected from surveys, indicating that contemporary principals believed it was essential to have a "fundamental knowledge of special education procedures, guidelines, and laws" Templeton (2017, p. 21). The participants agreed that principals should be proficient in interpreting assessment data. When principals understand assessment data, it can benefit students in the pre-referral

intervention phase. It could also contribute to decisions made in IEP meetings when determining the student's strengths, needs, and interventions.

Principals knowledgeable about special education should be able to lead discussions about students' needs. The principals reported that they serve as the liaison between the school and the parents. Open communication with parents creates an environment where the student is the focus, and the student's success is a shared goal.

The findings revealed that Principal A and Principal B, the principals with a knowledge base and skill set in special education, were aware of their limits regarding special education procedures, guidelines, and laws. Both principals consider a referral to special education a last resort for a student. Both principals focus their attention on the pre-referral interventions and instructional strategies.

Principals C and D, considered to have average knowledge of special education, relied on their teachers to answer questions about special education procedures, guidelines, and laws to ensure implementation. These two principals also acknowledged that they subpoenaed the special education teachers to give input regarding the schedule of services for students with disabilities. Both principals confirmed using a "collaborative problem-solving approach" (T Templeton (2017, p. 26) when including the special education teacher in decision-making. Principals C and D focused on removing barriers for students who were considered at-risk with their academics and behavior.

Templeton (2017) recommends that principals knowledgeable and skilled in special education use their wisdom to address students going through the pre-referral process. When principals use their expertise in special education, they can reduce the number of students who require special education evaluations. The researcher also

recommends professional development on how to apply knowledge and skills to benefit students who are at risk.

Morris (2021) conducted this qualitative study in a Northeast state. The study examined how innovation is practiced in the K-12 special education classroom, focusing on innovative practices, their antecedents, their outcomes, and how the leadership team supported the school. The Diffusion of Innovation theory was used to conduct this study. The school served 235 students and only students who received special education services in preschool through twelfth grade. Participants included nine school employees who worked directly with the students.

The findings showed that participants shared some commonalities, including embracing new challenges, being open, demonstrating initiative, collaborating, and engaging in reflection (Morris, 2021, p. 61). Through interviews, the researcher learned that the participants invented new products and created new instructional strategies that developed solutions for their students. The school had an innovative environment because of the school staff. They were knowledgeable and created a collaborative atmosphere representing diverse ideas and shared leadership. They participated in knowledge-building practices and collaborative problem-solving by engaging in weekly cross-discipline team meetings (Morris, 2021, p. 62). Implementing innovation is essential to creating an equitable environment for students with disabilities.

Ruppar and Gaffney (2011) conducted a study investigating IEP decisions focusing on conversations, negotiations, and power. When conducting an IEP meeting, there is a structured format to follow to ensure the IEP team discusses all the required components. The committee members work collaboratively to develop an education plan

for students with disabilities. This study investigates the political, social, and relational factors that impact the decision-making process for a student with a severe disability (Ruppar & Gaffney, 2011).

One student was selected for this case study and was preparing to have an initial IEP meeting. The student was five years old and received services in a blended classroom, including special and general education students. There were 11 IEP team members out of 12 that agreed to participate in the study. The school district served as the location of the study. The district offered inclusion services, self-contained classrooms for students with behavior disorders, and life skills classrooms. Data collection included audio recordings and interviews. The interview questions asked about the perceptions of meetings, which included the participant's role in the meeting and the power of others who attended the meeting (Ruppar & Gaffney, 2011). The researchers made three observations from the IEP meeting, which included the student's diagnosis, the placement decision, and the discussion surrounding the student's goals (Ruppar & Gaffney, 2011).

Findings suggest that committee members did have different opinions about the final decisions but did not make them known during the meeting. Also, conversations during meetings influenced the decisions made in the meeting. These discussions were uncomfortable for committee members. Research has shown that using an IEP agenda for a structured meeting can sometimes limit the opportunity to discuss important details about a student's education plan (Ruppar & Gaffney, 2011). Using IEP agendas is a recommended practice to ensure that the IEP meeting is well-organized and that the IEP team develops a proper IEP. It is essential to customize the agenda according to the specific needs of the IEP team while creating it. To ensure a productive IEP meeting, the

IEP team must create a well-structured agenda that outlines the roles of each member, identifies the specific areas of the student's IEP to be discussed, highlights any outstanding issues that require attention, and identifies areas of agreement.

A qualitative case study by Hoppey and McLeskey (2013) focused on how a principal can support school improvement during an era of high-stakes accountability. The study was conducted in Florida, known for its inclusive practices for students with disabilities and academic success. It was conducted over one school year and involved interviews and observations of the principal engaging in-district meetings, community events, and faculty meetings. The case study's results found that the principal's role is to "take care of people" by building trust, listening, and treating people well (Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013, p. 4). These findings highlight the importance of a supportive and inclusive school environment and the crucial role that principals play in ensuring the success of their students and faculty.

This section discusses the role of campus administrators in the IEP process and the importance of their knowledge of special education. Studies have shown administrators need more professional development opportunities to build their confidence. Another study found that committee members had differing opinions but did not express them during an IEP meeting. Using an IEP agenda can help ensure that meetings are productive. Ultimately, the goal is to promote inclusion and provide the LRE for students with disabilities.

Identification

The IEP team member responsible for interpreting the instructional implications of evaluation results (*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, 2024) is the evaluator,

also known as the diagnostician or LSSP. Lambert et al. (2022) suggest that identifying African American males with Emotional Disturbance (ED) has been an issue of concern. Questions regarding racial bias, the assessment instruments used, and cultural differences have sparked conversations about the overrepresentation of African American students in self-contained programs for students with ED.

Lambert et al. (2022) examined the emotional and behavioral functioning of African American students with emotional disturbance (ED) disabilities, African American students without disabilities, Caucasian students with emotional disturbance disabilities, and Caucasian students without disabilities. The purpose was to discover the differences in their characteristics when comparing all student groups. For a student to identify as emotionally disturbed, one or more of the characteristics are displayed: an inability to learn, they have relationship problems, inappropriate behavior, unhappiness or depression, and showing physical symptoms or fears for an extended period.

Over three years, data was collected from various campus staff members, including teachers and school psychologists, using a norm-referenced rating scale to conduct this quantitative research. The directions directed respondents to rate the students in their classes for at least two months. They were to provide a rating of all students listed on their caseloads, starting from the top to the bottom or vice versa. The Scales for Assessing Emotional Disturbance -3 (SAED-3Rs) instrument consisted of 45 items and targeted students ages five to eighteen (Lambert et al., 2022).

Findings suggest that African American students with emotional disturbance disabilities have different emotional and behavioral needs than African American students without ED disabilities in the general education classroom. African American

students with ED demonstrated higher levels of behavioral challenges than those students without disabilities who were African American and Caucasian. The degree of the differences was large across all the characteristics of emotional disturbance. There were two characteristics that African American students with ED differed when compared to Caucasian students with ED, including inappropriate behavior, physical symptoms, and fears.

Results revealed that African American students with ED have more commonalities of academic, emotional, and behavioral characteristics with Caucasian students who are ED than African American students without disabilities. Lambert et al. (2022) recommended that educators adopt evidence-based interventions to meet these students' academic, emotional, and behavioral needs. The findings suggest that educators should develop tests and adopt "culturally responsive evidence-based practices that meet the documented academic, emotional, and behavioral needs of this student group" (Lambert et al., 2022, p. 115).

Dowdy et al. (2013) aimed to compare two methods of identifying at-risk students - teacher nomination and universal screening. The study involved 849 students and 42 teachers from an elementary and middle school in Southern California. The researchers hypothesized that the universal screener method would identify more at-risk students and identify them for both academic and behavioral reasons. The study used a qualitative method, and its findings suggested that the universal screener was more effective in identifying students with emotional and behavioral problems than the teacher nomination method. Both methods indicated students were within the normal range for emotional and

behavioral risks. Additionally, the study found that more males than females were at an elevated risk level.

Overall, the study provides insights into the effectiveness of different methods of identifying at-risk students and highlights the importance of using a comprehensive approach to identify and support students who may need additional help. Grindal et al. (2019) further investigated the impact of race and socioeconomic status on students receiving special education services.

Grindal et al. (2019) examine the potential link between race, income, and placement of African American and Hispanic students in special education classrooms. Specifically, the researchers aimed to determine if students in this group were more likely to be placed in separate classrooms than Caucasian students and how family income levels may have played a role in their identification for special education services.

The study adopted a qualitative approach to collect student data from three states: A, B, and C. The researchers identified inclusion students as the study participants to ensure consistency in the study group. The available data exclusively focused on the student's disability status and did not consider their eligibility for free or reduced lunch or their educational placement. Moreover, the study only included students with four specific disabilities, namely autism, learning disability, emotional disability, and intellectual disability, out of the thirteen disability categories.

The study uncovered three significant trends: 1) They observed a pattern of overrepresentation of non-low-income students in the category of students receiving special education services. 2) This overrepresentation was not present in the case of students with sensory disabilities. 3) Compared to Caucasian students, the identification

of services was smaller for low-income students. The IDEA recommendations call for states to include Special Education identification and placement based on income status or combine them during the next reauthorization. Apart from income status, the teacher's ethnicity is another factor in identifying and placing students in special education. In a related study, Woodson and Harris (2018) explored the potential influence of a teacher's race and gender on the identification and placement of students in special education, mainly focusing on male students of different races and ethnicities.

Woodson and Harris (2018) conducted a study to explore the potential impact of a teacher's race and gender on the number of male students they refer to special education programs based on the student's race and ethnicity. The research involved collecting data from teachers in the Pennsylvania school system, who were given a behavior rating form (RTF) survey. The Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessments assesses the strengths, adaptive functioning, and behavioral, emotional, and social challenges of individuals aged 1.5 to over 18.

Woodson and Harris (2018) analyzed data from over 100 teachers and 1,000 students at a targeted school. The scenario presented the teachers with a student's classroom behaviors, which they had to evaluate for severity and likelihood of referring the student for special education evaluation. The study aimed to determine whether the gender and race of the teacher had any influence on their referral decisions. The study concluded that the student's race, the teacher's race, the teacher's years of service, and their attitude towards inclusion services impacted the number of referrals for special education.

The study discovered that teachers with more experience in teaching tended to refer students with behavioral problems for special education. On the other hand, teachers who had positive attitudes towards inclusion services were less inclined to refer students with behavioral issues for special education evaluation. However, the study failed to establish a correlation between teacher gender and the referral of male students to special education (Woodson & Harris, 2018).

The IEP team decides on the location within the school setting where the teacher will implement the student's IEP. IDEA does not define placement, but the "U.S. Department of Education has asserted that placement refers to the provision of special education and related services rather than a specific place, such as a specific classroom or school" and as the student's programs (Yell et al., 2020, p. 292). An Individualized Education Program outlines the specific services a student with special needs will receive, including their location, frequency, and duration.

A study by Kurth et al. (2019) analyzed the LRE statements in the IEP documents of 88 students who received special education services. The focus was on students with Extensive Support Needs (ESN) as documented in their IEPs to determine the factors used to make placement decisions. The researchers found that the IEPs often contained statements justifying the removal of students from general education settings and that the statements lacked individuality. The IEPs also did not include statements about supplementary aids and services, and access to inclusion services for students in the general education setting was limited. The researchers selected a sample group of 41 teachers from six states based on specific criteria. The criteria included that the IEP was

written for kindergarten to 12th-grade students with significant support needs and who were eligible for an alternative assessment.

The researchers verified that the students had ESN by reviewing and documenting their disabilities. The selected students had disabilities in the following categories: autism, intellectual disabilities, orthopedic impairments, other health impairments, developmental delay, multiple disabilities, speech-language impairments, emotional behavior disorder, visual impairment, and deaf-blindness. To gather data, they employed the qualitative method of content analysis.

The study found that the IEPs for African American male students with emotional disturbance showed a lack of individuality due to repeated statements. The justifications for removing these students from general education included the need for specially designed instruction, enrollment in a specific program, such as the resource room, and a "highly structured environment." (Kurth et al., 2019, p. 8). In addition, the study highlighted the limited access to inclusion services for students with Exceptional Support Needs (ESN) in the general education setting.

The study revealed that schools only offered non-academic classes such as Art, P.E., and Music to students with emotional and behavioral disorders and exceptional support needs while limiting their access to academic courses. Additionally, the IEPs did not mention supplementary aids and services; instead, they documented why these students should not attend classes in the general education classroom. Limiting access to the general education classroom highlights the need for greater clarity and individuality in IEPs and the importance of providing ESN students with access to inclusion services. Schools must consider various factors, such as academic, psychological, and behavioral

measures when deciding on the placement of special education services for students with EBD. The study emphasizes the necessity of providing an IEP that prioritizes individualized education and aims to educate students in the LRE.

Evans et al. (2012) analyzed whether there was a difference in teachers' perceptions across educational environments, including the general education setting, resource room, special education self-contained rooms, and public separate special education schools of students identified as emotionally disturbed who had an IEP. The researchers analyzed the differences in teachers' perceptions of the students in different academic settings. They examined the common teaching strategies used to support students' academic, externalizing, and internalizing concerns by general education and special education teachers for this group of students. The study involved special education and general education teachers from 36 schools with students taught in resource and self-contained settings.

The surveys completed by 51 teachers revealed that students with ED who are in separate schools may experience physical symptoms, such as headaches and stomach aches, more frequently than students in resource or self-contained classrooms (Evans et al., 2012). The students with ED displayed four typical ED characteristics, including inability to learn, relationship problems, inappropriate behavior, and unhappiness, across all three settings. The study also revealed that teacher proximity was the most used teaching strategy for students with ED across all three settings (Evans et al., 2012). Moreover, more strategies were available for academic problems than for behavioral issues. These findings suggest that teachers need to be more aware of the physical

symptoms that students with ED may experience and that they should use a variety of strategies to address both academic and behavioral problems.

Disproportionality

When looking at the overrepresentation of African American students identified with disabilities, key factors may be the cause. Research shows that students from low socioeconomic families are off grade level when they begin school. There are some variables considered when referring students to special education. Sullivan and Bal (2013) examined the variables contributing to the disproportionality of student referrals to special education while also focusing on individual risk's sociodemographic and school characteristics. For the study, the researchers accessed the archives of an urban school district in the Midwest region. Participants included 39 school districts and approximately 18,000 students. Student data included race, language, gender, free/reduced lunch status, attendance, special education status, parent education level, and suspensions for each student (Sullivan & Bal, 2013).

This qualitative study showed that males and those students who received free/reduced lunch were at risk of being referred for special education evaluation. Of this group of students, Black students were found eligible for special education services more than their peers and were 2.8 times more likely to be labeled as SLD and ED (Sullivan & Bal, 2013). The study identified that one in every three African American males required special education services when researchers considered variables of race and gender. Additionally, African American females were twice as likely to need these services when compared to females of other races.

Lastly, the findings emphasized the need to study how social variances contributed to the construction of disability and the way it is produced disproportionately (Sullivan & Bal, 2013). In line with the emphasis on studying the social variances that contribute to the production of disability and its disproportionate impact, Harry and Fenton (2016) undertook a study to investigate the factors contributing to disproportionality.

Harry and Fenton (2016) conducted this study to determine the factors contributing to disproportionality and explain what influences negative attitudes regarding race and poverty. Some commonalities in the studies included the need for teacher resources, parent involvement, and the lack of knowledge surrounding the meaning of disproportionality (Harry & Fenton, 2016).

In one study, 64 notable education directors, teachers, administrators, and psychologists participated in face-to-face interviews. The reasons given for disproportionality included student poverty, a misunderstanding of students' ethnically based actions, and state assessments (Harry & Fenton, 2016). Teachers' misunderstanding of the term disproportionality resulted in over-identifying African American students in special education. To address the issue of discipline disparities among African American male students, Cook et al. (2018) conducted a study in three urban elementary schools.

Cook et al. (2018) conducted a study addressing Black male students' discipline disparities in three urban elementary schools. The schools had Federal and State oversight placed on the schools due to the disproportionate number of exclusionary discipline and special education referrals and placements for African American males. The schools were under Federal and State oversight due to the disproportionate number

of exclusionary discipline and special education referrals and placements for African American males. The study found that the risk ratios for all three schools were above 2.5, indicating that African American male students were more likely to be referred to the office for behavior concerns than other student groups (Cook et al., 2018).

To address the issue, Cook et al. (2018) collaborated with campus administrators to develop targeted interventions and determine the best methodology for the study. They implemented the Greet-Stop-Prompt (GSP) approach to reduce exclusionary discipline practices. The GREET component included proactive classroom management strategies. In contrast, the STOP component involved educating teachers about implicit biases and providing them with a visual cue and mindfulness technique to regulate their decision-making process. The PROMPT component offered teachers alternative methods to respond to perceived or actual problem behaviors.

The study's findings showed that the GSP approach effectively reduced exclusionary discipline practices and improved students' attitudes toward school. Teachers perceived the implementation of GSP as feasible and easy to implement. Although one of the schools scored lower for acceptability, fidelity, and feasibility, the study demonstrated that the GSP approach could effectively reduce discipline disparities for Black male students. The study highlights the importance of addressing discipline disparities and implementing evidence-based interventions to promote equity and improve student outcomes.

Educational Theory

The case study applied two educational frameworks. Bolman and Deals (2021) Structural Leadership Framework work and the Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS). Bolman and Deal's structural framework describes four types of leaders: structural,

political, human, and symbolic. The Multi-tiered System of Support describes academic and behavioral interventions delivered in a tiered model.

Structural Leadership

Bolman and Deal's (2021) Structural Leadership framework guided the research study. According to this perspective, the structural leader is responsible for "guiding people in the right direction, defining their jobs, and stipulating how they work together" (Bolman & Deal, 2021, p. 50). The structural framework's components are strategy, structural forms, functions, and vertical and lateral coordination.

To implement the structural framework, the leader must first have a strategy. Bolman and Deal (2021) define *strategy* as "an organization's overall approach to goals and methods" (p. 52). To achieve the organization's goals, the campus administrator must have a plan of implementation, share her perspective with the team about how they will reach the goal, be consistent with decision-making, ensure the organization is in a good position to make sound decisions, and, lastly, engage and follow through with the plan.

Second, the leader must have a structural form and know their functions to achieve the goals. The structure can enhance and constrain an organization's actions (Bolman & Deal, 2021). When the IEP team decides on a self-contained placement for a student with EBD, they may limit the options for where the student can receive services. These constraints could be related to the type of services the student requires or the availability of appropriate programs in specific locations. If the student's campus does not offer the required program, they may have to attend another school that provides it.

Third, vertical coordination in structural leadership means assigning tasks or jobs to those being led (Bolman & Deal, 2021). The campus administrator assigns roles and responsibilities to IEP team members and ensures they follow all federal rules and laws

during the IEP meeting. As the leader of the IEP team, the IDEA requires a public agency representative to supervise the provision of specially designed instruction to meet the exceptional needs of children with disabilities.

The last component of the structural leadership framework is lateral coordination. Lateral coordination focuses on the organization's behavior. Campus administrators look at behaviors during IEP meetings, communication between school and home, and the coordination of staff roles. The IDEA has established a structured format for school districts to follow when creating a student's individualized education program, which acts as a "blueprint for expectations and exchanges" for IEP teams (Bolman & Deal, 2021, p. 53). Having a strategy, structural forms, functions, and vertical and lateral coordinator in place, the campus administrator can guide the IEP team to make legally sound placement decisions,

Multi-tiered System of Support Framework

When the United States Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, it required schools to adopt a school-wide support system to help students improve academically and behaviorally (Bohanon et al., 2021). A multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) is a framework used to provide the leveled support needed to address students' academic and behavioral concerns. American Institute for Research (AIR) (2024) defines MTSS as "a proactive and preventative framework that integrates data and instruction to maximize student achievement and support student's social, emotional, and behavior needs from a strengths-based perspective." When implemented, the MTSS framework provides data to assist teachers in making data-based decisions. MTSS encourages high-quality instruction and interventions to address the students' social,

emotional, and behavioral needs. Two model schools adopt when implementing MTSS are Positive Behavior Support Interventions (PBSI) and Response to Interventions (RtI).

Positive Behavior Supports Interventions

Positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) is a framework that supports structured classroom preventative strategies and feedback methods for teachers to implement. It provides "equitable academic and social, emotional, and behavioral (SEB) outcomes for every student" (Simonsen et al., 2021, p. 3). Educators differentiate the behavior interventions according to the student's needs, beginning with school-wide support and increasing support at each tier.

In the first tier, teachers provide instruction to the entire group, which caters to the needs of all students and represents 80% of the student population. Fuchs et al. (2014) suggest that during Tier 1, teachers use a "core instructional program, classroom routines meant to provide opportunities for instructional differentiation and accommodations" (p. 13). When Tier 1 interventions fail to produce the desired results, teachers move students to the next level: Tier 2.

In Tier 2, educators provide interventions in a small group setting, using empirically validated instructional practices tailored to the student's academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs. This approach is designed to be more targeted and effective and helps to address the specific challenges that the student is facing. The student population includes approximately 10 to 15% of the student body, and the recommended implementation timeframe is 10 to 20 weeks for 20 to 40-minute sessions meeting with groups three to four times per week (Fuchs et al., 2014). Before moving to the last tier, teachers use analyzed data to determine if the student will remain at Tier 2, move back to Tier 1, or need individualized interventions at Tier 3.

Tier 3 interventions are intense and individualized to address the student's academic and behavioral needs. This population represents 5% of the student population. The school provides data-based interventions to students with severe learning, social, emotional, and behavioral needs. Students with disabilities can receive individualized intensive interventions at Tier 3 (American Institutes for Research, 2024). The following section will discuss a review of the literature on tiered support.

Tier 1 Interventions

Weeden et al. (2016) implemented the Class-wide Function-related Intervention Team (CW-FIT), which is "a classroom management system based on teaching classroom rules, skills, use of a group contingency plan with differential reinforcement of appropriate behaviors and minimized social attention to inappropriate behavior" (p. 286). The researchers wanted to know how this intervention would work outside the general education classroom. The targeted group was a special education self-contained classroom. The study examined students' task behavior, teacher praise, and reprimand behaviors. Participants included six students from the first through third grades, which included five boys and one girl who all met the eligibility criteria of having an emotional behavior disorder.

Of the six participants, one male student engaged with his non-disabled peers by participating in mainstream classes. The other five students remain in the self-contained classroom for all their academic classwork. The researchers utilized a game format to present the CW-FIT and collected data in three areas: group on-task behavior, the fidelity of the procedures, and teacher behavior. For on-task behavior, they collected data every 30 seconds during a 20-minute observation at the beginning of the class. During this time,

the researchers defined on-task behavior as students actively engaging in the assigned activity. The observer used a plus and minus symbol to document the on-task and off behavior (Weeden et al., 2016).

To evaluate the accuracy of the procedures, the researchers utilized a 13-item checklist and completed it using the group on-task data for 12 to 16 sessions. During a 20-minute group task session, the evaluators assessed the teacher's behavior by counting the number of positive statements, negative statements, and points given. Praise statements such as "Nice work following directions" and "Great job staying in your seats" were observed (Weeden et al., 2016, p. 287). The teacher rewarded students for good behavior by giving tangible rewards and points while reprimanding negative behavior to discourage it.

Before playing the game, the class set points goals together. The students created reinforcers to help meet their daily point goals. They would receive a reward if they met their conditions. The observer collected data while the teacher played the game for 30 to 60 minutes daily. They conducted follow-ups using the same procedures for four to eight weeks.

Findings revealed that CW-FIT improved students' on-task behavior by 90% before follow-ups and 93% with follow-ups. The teacher's responses increased by giving students 40% more praise statements, and the reprimand statements decreased from 9% to 3.1%. Overall, the student's on-task behavior improved with the implementation of the CW-FIT intervention. Weeden et al. (2016) focused on the CW-FIT interventions in the special education self-contained classroom only, but the intervention can also benefit students in the general education classroom.

Kamps et al. (2015) looked at 17 elementary schools already implementing a school-wide positive behavior support intervention program. Each school committed to participating in the study for one year. Three school districts were randomly selected, and the classes each had 18 to 25 students. The researchers asked teachers to identify the time of day when students exhibited increased behavioral issues so they could implement the interventions.

Each teacher actively observed, praised, reminded, and awarded points to their assigned group of four students. An eight-item checklist was used once to twice weekly during observations to measure classroom management. The CW-FIT interventions were implemented three to four times weekly from October to March of the selected school year (Kamps et al., 2015).

The teachers taught targeted lessons to the whole class over three to five lessons, which included "a) gaining the teacher's attention, b) following directions, and c) ignoring inappropriate behaviors" With the implementation of CW-FIT, student's on-task behavior increased for the intervention classes when compared to the comparison group classes (Kamps et al., 2015, p. 138). The comparison of classes on-task behavior also increased from 50% to 56%. One difference between the two groups was the number of teacher praise statements. They increased from four to 40 praises. The study's findings align with that of Weeden et al. (2016), showing an increase in on-task behavior and teacher praise statements. One negative effect included that less than 50% of teachers continued the implementation of the CW-FIT interventions once the study ended.

It is worth noting that while Weeden et al. (2016) found positive effects of the CW-FIT interventions, there were also some challenges in sustaining the intervention

after the study ended. Investigating the long-term effectiveness of interventions is essential to comprehending their effectiveness. Saeki et al. (2011) attempted to address this by conducting a qualitative study on the effectiveness of Tier 1 and 2 interventions on students with severe academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs at an elementary public school in Southern California.

Saeki et al. (2011) conducted a qualitative study at an elementary public school in Southern California to investigate the effectiveness of Tier 1 and 2 interventions on students with severe academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs. The study was supervised by the campus principal and school psychologist, with the participation of faculty supervisors and school psychologist interns. The team worked together to discuss and address campus concerns, such as increased discipline referrals and disruptive behavior. Their goal was to understand better the impact of tiered support on students with complex needs.

The study involved 55 third-grade students from three classrooms. The teachers administered Tier 1 and 2 interventions to the students. Initially, all students received universal interventions on impulse control twice a week for five sessions, the Tier 1 interventions. After completing universal interventions, the teachers identified nine students who required additional interventions and moved them to Tier 2. Saeki et al. (2011) organized two groups, one teaching impulse control to six boys and the other focusing on empathy and friendship lessons for three girls.

The program delivered 15 weekly interventions to help students improve their empathy and friendship skills. However, after implementing these interventions, one student still needed further support. To address this, the school psychologist provided

targeted interventions to the identified student through strength-based cognitive behavioral therapy for the last two months of the school year (Saeki et al., 2011).

The research findings indicated that evaluating the students' response to interventions and identifying those students who required additional interventions posed some challenges. The evaluators considered the assessment scores of students before and after the intervention, as well as the recommendations of their teachers when determining the level of intervention required. Using the assessment data was a challenge for the researchers because it did not align with what the teachers reported. For example, of the nine students selected to receive Tier 2 interventions, four were successful and returned to Tier 1. In contrast, the other students remained at the current level or were absent during the pre- or post-assessments. Some student scores went up, and others dropped due to absence. Recommendations included using other qualitative sources like student observations in different settings to collect more data. This additional data could "add value to the decision-making process" (Saeki et al., 2011, p. 50).

To provide the necessary support for students who are at risk and require greater attention for their social-emotional behavior, educational professionals suggest implementing Tier 2 interventions that are "efficient, practical, and feasible to execute," as recommended by Bruhn et al. (2014, p. 171). The Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (2024) offers Tier 2 interventions to groups of ten or more students, which include practicing social skills groups, self-management, and academic support. One of the critical practices of Tier 2 is increasing the opportunities for positive reinforcement. An example is the implementation of the Check in Check Out (CICO) intervention (Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2024).

Tier 2 Interventions

The CICO intervention allows students to receive teacher feedback at least "five to seven times per day" (Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2024). With consistent feedback, teachers can reinforce the preferred behavior and remind students of the expected behavior. Sottolare and Blair (2023) examined the CICO intervention when implemented with students who are "at risk for emotional and behavior disorders served in a high need elementary school setting "(p. 30). The selected school was in Florida and included a student population of 66% African American, 24% Hispanic, and 9% Caucasian. Seventy-five percent of the population received free or reduced lunch.

The study included three first-grade African American male students, all from single-parent households with a socioeconomic status below the poverty line. The teachers chose the students because they fulfilled one of the following criteria. They had one primary discipline referral or two to five minor discipline referrals. The students exhibited behavior problems throughout the school day, and last, the potential function for problem behavior was hypothesized to be attention (Sottolare & Blair, 2023).

Other participants included two teachers, three parents, the guidance counselor who served as the CICO coordinator, and a second guidance counselor who served as a substitute when the CICO coordinator was unavailable. The selected teachers were educational novices with two to three years of experience. Both teachers implemented school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports (SWPBIS) within their classrooms. The parents received a letter explaining their role in implementing the process, which included how to provide feedback.

The study's researchers focused on three areas of fidelity: teacher implementation, CICO coordinator implementation, and parent's use of the daily report card (DRC). To establish a starting point, the students actively engaged in SWPBIS and received instruction on classroom expectations. The teachers enforced positive behavior by implementing a token economy. Moreover, when the students' behavior intensified, the teacher provided universal support three to five times a day for two weeks. The CICO coordinator executed the interventions by conducting morning and afternoon meetings. The meetings aimed to receive feedback on the students' daily report cards. Upon arrival, the CICO coordinator would meet with each of the three students individually, assess whether the students have their classroom materials ready, provide positive feedback orally, and verify if their parents have signed their DRC (Sottolare & Blair, 2023).

Afterward, the students were allowed to go to class. After the morning check-in, the CICO coordinator scored each behavior goal on the DRC and totaled the student's scorecard. The students returned to the CICO coordinator for checkout procedures. At the end of each day, the CICO coordinator reviewed the students' accomplishments and any areas of concern. Students received rewards based on their total points (Sottolare & Blair, 2023).

The campus implemented a fading-out process for students who met their points goals for five consecutive days, including two students. During the intervention phase, the CICO Coordinator and teachers implemented the fidelity checklists and the fading-out process for two students. One of the students was on the fading-out process for 12 days, while the other was on it for 13 days. According to the findings, implementing the CICO intervention was a success. The parents' use of the DRC was indirectly assessed by

reviewing how many times they signed the DRC and returned it to school, averaging 80% (Sottolare & Blair, 2023).

Furthermore, the CICO intervention positively impacted students' academic engagement and behavior, as they exhibited fewer problem behaviors. These findings are consistent with other studies on CICO interventions. Schools need to tailor the fading phases of the intervention based on individual student needs. Sottolare and Blair (2023) found that two out of three students could maintain their improved behavior after being removed from the DRC, while the third student needed additional support. In other research on behavior interventions, Miller et al. (2015) studied the effectiveness of CICO at two elementary schools in the Southeast United States.

Miller et al. (2015) researched the effectiveness of CICO at two elementary schools in the Southeast United States. Both schools had implemented a form of the school-wide positive behavior intervention and support framework (SWPBIS) for at least one year. Each student had a CICO mentor, and the teacher's role was to provide feedback on their behavior, participation in the interventions, and completion of Daily Behavior Report Cards (DBRCs). The researchers collected data by observing, conducting interviews, and gathering information from the DBRCs.

Students used the DBRCs to receive teacher feedback about specific replacement behaviors during each class. Upon arrival at school, they checked in with their CICO mentor, who distributed points and praise to encourage positive behavior. If the students met their daily goal, they received points and a reward for good behavior. The results showed that the CICO intervention effectively decreased problematic behaviors and increased academic engagement, supporting its effectiveness as a Tier 2 intervention in

the SWPBIS. The CICO strategy promotes positive behavior changes without requiring Tier 3 intervention (Miller et al., 2015).

Tier 3 Interventions

It is important to note that the MTSS framework provides a range of interventions for students with differing needs. Once Tier 2 interventions have been exhausted without success, Teachers provide Tier 3 interventions to students with severe and persistent learning and social-emotional behavioral needs. Students receive individualized instruction and support at this stage based on data-driven analysis. The student population at Tier 3 represents 1%- to 5% of the student body (Center on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, 2024).

When students receive data-based individualization (DBI), they receive tailored instruction to address their critical area of need (Fuchs et al., 2014). After identifying the critical area of need, the next step is to implement Data-Based Individualization (DBI) to provide targeted instruction to students. To implement DBI, the teacher collects and analyzes baseline data on student behavior and then determines if any adjustments are necessary for students who did not respond to the interventions.

Bruhn et al. (2020) conducted a study to determine the effectiveness of teacher-driven DBI implementation for behavior interventions instead of researcher-driven implementation. The study evaluated how different intervention adaptations impacted student responses when using a self-monitoring intervention. The findings enable the teachers to decide whether to continue or discontinue the interventions. The study had 13 total teacher participants, including general and special education teachers. The school where the teachers worked implemented the PBIS framework.

The school's demographics included 58.4% Caucasian, 18.7% African American, 11.5% Hispanic, 6.1% Asian, and 5.3% identified as Other. Students demonstrated a high risk of off-task behavior and poor academic performance. They also received a high number of discipline referrals, had a behavior intervention plan or behavior goals, or had a disability or emotional and behavioral disorder (Bruhn et al., 2020).

Researchers provided professional development on DBI and how to apply the self-monitoring intervention before the study began. Teachers identified targeted behaviors to monitor during the intervention period. The teachers monitored and rated the students' responsiveness using the SCORE IT program. They applied the DBI framework to collect data and determine if any adjustments were necessary to the self-monitoring intervention. Examples of adjustments included increasing a student's goal, decreasing feedback, or changing the contingency for reinforcement. The researchers advised teachers only to make one adjustment at a time. The teachers analyzed the data every three to five days and provided interventions over seven weeks. Students used the same SCORE IT app to self-monitor their behavior as their teachers. Each student's interventions were individualized according to the DBI protocol. Overall, teachers created the students' behavior, and the students self-monitored their behavior for "29.8 days" (Bruhn et al., 2020, p. 8). During this time, teachers made three adjustments to the self-monitoring intervention.

When the researchers taught teachers to implement DBI with fidelity, positive student behavior resulted. In addition, the demonstration of using a self-monitoring intervention showed effectiveness by improving student behavior due to the teacher's rating. The results showed that 10 out of 13 students responded to the interventions.

Depending on how the students responded, teachers adjusted the length of the self-monitoring interventions. Adjustments are allowed to increase desired behavior.

In conclusion, the researchers found that implementing data-based interventions improved student behavior. They highlighted a significant reduction in negative behaviors after making necessary adjustments during the DBI process. Response to Intervention (RtI) is a framework to address student behavior and academics. When implementing RtI, students with EBD can receive subject-specific and behavioral interventions.

Response to Intervention

General education teachers use the Response to Intervention (RtI) pre-referral model to prevent academic failure and increase student outcomes (Alsalamah, 2020). Students identified with emotional and behavioral disorders have not only behavioral difficulties but also academic concerns (Alsalamah, 2020). To address academic and behavioral concerns, an RtI model, including "evidence-based interventions and assessment practices," can be implemented to promote positive academic outcomes for all students in the least restrictive environment (Alsalamah, 2020, p. 68). The Response to Intervention model (RtI) is a collaborative approach between schools and families to improve student learning. The RtI model is implemented in a tiered format involving assessment, instruction, and communication. The ultimate goal of this approach is to ensure that all students receive the necessary support to succeed academically.

Tier 1 interventions have "clear behavioral expectations and instructions" (Alsalamah, 2020, p. 69). While engaged in intervention, the teacher describes the behavior expectations to the student. The teacher rewards the student once they

implement the desired behavior. If the behavior does not improve, the student receives targeted interventions in Tier 2.

In Tier 2 behavior interventions, teachers provide "more intensive behavioral instruction" to students in small group settings (Alsalamah, 2020, p. 69). Such interventions may involve reteaching, teaching social skills, and providing feedback. After implementing intensive behavioral interventions and the student continues not to show improvement, the school can decide to transition to Tier 3.

Tier 3 interventions tailor individualized support to students with EBD who require special education services, providing them with "extra-extensive interventions" (Alsalamah, 2020, p. 69). It is at Tier 3 that schools create an individual behavior plan based on data from a functional behavioral assessment. Wraparound services, including mental health services, can be offered to support the student (Alsalamah, 2020). Through this approach, all stakeholders collaborate to address the students' needs and provide the necessary support.

A systematic review conducted by Alsalamah (2020) focused on investigating the implementation of the RtI model for students at risk of ED in elementary schools. The students included in the review were between the ages of four and thirteen. The study reviewed classroom interventions provided in general education and special education classrooms.

The results revealed a reduction in damaging behaviors among students with behavioral problems after implementing RtI interventions. In contrast, the findings showed limited behavioral outcomes for kindergartners and first graders after receiving behavior interventions. Given the consequences of inadequate support for students with

EBD, it is important to continue exploring effective strategies for meeting their unique needs and improving their educational outcomes.

Polcyn et al. (2014) evaluated a peer-mediated, evidence-based reading fluency intervention provided to students identified as struggling by their teachers. Over two years, researchers conducted the study in the southwest United States. Their teachers selected a total of 68 students to participate in the study. The selected students had academic weaknesses in math, reading, and writing. None of the students who were selected received special education services. Teachers provided interventions such as peer tutoring and guided oral reading for three weeks to see if the students made progress. The school requested a student study team (SST) meeting for students who still needed to progress.

In the pre-intervention period, SST meetings were attended by 48 students, and 25 students underwent evaluation for special education services. During the intervention period, the SST identified 20 students who needed additional support. Five students qualified for special education services from that group. The data showed a decrease in special education referrals after implementing the interventions. There was also a decrease in the number of students who needed support during the implementation of the intervention period. The last finding showed that students who participated in the reading fluency intervention demonstrated a higher probability of meeting the eligibility criteria for special education placement (Polcyn et al., 2014).

Nagro et al. (2019) conducted a study targeting general and special education teachers. The study aims to determine whether teachers understand how to implement Tier 3 interventions and examine their knowledge of the RTI framework. The study took

place in Maryland, using a tiered support model with Tier 1, providing primary interventions, including core curriculum and research-based instructional practices. Tier 2 preventive interventions use evidence-based interventions to address students' academic and behavioral deficits. In the last level, Tier 3, students experiencing persistent learning loss and behavior challenges receive more intensive interventions.

Study participants included 63 total teachers, both classroom and related service providers. All participants taught at the early childhood and elementary levels. Participants completed a 15-question open-ended survey. Questions included best practices in reading and math intervention and RTI implementation questions about provided interventions for students who need to make adequate progress in their classroom. Questions also had what modifications students received when they were struggling.

The results revealed that teachers needed to understand the RTI framework, as measured by tertiary supports or intensive interventions. Sixty percent of teachers reported interventions for behavior, and all the teachers agreed that students received RTI interventions during reading instruction. When asked which student group could receive Tier 3 interventions, 69% responded, "Anyone who needs them and any teacher can provide such services" (Nagro et al., 2019, p. 56). There were 18% who said the only student group that could receive Tier 3 interventions was students with disabilities. A small percentage of teachers, 11%, reported that their schools do not offer tertiary support when students do not make adequate progress.

To answer research question two, how are RTI interventions implemented at the Tier 3 level? Possible responses included intensive interventions, modifications to

instructional delivery, additional supports combined with instruction, and behavioral supports (Nagro et al., 2019). As a result, 52% of the participants responded using five of the 32 interventions. These included explicit instruction to gain the students' attention during structured time, modeling and describing concepts, and frequency of questioning to check for understanding. There, 57% of participants used systematic instruction, including step-by-step instructions, when teaching new skills and scaffolding. Lastly, 56% of participants increased the students' opportunities to participate in what they learned.

For question three, researchers looked for the resources teachers used to enhance their RtI knowledge. When given a list of 10 resources as a reference, 51% of the participants selected resources that required a subscription. Many participants needed to familiarize themselves with resources like the National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI) and the Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (TACPBIS).

Researchers concluded that not all teachers understood which student group should receive tertiary support. They needed more knowledge and understanding about evidence-based interventions and their role in a multi-tiered system of support. Researchers also concluded that professional development on RtI and its implementation would benefit teachers.

Hingstman et al. (202) focused on effective programs for at-risk students with high-incidence disabilities. Their research questions included: What is known about the effectiveness of programs that potentially reduce the number of students assigned to

special education? Question two asked about the common elements of programs that reduce the number of students assigned to special education.

Data collection came from various peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed journals. This qualitative study found a significant variation in approaches and targeted skills that helped reduce the number of student referrals. The study also concluded that students benefited from tutoring and intensified instruction adapted to their needs. More effective programs place heavy emphasis on professional development and coaching. The researchers discovered that creating an environment involving parents benefited the students.

Foundations of the Methodology

The study's methodology describes the methods the researcher used to conduct the research. The researcher decided to conduct a qualitative study. The approach selected to perform the qualitative research was a single case study.

Qualitative Research Methods

Qualitative research methods are used to gain concise information, leading to a better understanding of social phenomena (Leko et al., 2021). When used in special education, they explore topics and issues such as student experiences, their families, and their educational roles. Some assumptions about qualitative research methods include using undersized samples that represent specific populations, settings, and events.

Researchers are assumed to serve as the primary instrument in the study.

Researchers are relied on for their interpretation of the data collected. Some familiar data sources for this type of research are interviews, focus groups, open-ended surveys, observations, documents, and artifacts. Case studies, ethnography, grounded

theory, narrative, and phenomenology are qualitative research methods frequently used. To ensure accuracy and effectiveness, researchers should conduct qualitative research with rigor. A rigorous study will build trustworthiness and credibility with the readers of the study.

Thomas (2011) discusses three qualitative approaches: case studies, ethnographies, and experience narratives. Researchers use a case study approach to describe an entity by providing details of its actions. These entities could include groups, organizations, individuals, or events. When researchers plan to conduct a case study, they want to have research questions to help guide the study in hopes of solving the presented problem.

Using case studies as a research method has some advantages and limitations. One advantage is that it reveals the entity's unique character. However, the case study approach may have a potential limitation in that it cannot easily generalize its findings to future cases.

Case Study Research

The essential purpose of conducting case study research is to articulate the purpose of the research to potential stakeholders. Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2014) believe that educational researchers should strive to find ways to improve student outcomes. Knowing the purpose will help the researcher determine what type of research to conduct. Case studies can be exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory.

Communication is another critical purpose of case study research. Communicating the purpose and intended outcomes will negate any false intentions. It is important to note that having flexibility will allow the researcher to make changes if

needed. For example, a participant may move and, therefore, no longer be able to participate in the study. The researcher would then need to adjust the study without starting over. These essential purposes will protect the integrity of the case study.

The researcher should consider some critical decisions. First, consider self-reflection. When one self-reflects, they are looking for themselves in the case study. As the interpreter, the researcher translates the data and information collected so others will understand. The method cannot disengage from the theory. Self-reflection makes the researcher aware of different assumptions.

Secondly, a researcher must make a critical decision to determine the research question. The research question is essential in guiding the research and helps the researcher identify the research path. The researcher may have to change directions as data is collected. Referring to the reference lists to find other articles to incorporate into the study is an option. Joining researcher organizations is a way to gain feedback and develop a network of support while conducting the study (Yang et al., 2013).

Critical decision three challenges the researcher to defend their methodological approach. When the researchers can question themselves and justify why they chose a specific method, it helps them see a different viewpoint. Providing clarity and justification are ways to strengthen the value of the method (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2014).

Knowing who will do what in the study is critical decision number four. What is the strategic approach to the study? The researcher will need to determine their strategy when working on the study. Getting organized is another critical decision. A system for storing articles and data will help ensure the data's confidentiality and safety. The last

critical decision is sharing the findings. Knowing the audience will help the researcher when presenting the findings. The findings reflect the experiences of the participants involved in the study. The following research articles will review case studies about disproportionality and African American males.

Hart et al. (2010) conducted a three-year study that actively analyzed how four African American elementary students with emotional disturbance were labeled in the special education process. They observed the construction of this label and examined district policies across 12 school districts. The researchers also conducted interviews and observations at selected campuses. In-depth observations took place in 24 targeted classrooms. Twelve students were selected, and researchers followed them through the special education process, from referral to placement. Data collection included recorded conversations, observations in the school, observations at the students' homes, and a review of school records. For the in-depth study, 24 teachers were selected based on their race, years of teaching, grade level, teaching skill, and referral rate. The students selected for the study were all identified as emotionally disturbed (Hart et al., 2010).

There were three main concerns found. First, the teacher's skills and understanding of the student's academic and behavior were a concern. Researchers observed teachers who left the classroom multiple times and did not have any classroom management skills. Second, the evaluation team focused more on the students' home lives and ignored the school's role and the students' lack of support (Hart et al., 2010). The third concern was subjective decision-making regarding placement. All four students received services in a self-contained classroom for children with ED. The decision to place the students in this environment varied depending on the teacher's acceptance,

psychologists' moral positioning, peer success standards, and perceptions toward children's families (Hart et al., 2010). The researchers determined teachers based their assumptions of the students who were ED stereotypes of African American families in poverty.

Researchers found that some students in the special education classroom for students with ED did not display any behaviors. When provided with effective interventions (Hart et al., 2010) in the general education classroom, a special education referral was unnecessary. Franklin-Gillette et al. (2023) believed that placing students in self-contained settings restricts their access to the general education curriculum and hinders them from being educated with their non-disabled peers.

Craft and Howley (2018) investigated how African American students at the secondary level viewed their special education placement and their school experiences. Policies and practices intentionally discriminate against or harm a specific group of people, creating institutional racism. It can happen in a direct or indirect form. The qualitative study included three high schools in a Midwestern urban school district. The schools selected for the study were identified based on the percentage of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP). They were categorized by low, medium, and high and had a high rate of African American students with IEPs. To participate, students met the following criteria: African American, juniors, or seniors, identified as learning disabled, and received services for at least three years. Nine students met the requirements, with each school having three students represented.

The Seidmen's Approach consisted of three interviews, each lasting 30 to 90 minutes (Craft & Howley, 2018). Participants answered questions about their life history

and family dynamics. The second interview asked about their personal experiences in special education, and the final interview asked the students to reflect on their experiences in a special education program and how it affected their lives. Data were collected using a digital recorder and a field journal.

The findings revealed three themes: the students' experiences in special education, their positive and negative perceptions of their placements, and their responses to their placements. Some reasons for placements included experiences of trauma, which resulted in negative behavior. Other students saw their placements as a dead end, and there was no way out. The students were placed in special education because of their life experiences, not because of need.

Summary

Chapter 2 discussed the history and background of the IDEA. *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) established the foundation for children with disabilities to access a FAPE. Judges in both *PARC v Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1972) and *Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia* (1972) used the *Brown* case as the standard when determining the verdicts of each case. Because of these cases, the U.S. Congress passed the EAHCA (1970), now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, in 1990 and later reauthorized in 2004.

The IDEA law requires states that accept federal funding to provide FAPE to children with disabilities in their LRE (*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2024*). Children in their LRE are with their non-disabled peers to the "maximum extent possible" (*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2024*). Before making a referral to

special education, students receive evidence-based interventions in the general education classroom through a multi-tiered support system.

MTSS is a tiered support system for students struggling academically and behaviorally from preschool through high school. This layered support begins with Tier 1, providing prevention to help improve the areas of struggle. Tier 2 provides targeted interventions to support the students in the areas where they continue to struggle. If the student does not respond to the previous two tiers of interventions, the lessons incorporate Tier 3 interventions, which activates a request for special education evaluation. The campus administrator ensures that they follow all necessary steps throughout the process. As the instructional leader, they also lead the IEP team to ensure they properly constitute and develop an IEP for the students.

The following section covered in Chapter 2 is the Content on Leadership. IDEA provides a structured format for what IEP teams should look like and what the IEP document must include for all children with disabilities. A structural leader ensures adherence by establishing guidelines, procedures, and a management chain of command (Lyon et al., 2014). The literature review thoroughly discussed the placement decisions made for African American males with ED. The researcher reviewed the literature on how African American males with ED are overidentified and disproportionately represented. The selected method for the research study is a case study, one of the methods used when conducting qualitative research.

The methodology used is the qualitative research method of the case study. A qualitative research design collects participant narrative data (Drew et al., 2014; Edmonds & Kennedy, 2019). The researcher then uses their interpretation of the

participant's perspective. One type of qualitative research is the case study. The case study "examines in depth one entity such as one individual, group, organization, or event" (Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019, p. 319). A literature review included essential purposes and decisions about case study research and explained how to design case study research. Chapter 3 presents a discussion of how to conduct the proposed research. The data analysis plan will include the setting, participants, and data collection instruments.

CHAPTER 3. METHOD AND PROCEDURES

The case study investigates the effectiveness of the multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) academic and behavioral interventions provided at Tiers 1 and 2 before transitioning the student to Tier 3 and initiating a referral for special education evaluation. For Chapter 3, the researcher has divided the methodology section into the following parts: (1) providing an overview of the study, (2) outlining the research questions, (3) designing the research, (4) discussing the research content and its setting, (5) identifying the research participants, (6) detailing the study procedures, including the data collection plan, data management, and timeline, (7) listing the instruments used in data collection, (8) explaining the data analysis plan, and (9) outlining ethical considerations.

Research Questions

When planning qualitative research, developing the research questions helps determine the type of study to conduct. Yin (2018) suggests that when conducting exploratory case study research, researchers should use "what" and "how" questions (p. 10). For this study, the following what and how questions will help to answer the overarching question of what school-based academic and behavior interventions and strategies were used to help determine a self-contained special education placement for a student identified as emotionally disturbed.

- Research Question 1: What academic and behavioral school-based interventions were provided to the student before being referred to special education evaluation, and what were the results?

- Research Question 2: How did the teacher's perception of the student affect the IEP team's decision to place the student with emotional disturbance?
- Research Question 3: In what ways did the campus administrator perceive her role as the leader of the IEP team when determining placement for students with emotional disturbance?
- Research Question 4: What was the parents' perception of the special education referral process for their child who was referred for special education testing and identified as emotionally disturbed?

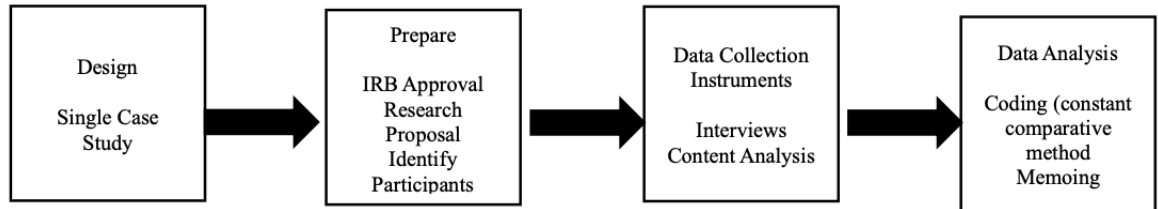
The questions support the theoretical framework of case study research by drawing on the narratives from interviews and reviewing documents throughout the research, helping to develop a case that highlights the outcome of the decisions made in the study.

Research Design

Thomas (2011, p. 33) states that qualitative research involves "collecting and interpreting information about a phenomenon without relying on quantities." This approach considers that individuals experience behavior differently based on the complete context. For this qualitative study, the research method follows Yin's (2018) case study framework, which involves designing, preparing, collecting, and analyzing data (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1

Single Case Study Design Overview



When designing case study research, the researcher must know how each study component affects the other (Salmons, 2014). All components center around the research questions and the quality of the work is valid and reliable (Ebneyamini & Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018; Flick, 2018). Yin (2018) defines a *case study* as an "empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be evident" (p. 15). The case study method allows flexibility in making changes and choices regarding the data collection. It provides the opportunity to collect data from different sources, known as triangulation. Data from multiple sources can strengthen the study's validity by offering various viewpoints.

Yin's (2018) single case study design includes defining, designing, and selecting the research case. The researcher will then prepare, collect, and analyze the data. The last step comprises analyzing any remaining data and drawing conclusions about the findings.

Primary Information

The study occurred in a suburban public school district in North Texas known as Milky Way Independent School District (MWISD). The total population is 72,602, according to the United States Census Bureau (2023). The property value in this city is

\$417,140 < \$44,556. The district provides educational opportunities to a diverse population of approximately 35,000 students in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grades (See Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

2021-2022 Student Demographics for Milky Way Independent School District

Ethnicity	Count	Percentage
African American	11,667	32.7%
Hispanic	9,563	26.8%
White	9,521	26.7%
American Indian	102	.3%
Asian	2,942	8.2%
Pacific Islander	52	.1%
Two or More Races	1,814	5.1%

Note. Table 3.1 shows the total number of students by ethnicity (Texas Education Agency, 2023).

During the same school year, the district served approximately 3,747 students in the special education program (See Table 3.2) by disability. Students receive instruction at 49 different schools across the district. It employs approximately 4,714 teachers and staff members. There is one pre-kindergarten academy, 24 elementary schools (grades K-4), seven intermediate schools (grades 5 - 6), seven middle schools (grades 7-8), two STEM academies, five traditional high schools, one career and technology academy, an alternative school, and an early college high school. There are over 100 languages spoken in this district.

Table 3.2

Total Number of Students by Primary Disability in Milky Way Independent School

District

Primary Disability	Count	Percentage
Total Students with Intellectual Disabilities	1,876	46.2%
Students with Physical Disabilities	761	18.8%
Students with Autism	690	17 %
Students with Behavioral Disabilities	647	15.9%
Students with Non-Categorical Early Childhood	83	2.0%
Total Students with Disabilities	4,057	

Note: The table displays the total number of students with disabilities in the 2022-2023 school year who received special education services (Texas Education Agency, 2024).

Secondary Information

The researcher purposefully selected a special education folder that met specific criteria for the study. Specifically, the criteria included the following: one, the school must have referred an African American male elementary student for special education testing during the 2022-2023 academic year; two, the recommendation for this student must have been for a self-contained behavior program; and three, the student must have been identified as having an emotional disturbance (ED). Milky Way ISD offers a variety of services to support special education students. According to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2024), public education agencies must provide alternative placements to meet the needs of children with disabilities for special education and related services. The school district offers a continuum of services in three types of

placements. According to the Texas Administrative Code (2021), in the mainstream instructional setting, students can receive "special education and related services in regular classrooms based on their individual education plan (IEP)" (Texas Administrative Code, 2021). In the resource room, students receive "special education and related services in a setting other than regular education for less than 50% of the regular school day" (Texas Administrative Code, 2021). Finally, the self-contained instructional setting provides "special education and related services to students in a self-contained program for 50% or more of the regular school day on a regular school campus" (Texas Administrative Code, 2021).

Research Participants

The study participants included active and inactive participants. The active participants included staff members who currently supported the student at the time of the research study. They were selected because they met the following requirements: the campus administrator had five or more years of facilitating IEP meetings, and the special education teacher and diagnostician had worked in their profession for over five years. They included the campus administrator, Mrs. Snow; the special education teacher, Emma; the diagnostician who completed the evaluation, Jane; and the parent, Ms. Smith.

The inactive participants of the study were identified by reviewing the MTSS committee notes, special education referral documents, full initial individual evaluation, and the signature page of the IEP document. They included the campus principal, counselor, reading interventionist, three general education teachers, and the licensed specialist in school psychology (LSSP). An email letter of interest was sent to all potential participants to invite them to participate in the research study. The targeted

group included the campus administrators, general education and special education teachers, the campus diagnostician, and the LSSP. The researcher also called the parent by phone to invite her to participate in the study. The researcher obtained signed consent from all participants who agreed to participate in the study.

Procedures

Before collecting data, the researcher completed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct the case study. The IRB assures the protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects and is a requirement for institutions receiving federal funds (i.e., Anderson University). A completed Research Proposal form on the district's website was submitted, and MWISD approved it.

After receiving IRB and Research Proposal approval, the researcher, a district employee, verbally requested an alpha-numeric list of special education referrals at Galaxy Elementary School during the 2022-2023 school year from the special education department. Galaxy Elementary was purposefully selected because it offers a special education program for students with behavioral concerns. The alpha-numeric list included students' names, grades, ethnicity, campus name, suspected disability, date of referral, and gender.

After sorting through the list of six students, the researcher identified one student who met the research criteria. The criteria included an African American male whose disability was an emotional disturbance who received a Full Initial Individual Evaluation (FIIE) during the 2022-2023 school year. The collected list of information was encrypted and saved to a laptop computer with password protection.

Once the identified campus was selected, the researcher contacted the campus principal of Galaxy Elementary School and used the phone script to request a meeting time. The objective was to explain the research project and invite her to participate (see Appendix A). Once an agreed-upon date and time were determined, the researcher sent an email inviting the principal to an individual consent meeting and interview (see Appendix B).

Next, the parent was contacted by phone using the phone script. The researcher explained the study over the phone and asked the parent if she would like to participate. The researcher also asked the parent for consent to review her child's academic and special education records. After she gave verbal consent to participate, the researcher emailed two consent forms for participation in the study (see Appendix C) and (see Appendix D).

The study included two additional active participants: the diagnostician who evaluated the student and the current special education teacher. In addition, several inactive participants were involved in the MTSS process. These included two general education teachers, a special education teacher, a counselor, a reading interventionist, and the campus administrator of Mars Elementary School. These participants received an email inviting them to participate in the study. They had one week to respond and confirm their participation. At the end of one week, the researcher sent a reminder email to those individuals still needing to confirm their participation. A total of two participants confirmed interest in participating, the diagnostician and the special education teacher, bringing the total number of participants to four. The researcher prepared for the data collection process after scheduling the individual interviews and consent meetings.

Data Collection

When conducting research, it is important to gather information from different sources. Additionally, triangulating the research method can improve the quality of qualitative research. Flick (2018) recommends enhancing the reliability and validity of findings by combining different data collection methods.

Instrumentation

For the case study, the researcher utilized two methods to gather data: conducting individual interviews and analyzing content. Interviews allowed the interviewer to engage with the participants face-to-face and ask probing questions (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). They also created an environment for the interviewee to provide a narrative by discussing her personal experiences relating to the questions. The researcher conducted four semi-structured interviews with four participants over three weeks.

The second instrument to collect data was content analysis, which entails searching through one or more written documents (Thomas, 2011). One advantage of using content analysis is having the ability to scan large quantities of documents at a time. The researcher used a laptop to review and scan documents. The Microsoft Word document feature, Find, assisted with word searches within the documents. Using the highlighter feature helped to capture critical terms and phrases, including a *multi-tiered system of supports, RTI, interventions, Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3, IEP, behavior interventions, duration, frequency, data collection, behavior, outcomes, special education, discipline, and evaluation*. The purpose of searching these terms was to determine the type of interventions provided to the student and the response to those interventions.

Interviews

Interviews in qualitative research are a flexible way to collect factual data, views, opinions, personal narratives, and histories. These elements make interviews meaningful when participants answer various research questions (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). Four Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with the campus staff, campus administrator, and parent. Interviews were scheduled using the district's electronic calendar and Microsoft Outlook and took place in person and virtually using Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Electronic signatures of consent were obtained from each participant by using Acrobat Adobe. To protect the identity of each participant, pseudonyms were assigned. After each interview, the recordings were transcribed verbatim and sent to each participant to check for accuracy.

Campus Staff Interviews

To answer Research Question 1 and Research Question 2, the teacher provided her perspective on the IEP team's decision to place the student with emotional disturbance in a self-contained classroom. The diagnostician provided information regarding the special education referral process and how the teachers' and parent input affects the completion of the Full Initial Individual Evaluation (FIIE). Participants permitted the researcher to record the meeting using a laptop. To initiate the interview, the researcher placed a link to the demographic survey in the chat of the virtual meeting platform (see Appendix E). The IRB consent letter was displayed on the screen for participants to view while the researcher explained informed consent.

The Campus Staff Interview Protocol (see Appendix F) was used to conduct the interview. The researcher displayed the interview questions for the participants to view during the interview. The researcher utilized a conversational model for sixty minutes.

Once the interview was over, the recording was stopped and transcribed verbatim into written form. Transcribing and coding allowed the researcher to compare the participants' responses and look for similarities and differences in answers to create codes, which began the data analysis process. The researcher compared written notes to the transcribed interview for accuracy. Each participant received a copy of the completed transcript to verify the accuracy and validity of their statements.

Campus Administrator Interview

The campus administrator participated in an individual interview. The interview aimed to determine how she perceived her role as the leader of the IEP team when determining placement for students with emotional disturbance to answer Research Question 3. The administrator provided detailed information about the district's expectations of the multi-tiered system of support and special education referral process, including explaining her role as an IEP team member.

The researcher contacted the principal by phone and email, requesting three dates to schedule the interview. Before the in-person interview began, the researcher asked permission to record the meeting using Microsoft Teams. Once granted, a link to the demographic survey was emailed to the principal to complete. The IRB consent letter was displayed on the projector screen for the principal to view while the researcher explained informed consent. The Campus Administrator Interview Protocol was used to ask questions (see Appendix G).

The interviewer ended the interview after 15 minutes due to a scheduling conflict, even though the meeting was scheduled for one hour. When discussing rescheduling, no dates accommodated the researcher's and principal's schedules. The alternative was for the principal to agree to answer the remaining questions by email. The remaining

interview questions were emailed to the principal the same day for completion. After two days, the principal emailed the responses to the questions and her signed consent form back to the researcher.

After the interview, the researcher stopped the recording and transcribed it verbatim into written form. To ensure accuracy, they compared written notes and interview responses to the transcribed interview. Once completed, the principal received a copy of the transcript to verify the accuracy and validity of her statements. After the principal verified the transcript, the researcher began the data analysis phase by reading the transcript line-by-line, making notes in the margins, and creating codes.

Parent Interview

Research Question 4 aimed to explore how the parent perceived whose child was identified as emotionally disturbed and referred for special education evaluation regarding the special education referral process. Interviewing with the parents proved helpful in answering this research question. Creating a safe environment for the parent to share her personal experience was necessary for the study. As a required member of the IEP team, the parent contributes information about their child. The information provided can assist the IEP team in making the final placement decision.

The selected parent received a phone call requesting a time of availability. Once a mutually agreed-upon date and time were determined, an electronic calendar invite was sent to the parent confirming the interview. A follow-up phone call was made to the parent the day before the interview to confirm the appointment. The parent was invited to participate in person or virtually and requested a virtual interview. A Microsoft Teams link was created and sent to the parent's email address.

During the interview, the researcher explained the informed consent form to the parents and displayed it on the screen. The researcher emphasized that the parent's participation was voluntary and that she could stop the interview anytime. The researcher sent the parent consent to participate and to review student records (See Appendix C and Appendix D). The parent signed both consent forms, allowing the researcher to review her child's school records and participate in the study. She also permitted the recording of the meeting.

The Parent Interview Protocol was used to ask questions (see Appendix H). The parent interview lasted 45 minutes. Once the interview was over, the recording, interview protocol, and additional notes were transcribed verbatim into written form. The parent received a copy to verify the accuracy and validity of her statements. The parent's responses were transcribed and coded after the interview.

Documents and Folder Review

Document analysis in qualitative research focuses on interpreting latent meaning, and the researcher looks for "explicit meaning" in data (Morgan, 2022, p. 65). The researcher analyzed and interpreted the data to gain an understanding and develop knowledge. To address Research Question 1, data collected from the document and folder review were used. Data included a review of intervention strategies, teacher reports, student work samples, behavior logs, academic records, and the IEP. It took one week to conduct the document and folder review. The purpose of the document review was the following.

- Identify the interventions provided to the student.
- Analyze the evaluation procedures.

- Investigate whether the IEP contains support and services for behavior.
- Dissect the data to support LRE implementation.
- Examine what instructional strategies were provided to the student.
- Uncover the strategies and interventions used to address the student's behavior.
- Discover what professional development was provided to staff regarding behavior.
- Reveal If there was a behavior intervention plan (BIP) in the IEP.
- Conclude if the student made progress on his goals.
- Determine if the parent was involved in the decision-making process.

The confidential documents were only viewed by the researcher and were password-protected on a laptop.

Data Management

Data was collected using a laptop, Microsoft Word documents, a laptop recorder, and notebooks. An electronic file folder stored the data collected during the document review. To organize each folder, the researcher created a label identifying the content, such as Folder 1 MTSS documents, Folder 2 FIIE, and Folder 3 IEP Documents. Each interview protocol was placed in an electronic folder and labeled Administrator Interview, Special Education Teacher Interview, Diagnostician Interview, and Parent Interview. All files were encrypted and stored on a personal laptop with password protection for security purposes. After the research study, all files will be removed from the computer, copied to an external hard drive, and stored for five years. The researcher will delete the electronic copies stored on the laptop.

Data Analysis Framework

Data analysis involves interpreting data using coding and notetaking techniques as a foundation to discover patterns of social behavior (Holton & Walsh, 2020, p. 2). After conducting interviews and reviewing documents, the researcher analyzed the data using Glaser and Strauss's (2017) constant comparative method framework. It compares incidents applicable to each category, integrates categories and their properties, delimits the theory, and writes the theory. The researcher conducted interviews and reviewed documents and folders for this specific study.

To compare the incidents that apply to each category, the researcher read each transcript carefully using a hand-coding technique, which involved reading line by line and paragraph by paragraph. To aid in the data analysis, the researcher used a pen to make notes in the margins of the reading material. This method proved helpful in identifying the frequent changes in the data and creating appropriate codes for analysis.

Keywords and phrases were highlighted and organized into academic or behavior categories using color-coded Post-it notes. The researcher used orange Post-it notes to indicate behavior interventions and pink notes to indicate academic interventions. The process continued by creating open codes and themes on Post-it notes.

The features in Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat were used for electronic completion. A list of the color codes used can be found in (see Appendix I).

During the coding process, the researcher compared words and phrases to existing categories to identify any new categories that may have emerged (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). For instance, after reviewing the data, the researcher identified five distinct types of behavior exhibited by the student: physical aggression, verbal aggression, elopement,

task refusal, and disrupting the learning environment. To ensure consistency, the researcher cross-referenced these categories with the codes assigned to the behavior section. This approach aligns with Glaser and Strauss' (2017) recommendation to "compare incidents within and between categories" while coding (p. 106). The researcher repeated this process several times until saturation was achieved, and then the categories and their properties were integrated. To ensure accuracy in the researcher's analysis, the researcher carefully reviewed the transcript and codes to determine whether further coding was necessary. This process allowed the researcher to maintain clarity and precision throughout the work.

Trustworthiness

The researcher used data triangulation and collected data through individual interviews and document reviews to ensure the study was reliable. The researcher compared the responses from different interviews to check for consistency and ensure the data was reliable and could be included in the case study confidently (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). Guba (1981) proposed four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which researchers should use to establish trustworthiness. The following sections explain each criterion in detail.

Credibility

The study's credibility seeks to answer the question, how can the truth be established with the research participants? To gather a range of information, including factual data, personal narratives, and opinions, the researcher used interviews and content analysis as her data collection methods, which are known for their flexibility (Atkins &

Wallace, 2012). These methods allow the researcher to actively collect and analyze data, making them a valuable tool for conducting effective research.

The researcher held four individual meetings to explain the study's purpose and explain informed consent to the participants. The researcher emphasized that the participants could leave the study at any time as it was voluntary participation. To encourage honest answers from the participants, the researcher used a soft tone when asking questions and explained the confidentiality measures and details about how the data would be stored and protected.

Transferability

Transferability is "the concept analogous to generalizability or external validity" (Guba, 1981, p. 81). The study was divided into four chapters, each focusing on a specific area. In Chapter 1, the researcher explains the importance and purpose of the study. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of current articles related to the topic. Chapter 3 covers the study's setting, methodology, research design, data analysis plan, and framework. Finally, in Chapter 4, the researcher presents the study's findings, which readers can use to determine how applicable the results are to their own experiences.

Dependability

Establishing dependability, which refers to the reliability and consistency of the study, is important to ensure its success. To achieve this, the researcher held regular meetings with the researcher's dissertation chair to generate ideas and receive advice on the study's logistics. As the study progressed, the researcher continued to meet with the dissertation committee to receive feedback on the research questions, study design, and

methodology. This feedback was considered and applied to the study to ensure its success.

Confirmability

Confirmability in research suggests that the researcher must rely on the data to maintain neutrality, which requires clear documentation of the methods used and the data produced. Researchers must actively consider potential biases that could affect the study's results. One effective way to address this is by sharing background information with participants, among other strategies.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher used the ethical principles outlined by Flick (2018). The researcher considered ethical concerns throughout the research process. First, permission from the Anderson University IRB committee and Milky Way ISD was obtained before contacting potential participants or collecting data. Second, informed consent was shared, displayed, and explained to the active participants and obtained. Third, the researcher disclosed the purpose of the study, potentially harmful effects, and the protection of any identifiable information with each participant. Fourth, once data collection began, pseudonyms were assigned for all districts, schools, and participants' names to protect anonymity, confidentiality, and participants' privacy. Fifth, participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. However, all participants continued with the study.

When considering the research environment, each interview was individualized and held in the researcher's private office without distractions using individual Zoom and Microsoft Teams links for each virtual interview. All password-protected files were

removed from the laptop and copied to an external hard drive for five years to protect the participant's confidential information. The electronic copies on the laptop were deleted. Lastly, plagiarism was avoided when analyzing data, transcribing participants' responses, analyzing data, and reporting the study findings. These ethical considerations protected the participants in the study and the integrity of the collected data, analysis, and the researcher.

Summary

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research study's methodology and procedures. The study investigated the special education placement decision of an African American male with emotional disturbance. The study used the qualitative research method of case study. The case study method was selected because it allows the researcher flexibility when conducting the survey. It also uses real-life context as its primary source of evidence.

The study is in a suburban school district in North Texas. The district offers various types of special education self-contained classrooms. For this study, a document review included a folder from the special education behavior program. Participants included the current campus principal, the special education teacher, the diagnostician, and the parent. Data was collected by conducting interviews and reviewing the student's academic and special education records.

An introduction and consent meeting explained the research purpose and design. During this meeting, participants agreed to participate in the study. The researcher protected the collected data with a password on a laptop and kept it for five years. One

ethical concern is that participants will share information about the study, possibly disclosing other participants.

The study aims to investigate the school-based interventions employed and the procedures followed while deciding the placement of African American males with emotional disturbance in a special education self-contained classroom. Chapter 4 will present this study's findings, including the three common themes obtained from the data's coding. An evaluation of the findings and a summary will conclude the chapter.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

In this qualitative case study, the researcher investigated the interventions provided to an elementary school student who identifies as an African American male before his referral for special education evaluation. The researcher's goal was to identify school-based interventions implemented before a student's referral to special education and to understand the reasons for their enrollment in a self-contained behavior program. The study focuses on a ten-year-old fourth-grade student currently receiving behavior program services. The student joined Milky Way ISD during the 2022-2023 academic year. The study clarifies the academic and behavioral interventions provided to the student before his referral for special education evaluation. The student met the eligibility criteria for special education with a primary disability of being emotionally disturbed and with an Other Health Impairment (OHI) for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The student exhibited physical and verbal aggression, disrupted the learning environment, eloped, and displayed off-task behaviors (See Table 4.1) *Types of Student Behaviors during the 2022-2023 school year.*

Table 4.1

Types of Student Behaviors During the 2022-2023 School Year

Documented Behavior	Examples	Incidents	Frequency	Duration
Physical Aggression	Hitting, pushing, shoving, throwing objects	12	Weekly	40 days
Non-Compliance	Not complying with the teacher's request, leaving the assigned area, putting the head down on the desk	88	Two or more times a day	40 days
Disrupting Learning Environment	Roaming, rolling on the floor, yelling, making noises, and touching others belongings	93	Two or more times a day	40 days
Verbal Aggression	Name-calling, making threats, yelling at staff	12	Two or more times a day	40 days
Elopement	Leaving assigned space, leaving the classroom	9	Two or more times a day	40 days

Upon observing these behaviors, the campus initiated the MTSS process to provide tiered support, eventually leading to a referral for special education evaluation. The triangulation process involved reviewing academic and special education records and conducting individual interviews with four stakeholders.

The research methodology employed a single case study, delving into a specific real-life phenomenon while staying within certain boundaries. This approach allowed data to be gathered from multiple sources, resulting in a narrative presentation of the findings (Yin, 2018). The research instruments comprised four semi-structured interviews, each lasting about an hour.

These interviews were conducted with Jane, the diagnostician; June, the special education teacher; Mrs. Snow, the campus administrator; and Ms. Smith, the student's parent.

During the content analysis phase of the research, various student records were reviewed, including notes from MTSS committee meetings, academic records, disciplinary records, special education records, and behavior data. Highlighters, small Post-its, and two large Post-it poster papers were used to organize the gathered information into separate tables to ensure that all relevant details were captured. It was found that during the 2022-2023 school year, the student received behavior interventions as part of the MTSS process (See Table 4.2) and academic interventions (See Table 4.3).

Table 4.2*MTSS Behavior Interventions*

Behavior Interventions	Tier Level	Actual Duration	Recommended Duration
Ability grouping	Tier 2	7 days	10 – 20 weeks
Behavior chart	Tier 3	11 weeks	20 + weeks
Behavior management plan	Tier 3	11 days	20 + weeks
Flexible seating	Tier 2	19 days	10 – 20 weeks
Check-ins	Tier 2	11 weeks	10 – 20 weeks
Choices	Tier 3	11 weeks	20 + weeks
Frequent breaks	Tier 3	11 weeks	20 + weeks
Non-verbal countdown	Tier 3	11 weeks	20 + weeks
Tutoring	Tier 3	19 days	20 + weeks
Physical activity	Tier 3	11 weeks	20 + weeks

Note: The table represents the behavior interventions provided to the student during the 2022-2023 school year while undergoing the MTSS process (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007).

Table 4.3*MTSS Academic Interventions*

Academic Interventions	Tier Level	Actual Duration	Recommended Duration
Chunking assignments	Tier 1	19 days	8 weeks
Extra time for completing assessments	Tier 3	7 days	20 + weeks
Graphic organizers	Tier 1	19 days	8 weeks
Oral tests	Tier 3	19 days	20 + weeks
Shorten assignments	Tier 1	19 days	8 weeks
Spell checker	Tier 3	19 days	20 + weeks

Note: The table represents the academic interventions reported to the student during the 2022-2023 school year while going through the MTSS process (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007).

Chapter 4 provides the findings to the following research questions:

- Research Question 1: What academic and behavioral school-based interventions were provided to the student before being referred to special education testing, and what were the results of those interventions?
- Research Question 2: How did the IEP team’s perception of the student affect placing the student with emotional disturbance in a self-contained classroom?
- Research Question 3: How does the campus administrator perceive her role as the leader of the IEP team when determining placement for students with emotional disturbance?
- Research Question 4: What was the parent's perception of the special education referral process for their child who was referred for special education testing and identified as emotionally disturbed?

Active participants included the parent, the diagnostician who evaluated the student, the current special education teacher, and the current campus administrator (See Table 4.4). The active participants' age ranges, years of experience, gender, and ethnicity are listed.

Table 4.4

Demographic Distribution of Active Research Participants

Participant	Name	Position	Age Range	Years in Education	Gender	Ethnicity
P 1	Jane	Diagnostician	35-44	18	Female	Caucasian
P2	Mrs. Snow	Principal	35-44	16	Female	African American
P3	Emma	Special Education Teacher	35-44	10	Female	Caucasian
P4	Ms. Smith	Parent	N/A	N/A	Female	African American

A list of inactive study participants was identified by reviewing the MTSS committee notes, referral documents, the student’s initial full individual evaluation, and IEP documents (See Table 4.5). The inactive participants included the previous campus principal, a reading interventionist, a school counselor, and three general education teachers, all of whom received an email to participate in the study. However, there was no response. One general education teacher and the LSSP were no longer in the school district. Therefore, data from the MTSS committee meeting notes provided insight into the discussions and decisions for the student.

Table 4.5

Demographics Distribution of Inactive Research Participants

Participant	Gender	Ethnicity
Counselor	Female	African American
Principal	Female	African American
General Education Teacher No. 1	Female	Caucasian
General Education Teacher No. 2	Female	Caucasian
General Education Teacher No. 3	Female	African American
Reading Interventionist	Female	Hispanic
LSSP	Female	Caucasian

Note: This table represents the members of the Multi-tiered System of Support team that made the special education referral. They were responsible for implementing school-based interventions. No demographic data was available for the inactive participants.

Findings

In the MWISD school district, not all schools offer every special education program. If the IEP team recommends a special education self-contained classroom unavailable on the student's home campus, the student will have to transfer to a different school. Inviting the receiving school to the IEP meeting is a district practice. This was the

case for our student, John. The sequence of events that led up to the creation of John's initial individual education plan was reviewed, and the results of each research question and the themes that emerged from analyzing the documents and conducting interviews were examined.

During research analysis, three main themes emerged regarding the interventions given to an African American male elementary school student before his referral for special education evaluation. After numerous coding cycles, the emergent themes were Team Knowledge, Decision Making, and Advocacy. The subthemes of Team Awareness, Inconsistency in Time Delivery, and Professional Development emerged as specific elements under Team Knowledge. Student Disability Severity and Student Capabilities were subthemes under Decision Making. Placement emerged as a subtheme under Advocacy. A summary of thematic findings and data sources is outlined (See Table 4.6).

Table 4.6

Emerging Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subthemes	Data Source
Team Knowledge	Team Awareness Inconsistency in Time Delivery Professional Development	Interviews Review of Documents
Decision Making	Student Disability Severity Student Capabilities	Interviews Review of Documents
Advocacy	Placement	Interviews Review of Documents

Note. The table lists the themes and subthemes from the active participant's interviews.

The researcher included participant quotes and data from the student's academic records to make the themes more reliable and trustworthy. Using quotes can strengthen the validity of the findings and ensure that the results are based on accurate and relevant information.

Theme 1: Team Knowledge

The diagnostician, special education teacher, and campus principal were interviewed individually after thoroughly reviewing the MTSS committee notes, student intervention plan, and academic records. Data revealed that participants needed to better understand the MTSS process and guidelines. Participants showed a desire to be better informed about students' intervention needs. Also, participants expressed the inability to properly understand the intervention allotted time for Tiers 1-3. In addition, participants voiced their need for additional professional development opportunities.

Subtheme 1: Team awareness. Three participants, Jane, the diagnostician; Mrs. Snow, the campus administrator; and Emma, the special education teacher, acknowledged that the district had an MTSS process and that interventions were valuable. However, when asked about the specific student, the participants needed to learn what academic behavioral interventions students received.

The document review revealed the student transferred to MWISD during April of the Spring semester of the 2022-2023 school year from Rocky Road Independent School District (RRISD). While attending school in RRISD, the academic and behavior records included documentation that the school district began the MTSS process in February 2022. The documentation reflected an MTSS meeting held on February 10, 2022, and the MTSS team recommended John receive Tier 3 interventions in the general education classroom while awaiting special education evaluation. Some of the behavior interventions included a behavior chart, frequent breaks, check-ins, and non-verbal countdowns, according to the MTSS committee notes dated February 10, 2022.

As reported in the committee notes, the student began to receive the following behavior interventions: defusing techniques of redirection and refocusing, a behavior chart, check-in and check-out with the counselor, and a reward system. The student also received academic interventions, including chunking assignments and deconstructing tasks. The documentation showed that behavior goals were created in general education, and the teacher monitored progress for one month. The results revealed the student was unsuccessful in meeting his behavior goals, prompting the referral to special education evaluation.

When John entered MWISD in April 2022, his teacher, General Education Teacher No. 1, requested that the MTSS process begin for the student. According to the MTSS initial request/observation form and anecdotal notes, the student received the behavior interventions discussed earlier and listed in Table 4.2, which were unsuccessful. An examination of the committee notes, discipline records, and MTSS history revealed that the frequency and duration of the interventions were inconsistent.

When the diagnostician Jane was asked how long interventions were implemented, she stated: “Interventions are provided over six to nine weeks, and then if those interventions do not work, the student should spend nine to 12 weeks in each tier.” Mrs. Snow, the principal, responded,

“We follow the interventions identified in the Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) to target the behaviors found in the Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA). Not all ED students considered for self-contained placement need academic interventions. We have several who are on grade level.”

Jane stated that the student received “limited behavioral interventions and had numerous referrals and that there was a rush to evaluate the student despite the limited intervention data.” During the IEP meeting, Jane could not remember if the IEP team discussed the academic and behavioral interventions provided to the student.

After reviewing the committee notes from Milky Way ISD, the researcher discovered that the student had received Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions to address his academic and behavioral concerns. In the initial IEP meeting in the Fall of 2022, the IEP team agreed to incorporate the interventions recommended by the MTSS committee into the student's behavior intervention plan (BIP). These interventions included check-ins, preferred activities, frequent breaks, and daily behavior monitoring. However, the IEP documents did not provide any information on the duration of the interventions, or the methodology used for data collection.

When John started receiving special education services, Emma became his special education teacher at Galaxy Elementary School. As she did not know the student during the pre-referral process, Emma could only provide information about the interventions she delivered to John in her special education behavior classroom.

Emma

Behaviorally and academically, students are provided extra tutoring time. During the day, they are given one-on-one, small-group instruction with the teacher.

Students can access math manipulatives to assist with targeted skills. Other manipulatives may include using counters, calculators, or small group oral administration for math assessments.

If they struggle with reading or have the potential for dyslexia, we can provide auditory accommodations.

The student's current behavior intervention plan includes timeout, preferred seating, a calm-down area, providing mentors, providing social stories, social skills, time with the counselor, and time with the administrator. For positive reinforcement, we have Eagle Bucks that the student can earn, stars, extra recess, iPad time, Chromebook time, and other positive incentives we can imagine.

Subtheme 2: Inconsistency in time. The School District's Multi-Tiered System of Support. The handbook guides the length of interventions and data collection for teachers. Tier 1 interventions are universal practices implemented for six to nine weeks. After the nine weeks, if the student is not making progress, the student will begin to receive targeted interventions for an additional six to nine weeks. During Tier 2 interventions, the data collection time is every three weeks, and the student receives small group instruction for 60 minutes per week. There is a six-week check-in period during Tier 2. The MTSS committee reviews the Universal Screener to determine if the student is below, on, or above grade level. Depending on the outcome, the student will move to Tier 3 for intensive instruction, prompting the prereferral period for a special education evaluation, remain at Tier 2, or return to Tier 1 interventions.

Jane, Mrs. Snow, and Emma described the school district's MTSS process as follows:

Jane

The interventions are provided throughout six to nine weeks; if those are not, the students should spend nine to 12 weeks in each tier and have the regular Tier 1

interventions for nine to 12 weeks. They meet again. They need to make progress. Then, you change up the tier of interventions and provide more. Once they get to Tier 3, they continue to struggle to make those interventions, and each tier makes them more and more direct and specialized. Once they get to Tier 3, that is a consideration for a special education referral.

Mrs. Snow

“We engage in the MTSS process based on behavior and academics, but we collect initial data for about the first six weeks.”

Emma, the special education teacher, responded based on her personal experience in another district and as a parent undergoing the MTSS process.

Emma

I am familiar with my previous district’s MTSS process, and I can't say for sure 100%. Still, I have seen that they go through it several times and collect the data and documents. It's universal: Their tiered support system is Tier 1 on grade level, Tier 2 below grade level, and Tier 3 significantly below grade level.

Subtheme 3: Professional Development. Participants revealed the need for more district-wide professional development opportunities. Milky Way ISD does provide professional development on the MTSS process. The campus interventionist and administrator facilitate the training at the beginning of the school year when teachers and staff return from summer break. When asked what professional development is offered to teachers and administrators, Jane, and Emma responded,

Jane

I know it is offered to interventionists and administration, but there is no direct district-wide training for MTSS. Unless you do it over the summer, the interventionist and the administrator are trained, which trickles down to the campus level.

Emma

“Umm, we have had professional development on campus during one of our campus days over MTSS, and I know while I have not taken part in it myself, you know Galaxy Elementary.”

Mrs. Snow, the campus administrator, believed professional development once a year needed to be improved. To address her concern, she offers training on the MTSS process throughout the school year.

Mrs. Snow

Well, first, I would like to say that professional development is limited. It should be a little more intensive, but the MTSS professional development given to the teachers is facilitated by the campus administrators and not by the professional development department. The training is condensed, and the teachers receive that training at one of the beginnings of the school year's professional development days. One thing we have realized is that it is just not frequent enough. So, before engaging in our first round of MTSS meetings, we revisit the MTSS process in smaller pockets. That's done with grade levels; then, we usually must revisit it about mid-year.

The lack of professional development opportunities seems to give participants a sense of insecurity when providing MTSS services.

Theme 2: Decision-Making

Participants can submit data on student progress as they observe and work with students in a classroom setting. However, some team members did not feel they impacted final decision-making. Participants reported that although they were part of the IEP team, only certain members made the decision on recommendations concerning student capabilities and disability severity.

Subtheme 1: Student disability severity. Some IEP team members spend a lot of time with students to determine how much their disability impacts their education. Yet, in IEP meetings, they feel somewhat left out of decision-making. Jane reflected on the evaluation she conducted on the student and commented, "He did not have any significant cognitive deficits." She acknowledged that the student did have some deficits, but overall, he had "average cognitive intelligence." When inquired about whether the student's disability determined the type of services he would receive, Jane responded:

Jane

"It does not guarantee that they will get a self-contained program. So, having an emotional disturbance disability condition does not guarantee a self-contained program". Jane did not think her perception of the student impacted the committee's decision for a special education self-contained placement. When asked if she had a vote when agreeing to the recommendations of the IEP committee, Jane stated.

Jane

"I have an opinion. The campus administrator signs off on the paperwork. They get a vote; the administrator and the parents are the only two votes."

Subtheme 2: Student capabilities. Student academic and behavioral capabilities are considered when developing an IEP and implementing MTSS interventions. The special education teacher plays an important role in evaluating students' capabilities, yet the special education teacher has no say in the final IEP decision-making.

Emma is the current special education teacher for student behavior. However, she did not take part in the decision-making process for this student as she was not a teacher of the referring campus. Some students receive all their academic services with her in her classroom, while others receive inclusion services in the general education setting. Emma's responses are based on her experience of using data to determine if her self-contained students have obtained the skills necessary to receive instruction in the inclusion classroom. When asked about her perception and how it affects the IEP team's decision to place a student with ED in the self-contained classroom, Emma said:

Emma

My decision will affect the student's ability to push back into the general education setting. One of the questions I ask myself is: Are they ready for the Resource classroom? Are the students' attention spans able to receive 20 to 30 minutes of instruction in the general education classroom?

To follow up on this response, she was asked about the data she uses to help decide whether a student is ready for the general education classroom.

Emma

I look at their ability to complete classwork, if they avoid the task, the type of services and support they receive from the teacher. If the student causes class disruptions, are they easily distracted by other students, or do they cause

disruptions? I also looked at data to determine if they had any safety concerns, such as physical aggression toward others. The goal is to keep all of themselves and others safe.

Mrs. Snow, the campus administrator talked about her role as an IEP team member in determining special education placement; she responded,

Mrs. Snow

“So, my role as the campus administrator is reviewing our campus practices and data and thinking outside the box when implementing interventions. I also ensure that we follow district policy, and I'm a decision-making member of the IEP committee.”

As the researcher and Mrs. Snow continued the conversation, she was asked if she thought her role as the campus administrator affected the IEP team's decision-making.

Mrs. Snow

I believe my role affects the team's decision as my role as the LEA representative and campus leader is impactful by the nature of my title. More specifically, I lead the efforts of the campus staff when deciding for or against a self-contained setting for a student with ED.

We consider the individuality of the student's case. Some academic skills observed with other students include below-grade-level proficiency in reading comprehension and math fluency.” In addition, during the interview, Mrs. Snow shared, "The IEP team bases their considerations on the student's needs, not the wants of the adults. We must show a student's needs based on data to determine where the student will receive services.

Theme 3: Advocacy

Ms. Smith felt that her role as a part of the IEP team was to be a voice for her child. Also, advocating for her son's placement and having trust in the school was important to her. The data revealed her willingness to be an active participant during the IEP and MTSS process. For example, when asked what her role was as an IEP committee member, Ms. Smith explained, "My role is to support the school and my son. I also give feedback and listen to suggestions to support his teachers and him better. I offer emotional support as well." In addition, a review of IEP documents reveals that Ms. Smith is present during meetings.

Subtheme 1: Placement. Ms. Smith shared that her voice had not been heard at the previous school. Only when her son transferred to Galaxy Elementary did her perspective change. She was asked if she felt like she had a voice as a member of the IEP committee. She continued, "I think I have a voice in the meetings. The IEP team is not as big as it used to be because my son is in the behavior program, which makes it easier for me. The committee members make me feel comfortable expressing my opinion."

Ms. Smith was asked if she had any input as an IEP committee member about the specific behavior program the committee recommended. She said:

Ms. Smith

A lot of information was not explained to me. I do not think the receiving school should have explained why my son was being placed at their campus. I disagreed with how everything was presented to me. I felt forced to agree with placement at the new school.

After the student arrived at Galaxy, the new school, Ms. Smith shared that she felt like she was going into the new school “blind.” She also expressed concern about the lack of information about the program.

Ms. Smith

“I did not know who or what was in the classroom. I did not know the number of teachers or the number of students. It was like, OK, well, he should go here, we’re done.”

When asked about the academic skills and behavioral concerns observed when determining this student's placement in a special education self-contained program, Mrs. Snow did not observe the student because he transferred to her campus. She commented:

Mrs. Snow

Behavior concerns typically include the amount of time spent outside of the classroom or disengaged due to the following behavior: physical and emotional aggression, task refusal, non-compliance of reasonable teacher directives, and emotional outbursts such as screaming and crying.

Based on the interview, it is evident that the parent's experience with the special education process for her son, who was referred for testing and identified as emotionally disturbed, was negative. The parent felt pressured to accept the behavior placement decision made by the committee despite her understanding of her role as an IEP committee member. It wasn't until her son started attending Galaxy Elementary School that her concerns were finally heard. In addition, the interview with the school administrator revealed that behavioral concerns play a role in placement determination.

Summary of Themes

In summary, the three themes that emerged through data analysis are Team Knowledge, Decision Making, and Advocacy. The frequency of these emergent themes included Team Knowledge occurring within the data with the greatest frequency, while Decision Making and Advocacy appeared less often (See Table 4.7).

Table 4.7

Theme Frequency

Theme	Frequency
Team Knowledge	12
Decision Making	9
Advocacy	4

Note: The table lists the number of times each theme emerged from the data.

Summary

Chapter 4 featured the findings of a qualitative single case study that aimed to shed light on the special education placement determination for a fourth-grade African American male student with an emotionally disturbed disability. The study centered on the school-based interventions made available to the student during his progression through the Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) process.

The findings of this study revealed the need for IEP team members to be more knowledgeable about the MTSS process. Team members' inability to understand the MTSS process, inconsistencies in service delivery time, and lack of needed training were major concerns for study participants. Also, study participants revealed a lack of decision-making among service providers who collect data on students. In addition, the study found that some participants saw themselves as advocates for the child.

The findings align with prior research by Sottolare and Blair (2023) and Miller et al. (2015), who both researched the CICO intervention at the elementary school level. When the researchers provided professional development to teachers on implementing the CICO intervention, the schools saw decreased student behavior concerns and increased academic engagement. Likewise, Bruhn et al. (2020) researched data-based individualization (DBI). When teachers were given professional development on implementing the intervention, the school saw improvement in student behavior.

Four research questions were developed to guide the study.

- Research Question 1: What academic and behavioral school-based interventions were provided to the student before being referred to special education testing, and what were the results of those interventions?
- Research Question 2: How did the IEP team's perception of the student affect the placement of the student with emotional disturbance in a self-contained classroom?
- Research Question 3: How does the campus administrator perceive her role as the leader of the IEP team when determining placement for students with emotional disturbance?
- Research Question 4: What was the parent's perception of the special education referral process for their child referred for special education testing and identified as emotionally disturbed?

The data for this study was gathered by conducting semi-structured individual interviews with four key participants: the diagnostician, special education teacher, campus administrator, and parent. Triangulation ensured a comprehensive data collection process

by carefully reviewing the student's academic records, MTSS committee notes, IEP documents, evaluation reports, teacher reports, behavior logs, and interviews.

The significance of this study's results cannot be overstated, particularly for African American male students who have been identified as emotionally disturbed. Educators must be equipped with evidence-based interventions through professional development opportunities to better support their students in the classroom. Providing proven effective interventions may minimize the necessity of a special education referral. Chapter 5 will delve into the restatement of the study's objective, interpretation of the findings, implications, limitations, suggestions for future research, recommendations for practical application, and conclusion.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

The study was a qualitative single-case study that aimed to investigate the school-based interventions, both academic and behavioral, that students received before the special education evaluation was requested. Qualitative research using a single-case study design was used to gain the perceptions of the campus staff, campus administrator, and parents. The data analysis for this research study included individual interviews and a document review, which contributed to the narrative.

The study began with the introduction to the research study from Chapter 1, the literature review and theoretical framework in Chapter 2, and Chapter 3 provided the research methodology, the description of the participant and folder selections, data collection procedures, and the data analysis framework for the study. The evidence of the case study is presented in Chapter 4, the findings of which three themes emerged from the data analysis: team knowledge, decision-making, and Advocacy. In Chapter 5, the researcher will interpret the findings and discuss the implications for theory and practice, the limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

This chapter contains a discussion and recommendations for future research to help answer the following four research questions:

- Research Question 1: What academic and behavioral school-based interventions were provided to the student before being referred to special education testing, and what were the results of those interventions?
- Research Question 2: How did the IEP team's perception of the student affect placing the student with emotional disturbance in a self-contained classroom?

- Research Question 3: How does the campus administrator perceive her role as the leader of the IEP team when determining placement for students with emotional disturbance?
- Research Question 4: What was the parent's perception of the special education referral process for her child who was referred for special education testing and identified as emotionally disturbed?

Interpretation of Findings

In analyzing the findings, the researcher evaluates the responses to each research question, drawing support from the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Additionally, each question incorporates the emerging theme developed from the data analysis. This comprehensive approach allows for a thorough understanding of the research outcomes and their alignment with existing scholarly work.

Research Question 1

The first research question investigated the academic and behavioral school-based interventions provided to the student before he was referred to special education evaluation. Team knowledge was the emerging theme to address research question one, which includes the subthemes of team awareness, inconsistency in time delivery, and professional development. After interviewing each participant, the researcher concluded that they were knowledgeable about the MTSS process and procedures but were unsure of the specific interventions, the frequency and duration, or the result of the implementation. When asked to describe the MTSS process in MWISD, the participants' responses varied.

A multi-tiered support system provides students with instructional and behavioral support in a tiered model. Horner and Halle (2020) describe it as "a three-tiered continuum of supports with the level of support intensity increasing from Tier 1 to Tier 2 and then Tier 3" (p. 76). Implementing leveled supports with fidelity will maximize student engagement and academic achievement by providing a structured learning environment and predictable and safe classrooms (Kittleman et al., 2020).

Upon reviewing the documents, the researcher found that John received school-based interventions before being referred for a special education evaluation, but the frequency of implementation was inconsistent. When discussing the school-based interventions that John received during the MTSS process, the campus diagnostician and special education teacher were unaware of the specific interventions. The campus diagnostician did not recall any specific interventions discussed during the IEP meeting. The special education teacher was not a member of the IEP team at the time of initial implementation. Therefore, she was not able to answer the question.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports recommend providing students with "significant or persistent social and emotional needs" with individualized classroom practices to help prevent negative behaviors from occurring (Simonsen et al., 2021, p. 4). The researcher reviewed the committee notes from the MTSS committee, which outlined behavior interventions such as access to flexible seating, frequent breaks, and choices that the campus provided to the students. To ensure accurate implementation, educators would benefit from professional development.

The participants acknowledged participating in the beginning-of-year professional development but felt more was needed. To address the need for additional training, the

campus administrator shared that she offers MTSS professional development throughout the school year. Reviewing the student's academic records revealed that the student did receive some tiered interventions, including the CICO intervention.

The CICO intervention has been shown to reduce student behavior concerns while increasing academic engagement (Bruhn et al., 2014; Miller et al., 2015). When the researchers asked the participants about the duration of interventions, they all provided inconsistent timeframes. Therefore, the length of the interventions at each tier needed to be clarified. Fuchs and Fuchs (2007), Fuchs et al., (2014), and RTI Action Network (2024) recommend implementing Tier 1 interventions for 5 to 8 weeks, Tier 2 for 10 to 20 weeks, and Tier 3 for 20 or more weeks.

Johnson et al. (2006) recommend providing continuous professional development to ensure the implementation of tiered interventions. This approach enables new and returning teachers to receive initial and refresher training, enhancing their knowledge of implementing and monitoring interventions. Additionally, educational institutions should develop a professional development plan for MTSS. The plan would provide opportunities for teachers to engage with curriculum practices using evidence-based interventions. They would learn how to progress, monitor the interventions, and implement learned practices. Lastly, teachers would learn how to read student data and use it to make data-driven decisions.

Professional development would equip teachers and staff with the tools they need to make data-based decisions and allow them to learn how to problem-solve. Teachers could use the data from progress monitoring to decide if a student needs to move forward, backward, or stay put between tiers. Learning how to problem solve also gives teachers

time to collaborate with peers when making data-driven decisions about students. Both RTI and PBIS are frameworks under the MTSS umbrella. According to Hunter et al. (2015), when educators receive training on evidence-based practices, progress monitoring, and documentation of collected data, it improves student outcomes.

An IEP team member is responsible for engaging in conversations, asking probing questions, and ensuring the best possible decision for the student. In this case, the IEP committee could have benefitted from questions surrounding the academic and behavioral interventions and their outcomes when determining a special education service. Yell et al. (2020) state that the IEP must ensure a sincere effort when selecting the services for a student with a disability.

Research Question 2

The second research question focused on how the IEP team's perception of the student with emotional disturbance affected the placement into a self-contained classroom. From the data analysis, the emergent theme for this question was Decision-Making, and the two subthemes are student disability severity and student capabilities. The required IEP team members include the campus administrator, parent, special education teacher, and general education teacher. One of the primary responsibilities of this team is to develop an individualized education program for students with disabilities. Although IDEA (2024) does not provide specific guidance concerning decision-making and appropriate placement decisions, schools use guidance provided by their local education agencies. One of the areas of concern when determining services and programs is the severity of the student's disability.

For a student to receive special education services, they must have one of the 13 disabilities recognized by the IDEA. The diagnostician or LSSP is responsible for identifying the disability. Depending on age and grade, these individuals select the assessment tools most appropriate for the student. According to Jane, the diagnostician when she evaluated John, he had average cognitive deficits. Jane gave John the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children—5th Edition (WiSC-V)—Composite. The LSSP administered the psychological evaluation to determine if he was emotionally disturbed.

Connelly (2021) looked at three structures within the Special Education Identification Process (SPED IDP) that could cause bias and initialized norms that further marginalization for Black Indigenous Students of Color (BISOC). The structures outlined in the Individuals with Disability Education Act (2004) are a multidisciplinary team (MDT), decision-making structures, social-emotional-behavioral (SED) assessments, data collection, and definite identification of ED.

The study investigates the social construction of race, ability, goodness, and corresponding experiences and conditions (Connelly, 2021). It included reviewing the special education identification process structure, which included the members of the multidisciplinary teams and their roles, data used for decision-making, and the labeling of students with ED, specifically Black Indigenous students of color. Connelly (2021) discussed the critical praxis of special education, including the need for practitioners to have essential analysis skills when differing race and dis/ability compared to whiteness and ableism within SPED IDP. If practitioners are unaware of racialization within the special education structure, they may serve the system, not the student (Connelly, 2021).

Some critical questions for practitioners and teams may contribute to the disproportionate identification of Black Indigenous students of Color (BISOC) with emotional disturbance. If conversations about race, ableism, and BISOC are avoided, they will continue to be disproportionately identified as ED, and lastly, the conceptualization of vulnerable decision-making (Connelly, 2021). Special Education identification begins as early as pre-kindergarten.

The evaluation team, including a psychologist, diagnostician, and LSSP, identified John as having ADHD, Disruptive Mood Dysregulation Disorder, Unspecified Depressive Disorder, Unspecified Anxiety disorder, and Emotional Disturbance. When making placement decisions, the IEP team should not only consider the severity of the student's disability but also consider what the student can do. The behavior classroom was the only place John received his special education services and spent all his time. While he was allowed to attend elective classes like physical education, art, and music for 50 minutes daily, he needed the support of a paraprofessional. Students should have access to the least restrictive environment to receive education services when appropriate (*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, 2024).

Emma, John's special education teacher, determined if he could receive instruction in the general education classroom based on the data collected from his goals and BIP. This data included his task completion, behavior towards himself and others, and whether he was likely to cause a distraction in the classroom. The IEP team discussed this data and determined the appropriate services for John.

The school district offers a continuum of services for students who receive special education services. Yell et al. (2020) highlight the requirements of providing a continuum

of services, stating, "IDEA requires school districts to have a range or continuum of alternative placement options to meet their unique academic and functional needs" (p. 294). Regarding John, the IEP team determined that his placement was in the behavior self-contained classroom, which was his least restrictive environment.

Research Question 3

The third research question was specifically for the campus administrator and focused on how she perceived her role as the leader of the IEP team when determining placements for students with ED. The school leader plays an intricate role on the school campus. She is the decision-maker, instructional leader, and problem solver. The principal also serves as the leader and facilitator of IEP team meetings. While facilitating the meetings, principals stay focused on the agenda to deter distractions from other stakeholders. They are the source of "balance and neutrality" (Kirkland & Bauer, 2016, p. 2) between the school district and the parents.

Mrs. Snow demonstrated her awareness of her role as leader of the IEP team by acknowledging that her job title alone affects the committee's decisions. When conducting a study about leadership styles in special education, Trichas and Avdimiotis, (2020) discovered that teachers prefer to work for a principal who "adopts the transformational leadership style, which maximizes the teachers' sense of autonomy, has a vision for the future and constitutes a source of inspiration" (p. 5). Mrs. Snow, being aware of her role as the IEP team leader and how it can affect the outcome of the placement decision for students with disabilities, creates an opportunity for professional development for teachers over their roles and responsibilities as an IEP team member.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question focused on the parents' perception of the special education referral process. Data gathered surrounding this research question emerged the theme advocacy and placement subtheme. *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* resulted in IEP teams looking closer at the student individually when making placement decisions and developing IEPs that are "data-driven" (Yell et al., 2020, p. 345). The IDEA requires that the student's placement be decided based on the needs outlined in the IEP. In John's case, his FIIE recommended that he receive services in a structured environment with a behavior intervention plan to manage his attentional, behavioral, and affective difficulties. The U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the *Endrew* case has set an example for others. Before this ruling, the IEP team members could place students in special education programs based on their feelings about the student rather than their actual needs.

The parent, another required member of the IEP team, adds value to the decisions made regarding the student's strengths, needs, services, and placement decisions. Mothers are the primary parents who attend IEP meetings and serve as their children's advocates (Choiseul-Praslin et al., 2021). As a stakeholder in the meeting, the parent's input helps develop the IEP for her student. The parent provides feedback regarding what the student can and cannot do from the parent's perspective. She can address health questions, provide input regarding strengths and weaknesses, and provide insight into her child's likes and dislikes. Even though the parent has much information about her child, research shows that parents feel judged in IEP meetings.

Choiseul-Praslin et al. (2021) stated, "Mothers face scrutiny at IEP meetings and feel judged not just for their input but also for whether they are perceived as good or bad

parents" (p. 248). Campuses can build a positive relationship by openly communicating the child's progress, developing a sense of belonging by inviting parents to become involved in the child's school, remaining professional, and encouraging the parent to take a leadership role. Although Ms. Smith, the parent, knew her role on the IEP team, she was uncertain about the placement of John in the behavior classroom. This uncertainty and mistrust experienced by Ms. Smith are not uncommon among parents attending IEP meetings, and it highlights the need for schools to ensure that parents feel included in the decision-making process.

Trust is "the partnership shares a sense of assurance about the reliability or dependability of the character, ability, strength, or truth of the other members of the partnership" (Choiseul-Praslin et al., 2021, p. 248). Parents who attend IEP meetings do not feel like they are part of the team. Campus staff members talk "to" them and not "with" them (Choiseul-Praslin et al., 2021, p. 249). Parents feel like they must agree with the school's decision and often do not voice their concerns or opinions, like Ms. Smith.

During the meeting, the parent felt forced to agree with the decision to place her son in the behavior classroom. Mistrust can occur when schools fail to follow procedural safeguards, causing parents to feel "coerced" into making uncomfortable decisions (Choiseul-Praslin et al., 2021, p. 249). As a vital member of the IEP team, the campus must strive to ensure that parents feel included in the decision-making process regarding IEP development and placement decisions.

Implications for Theory

The case study found that John, the student, received school-based interventions, but the data did not support a self-contained behavior program. Having a structural leader

can help campuses by assigning roles during IEP meetings, implementing practices to ensure data is collected, and providing professional development to support teachers. When campuses adopt an MTSS framework, they give students a chance to achieve academically and behaviorally.

Structural Leadership Framework

The structural leadership framework was appropriate for this case study because it calls for strategy, structure, and virtual and lateral coordination. The study found that the IEP team members were not knowledgeable about the school-based interventions provided to the student with EBD but were aware of the MTSS process. The findings also suggested professional development in implementing interventions would benefit IEP team members.

A structural leadership framework calls for strategic planning. Bolman and Deal (2021) state, "Strategic decisions are future-oriented" (p. 70). The IEP team makes placement decisions for students with disabilities. Before the student reaches special education evaluation, the student receives interventions. If the student passes Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions successfully, the need for special education services is not warranted at that time. To assist campus teachers with implementing evidence-based interventions, the campus administrator can develop a long-term professional development plan to support teachers' decision-making.

A structural form would assist IEP teams with decision-making when developing and implementing the IEP. The IDEA allows LEAs to create their processes for making placement decisions. The structural leadership framework recommends leaders be mindful of their environment, the skills of their staff members, and the availability of

resources (Bolman & Deal, 2021). When IEP teams make decisions about placement, they must consider how the student's disability impacts his learning and what the student can achieve in the classroom. Having decision-making processes could guide IEP teams.

The campus administrator assigns the vertical and lateral coordination of tasks and roles. The parent felt her voice was not being heard, so she took it upon herself to advocate for her child. The IEP meeting is a collaboration of all stakeholders. Assigning roles and responsibilities and creating a meeting agenda to address the parents' concerns under this framework can help ensure all areas of concern are addressed and everyone's voices are heard. Vertical and lateral coordination alignment is streamlined when the "environment is stable; tasks are well understood and predictable, and uniformity is essential" (Bolman & Deal, 2021, p. 65).

Multi-Tiered System of Support Framework

The theoretical theory for the study was the Multi-tiered System of Supports. The framework was selected to help discover the evidence-based academic and behavioral interventions provided to an African American male student with an emotional disturbance disability. Horner and Halle (2020) describe MTSS as "a three-tiered continuum of supports with the level of support intensity increasing from Tier 1 to Tier 2 and then to Tier 3" (p. 76). The tiered-level models, such as PBIS for behavior and RtI for academics and behavior, offer interventions to meet students' needs at the level they are on. As a preventative measure, the advantages of implementing such a framework are identifying students with disabilities early, focusing on prevention and assessments, and having clear academic implications (Horner & Halle, 2020; Nitz et al., 2023; Sugai & Horner, 2020). By applying the MTSS framework to the study, the researcher identified

the gaps in decision-making, implementation of school-based interventions, data collection, and progress monitoring—all of which contribute to the decision-making process for placement. These identified gaps have important implications for practice in the education of African American males with special education eligibility for emotional disturbance.

Implications for Practice

The research study contributed to the existing research reviewed in the literature on the MTSS interventions provided to the student before a special education evaluation. Research conducted by Alsalamah (2020) and Bruhn et al. (2020) found that after implementing extensive interventions like data-based individualization, students' behavior decreased, and academic performance increased. Unlike the findings of these researchers, this study was unable to identify the interventions' duration, frequency, and results. However, the findings did support the importance of enhancing team knowledge, decision-making, and Advocacy.

Enhance Team Knowledge through Professional Development

The dialogue with the educational participants revealed the opportunity for in-depth professional development on evidence-based interventions and how to implement them, as well as continuous training on the MTSS process. Professional development will help teachers implement evidence-based interventions with fidelity. Kamps et al. (2015) and Weeden et al. (2016) provided professional development before teachers implemented the CW-FIT interventions in their classrooms, which decreased student behavior problems and increased academic engagement.

Professional development on implementing MTSS frameworks like PBIS equips teachers with the tools to provide specific student feedback regarding their goals and

social skills progress. It also demonstrates how to use strategies such as surveys, one-on-one meetings, and peer groups as feedback options. When giving feedback, the person's tone is essential to how the student will respond. Using a soft tone can encourage a positive response from the student.

It was delimited to an elementary school that offered the behavior program in a specific suburban school district. In special education, data is collected on the student's IEPs to determine if the student has progressed. The data is then shared with parents as a progress report and later discussed during the annual IEP meeting. Training is offered to special education teachers to help them learn how to progress toward and monitor their goals. The IDEA (2024) requires that the student's IEP includes "a description of how the child's progress toward meeting the annual goals" and that a "periodic report on the progress the child is making toward meeting the annual goals or other periodic reports, concurrent with the issuance of reports cards will be provided" is included in the IEP (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2024). The implication of practice is to enhance professional development to ensure the proper implementation of evidence-based interventions and data collection procedures.

Decision Making

When a student becomes eligible to receive special education services, one of the roles of the IEP team is to develop an individualized education program. The IEP team then reviews the data from the teacher data, classroom data, and parent input to help with the decision-making of services and programs. The student's LRE is considered first before considering a more restrictive environment (Yell et al., 2020).

The study's findings highlighted that the participants wanted to be included in the decision-making process. Decision-making is essential because whatever decisions are

agreed to can affect "from how, to what, and where students with disabilities are taught" (Kurth et al., 2022). To aid in the decision-making process, the IEP team can incorporate the utilization of a meeting agenda. The agenda allows for transparency and structure and ensures important topics are discussed (Mueller & Vick, 2019). The principal serves as the facilitator of the IEP team and uses the agenda as a guide.

When principals lead conversations surrounding placement based on data, it benefits IEP teams. Templeton. (2017) stated, "The ability to skillfully interpret data enables the principal to both identify the strengths and needs of all students and determine the effectiveness of interventions" (p. 21). When all stakeholders are included in the decision-making process, the IEP team can work together to reach a consensus regarding placement for the student (Yell et al., 2020). Working together creates an environment where the parents feel included and can trust the decisions that are made for their child. The implication of practice is to ensure that schools incorporate a meeting agenda to help guide the decision-making process.

Advocacy

Weingarten et al. (2020) suggest involving families in data-based decision-making is crucial to supporting their children's learning and behavior at home. This is especially important when making educational placement decisions for students with disabilities, as schools must ensure that parents are included in the process, according to the IDEA (2024) regulations. Excluding parents from decision-making forces them to advocate for their children, which can prove challenging. On the other hand, when schools partner with parents, they can contribute to decisions surrounding evidence-based interventions, referrals, services, and placement options in special education.

Research indicates that open and transparent communication between schools and families is essential for students' success and building trust. Therefore, schools must involve parents in data-based decision-making to ensure the best possible outcomes for students with disabilities (Choiseul-Praslin et al., 2021). The implication of practice is to create a welcoming environment for families by being trustworthy and transparent and including them in decision-making.

In the upcoming section, the researcher will discuss the study's limitations and suggest recommendations for future research. The researcher will also discuss the areas where we could have improved the study and the factors that might have affected the results. Moreover, the researcher will provide recommendations for future research to advance the comprehension of the subject matter based on our findings.

Limitations

This case study had limitations related to the methodology, including the sample size of participants. Not having the faculty who determined John needed a special education evaluation limited the researchers' interpretation of the IEP data. Relying on third-party data limited the outcome of findings. There were four participants and one school to represent the school district. The collected data needed statistical precision.

Being an employee of MWISD could impact the researcher's interpretation of the findings. The researcher's access to policies and procedures and knowledge of how they should be followed may cause bias in the findings. Unintentional bias was encountered during the campus selection. The individuals selected for the study did not represent the larger district population, so the results needed to be more generalizable. The case study results may benefit future research by including more members of different IEP

committees' perspectives on placement decisions of African American male students with ED. Incorporating quantitative methods of surveys could expand the sample size of participants by including educators and parents from different school districts.

Another limitation encountered was the selected timeframe of the study. The study looked at IEP evaluations during the 2022-2023 school year. The risk of choosing a year in the past is that teachers and staff may no longer work for the school district, limiting the number of active participants for the study. Of the seven members of the original IEP committee, three were no longer in the district, which included the referring general education teacher and the LSSP. The remaining four IEP team members did not respond to the participation invite. Therefore, the researcher had to rely on committee notes, teacher comments, and deliberations to create a narrative from the teacher's viewpoint, which could affect the study's internal validity.

Coding by hand contributes to the possible limitations. The researcher used the constant comparative method as the data analysis framework. Reading line by line may have impacted the reliability of findings. The selected method may produce different results for different researchers. Coding by hand also limited the inter-rater reliability of the findings. It eliminated the opportunity for similarities and differences to be observed.

The study's boundaries included those set by the researcher. A specific suburban school district offered the behavior program exclusively at an elementary school. The study participants had to have at least five years of experience in their field of study. The findings from the study represented the practices and procedures for all the schools in the school district. This limitation ensured that participants were familiar with the programs offered in the district and the MTSS process provided by the school district.

Recommendations for Future Research

The study focused on an African American male student identified as ED and examined the school-based interventions provided to him. The research analyzed the students' academic and special education records, one IEP team's decision to place her in a behavior program, and one parent's perspective on her experience going through the special education process. Expanding the sample size to include African American female students who have an emotional disturbance and their respective placement decisions would improve the generalizability of the recommendations and increase the possibility of replicating the case study, resulting in a more comprehensive and diverse understanding of the topic. By doing so, the researcher would obtain multiple personal perspectives and experiences about implementing evidence-based interventions, leading to a more generalizable study.

The study only examined the FIIE conducted during the 2022-2023 school year, but future research could expand over three years, including the current school year and previous years. Expanding the study could create opportunities to include current school district employees while looking for trends regarding the placement decisions of African American students. Increasing the study timeframe would also allow for a review of historical data and incorporate observation of IEP meetings. Including observations would help conceptualize the placement decisions made by IEP committee members.

Lastly, the research could extend to focus on the delivery method of MTSS and analyze the collected data from the progress monitoring of the school-based interventions. This analysis can assist IEP teams in making special education placement decisions. With IDEA not having a specific framework for IEP teams to use when

determining placements, research that supports the correlation between the delivery method, data-based interventions, and IEP placement decisions would provide additional information to researchers on how all three are essential to guide the IEP team when making placement decisions.

Conclusion

This qualitative single case study aimed to identify the school-based interventions provided to a student identified as emotionally disturbed before being placed in a special education behavior program. Schools must provide students with evidence-based interventions to address academic and behavioral concerns. The preventive measures resulted from the reauthorization of IDEA, which resulted in the adoption of an MTSS framework (Alsalamah, 2020).

The case study model utilized individual interviews and content analysis as the primary instruments to address the four research questions. Yin (2018) suggests using the case study method allows for a comprehensive description of findings by developing a narrative of the case through data. While conducting the research, the researcher expected to find a detailed list of Tier 1 and 2 interventions provided to the student, along with the data to support the outcomes of the interventions. Upon further investigation, the findings disclosed that the student received Tier 2 and 3 interventions, but there was no data to support how the student responded.

The teacher had implemented classroom practices and school-based interventions. However, the inconsistent delivery of interventions and lack of progress monitoring data made it unclear how the IEP team determined a self-contained placement. Kittleman et al. (2020) state, "When evidenced-based interventions are provided, they improve student outcomes, increase academic engagement, increase peer interactions, and decrease off-

task and disruptive behaviors" (p. 97). The outcome may have been different if the student had received evidenced interventions. The MTSS committee may have continued to implement interventions, set goals, and monitor progress before agreeing to the referral for special education services.

This study's findings suggest that school district members would benefit from professional development throughout the MTSS process. The findings also support the need for additional research on MTSS implementation of African American male students identified as ED. If educators do not receive appropriate training, they will continue to place students with EBD in self-contained classrooms for special education. When thinking about John's MTSS committee members, in-depth training and following the tiered support system could have given John a different outcome.

REFERENCES

References marked with an asterisk indicate studies included in the meta-analysis.

- Alsalamah, A. (2020). Supporting students with or at risk of emotional disturbance within the response to intervention model: A systematic review. *Journal of Education and Practice*, *11*(36), 67-80. <https://doi.org/10.7176/JEP/11-36-08>
- American Institutes for Research. (2024). *Center on multi-tiered systems of support*. Essential components of MTSS. Retrieved March 29, 2024, from <https://mtss4success.org>
- Atkins, L., & Wallace, S. (2012). *Qualitative Research in Education*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473957602>
- *Bal, A., Betters-Bubon, J., & Fish, R. E. (2019). A multilevel analysis of statewide disproportionality in exclusionary discipline and the identification of emotional disturbance. *Education and Urban Society*, *51*(2), 247-268. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124517716260>
- Barrett, C. A., Stevenson, N. A., & Burns, M. K. (2020). Relationship between disability category, time spent in general education and academic achievement. *Educational Studies*, *46*(4), 497-512. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2019.1614433>
- Board of Education v. Rowley, 458 U.S. 176, 203 (1982).
- Bohanon, H. S., Wu, M. J., Kushki, A., LeVesseur, C., Harms, A., Vera, E., Shriberg, D. (2021). The role of school improvement planning in the implementation of MTSS in secondary schools. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, *65*(3), 230–242. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2021.1908215>
- Bolman, L., & Deal, T. E. (2021). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership* (7th ed.). Jossey-Bass. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119281856>

- Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483. (1954).
- Bruhn, A. L., Lane, K. L., & Hirsch, S. E. (2014). A review of tier 2 interventions conducted within multitiered models of behavioral prevention. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 22(3), 171-189. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1063426613476092>
- Bruhn, A. L., Rila, A., Mahatmya, D., Estrapala, S., & Hendrix, N. (2020). The effects of data-based, individualized interventions for behavior. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 28(1), 3-16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1063426618806279>
- Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. (2024). *What is Tier 2 Support?* Tier 2. <https://www.pbis.org/>
- Choiseul-Praslin, B., Deardorff, M.E., Yeager, K.H. (2021). Mothers' perceptions of satisfaction, trust, and power in the individualized education program process. *Inclusion*, 9(4), 247-262. <https://doi.org/10.1352/2326-6988-9.4.247>
- Connelly, J. (2021). Interrogating the special education identification process for Black Indigenous students of color. *Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners*, 21(1), 78–92. <https://doi.org/10.56829/2158-396X-21.1.78>
- Cook, C. R., Duong, M. T., McIntosh, K., Fiat, A. E., Larson, M., Pullmann, M. D., & McGinnis, J. (2018). Addressing discipline disparities for Black male students: Linking malleable root causes to feasible and effective practices. *School Psychology Review*, 47(2), 135-152. <https://doi.org/10.17105/SPR-2017-0026.V47-2>
- Craft, E., & Howley, A. (2018). African-American students' experiences in special education programs. *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education*, 120(10), 1–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811812001001>

- Cruz, R. A., & Rodl, J. E. (2018). An integrative synthesis of the literature on disproportionality in special education. *The Journal of Special Education*, 52(1), 50–63.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022466918758707>
- Daniel R. R. v. State Board of Education, 874 F.2D 1036 (5TH CIR. 1989).
- Douvaris, G., & Hulsey, D. (2002). The least restrictive environment mandate: How has it been defined by the courts? *ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education*. 1-6.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED469442>
- Dowdy, E., Doane, K., Eklund, K., & Dever, B. V. (2013). A comparison of teacher nomination and screening to identify behavioral and emotional risk within a sample of underrepresented students. *Journal of Emotional & Behavioral Disorders*, 21(2), 127–137. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1063426611417627>
- Drew, C.J., Hardman, M.L., & Hosp, J.L. (2014). *Designing and Conducting Research in Education*. SAGE Publications, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483385648>
- Ebneyamini, S., & Sadeghi Moghadam, M. R. (2018). Toward developing a framework for conducting case study research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918817954>
- Edmonds, W. A., & Kennedy, T. D. (2019). *An applied guide to research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975, Pub. L. No. 94-142, 89 Stat. 773 (1975).
- Evans, C., Weiss, S. L., & Cullinan, D. (2012). Teacher perceptions and behavioral strategies for students with emotional disturbance across educational environments. *Preventing School Failure*, 56(2), 82–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2011.574170>

- Flick, U. (2018). *Designing qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529622737>
- Franklin-Gillette, S., DuPaul, G. J., Fu, Q., & Fogt, J. (2023). Peer influence in a school for youth with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 31(1), 3-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10634266221076471>
- Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L. S., & Vaughn, S. (2014). What is intensive instruction and why is it important? *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 46(4), 13-18.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059914522966>
- Fuchs, L. S., & Fuchs, D. (2007). A model for implementing responsiveness to intervention. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 39(5), 14–20.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/004005990703900503>
- Glaser, B.G. & Strauss, A.L. (2017). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203793206>
- Greer v. Rome, 950 F.2D 688 (1991).
- Grindal, T., Schifter, L. A., Schwartz, G., & Hehir, T. (2019). Racial differences in special education identification and placement: Evidence across three states. *Harvard Educational Review*, 89(4), 525–553. <https://doi.org/10.17763/1943-5045-89.4.525>
- Guba, E. G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology*, 29(2), 75–91.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/30219811>
- Hamilton, L., & Corbett-Whittier, C. (2014). *Using case study in education research*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473913851>

- Harry, B., & Fenton, P. (2016). Risk in schooling: The contribution of qualitative research to our understanding of the overrepresentation of minorities in special education. *Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners*, 16(1), 17–28.
<https://doi.org/10.56829/2158-396x.16.1.17>
- Hart, J. E., Cramer, E. D., Harry, B., Klingner, J. K., & Sturges, K. M. (2010). The continuum of “troubling” to “troubled” behavior: Exploratory case studies of African-American students in programs for emotional disturbance. *Remedial and Special Education*, 31(3), 148–162. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932508327468>
- Hazelkorn, M., Bucholz, J. L., Goodman, J. I., Duffy, M. L., & Brady, M. P. (2010). Response to intervention: General or special education? Who is responsible? *The Educational Forum*, 75(1), 17-25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2010.528552>
- Herzik, L. (2015). A better IDEA: Implementing a nationwide definition for significant disproportionality to combat the overrepresentation of minority students in special education. *San Diego Law Review*, 52(4), 951–966.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?q=source%3A%22National+Council+on+Disability%22&id=ED588494>
- Hingstman, M., Neitzel, A. J., & Slavin, R. E. (2023). Preventing special education assignment for students with learning or behavioral difficulties: A review of programs. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 28(4), 380-411.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2022.2098131>
- Holton, J., & Walsh, I. (2020). *Classic grounded theory: Applications with qualitative and quantitative data*. SAGE Publications Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071802762>

- Hoppey, D., & McLeskey, J. (2013). A case study of principal leadership in an effective inclusive school. *The Journal of Special Education*, 46(4), 245-256.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022466910390507>
- Horner, R. H., & Halle, J. W. (2020). Implications of emerging educational reforms for individuals with severe disabilities. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 45(2), 75-80.<https://doi.org/10.1177/1540796919872210>
- Hughley, K. S., & Larwin, K. H. (2021). Is there a disproportionate representation of African American males in special education? A causal-comparative investigation. *Journal of Organizational & Educational Leadership*, 7(1),1–32. <https://digitalcommons.gardnerwebb.edu/joel/vol7/iss1/3>
- Hunter, W., Maheady, L., Jasper, A., Williamson, R.L., Murley, R., Stratton, E. (2015). Numbered heads together as a tier 1 instruction strategy in multitiered systems of support. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 38(3), 345-362.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/44684070>
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. (2024), About IDEA. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea/>
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Regulations, 34 C.F.R. § 300 (2024).
<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/b/300.116>
- Institute of Education Sciences. (2023, May). *National center for education statistics*. Students with Disabilities. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgg/students-with-disabilities>
- Johnson, E., Mellard, D.F., Fuchs, D., & McKnight, M.A. (2006). *Responsiveness to intervention (RTI): How to do it*. National Research Center on Learning Disabilities.

- Joyner, R. L., Rouse, W. A., & Glatthorn, A. A. (2018). *Writing the winning thesis or dissertation: A step-by-step guide*. Thousand Oaks Corwin Press.
- Kamps, D., Wills, H., Dawson-Bannister, H., Heitzman-Powell, L., Kottwitz, E., Hansen, B., & Fleming, K. (2015). Class-wide function-related intervention teams “CW-FIT” efficacy trial outcomes. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, *17*(3), 134-145.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300714565244>
- Kirkland, E. K. B., & Bauer, S. C. (2016). Are leaders influenced by advocates in decisions on special education eligibility? *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership*, *11*(2). <http://journals.sfu.ca/ijepl/index.php/ijepl/article/view/649>
- Kittleman, A., Horner, R. H., & Rowe, D. A. (2020). Selecting evidence-based practices to improve learning and behavior. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *53*(2), 96-98.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059920964684>
- Kurth, J. A., Lockman Turner, E., Gerasimova, D., Hicks, T. A., Zagona, A., Lansey, K., Mansouri, M. C., Lyon, K. J., Jameson, M., Loyless, R., & Pace, J. R. (2022). An investigation of IEP quality associated with special education placement for students with complex support needs. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, *47*(4), 244-260. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15407969221134923>
- Kurth, J. A., Ruppard, A. L., Toews, S. G., McCabe, K. M., McQueston, J. A., & Johnston, R. (2019). Considerations in placement decisions for students with extensive support need an analysis of LRE statements. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, *44*(1), 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1540796918825479>

- Lambert, M. C., Katsiyannis, A., Epstein, M. H., & Cullinan, D. (2022). An initial study of the emotional and behavioral characteristics of Black students' schools identified them as emotionally disturbed. *Behavioral Disorders, 47*(2), 108–117.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/01987429211038022>
- Leko, M. M., Cook, B. G., & Cook, L. (2021). Qualitative methods in special education research. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 36*(4), 278–286.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ldrp.12268>
- Leva, K & Beasley, J. (2022) Dismantling racism through collaborative consultation: Promoting culturally affirming educator SEL. *Theory into Practice, 61*(2), 236-249,
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2022.2036049>
- Liang, D.T.H., Rosati, S.A., Fluharty, M., Gabrilowitz, R., Carter, D., Mui, V., Kern, L., & Freeman, J. (2022). A DisCrit critique of practices for youth with or at risk of emotional and behavioral disorders. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 32*(1), 36-46,
<https://doi.org/10.1177/10634266221141064>
- Light v. Parkway, 41 F.3RD 1223 (8TH CIR. 1994).
- Lyon, L., Ndershahi, A., Kachalia, P., & Hammer, D. (2014). A curricular reform viewed through Bolman & Deal's organizational frames. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 14*(3), 16–33. <https://doi.org/10.14434/josotl.v14i3.4940>
- Marsico, R. D. (2018). From Rowley to Endrew F.: The evolution of free appropriate public education for children with disabilities. *New York Law School Law Review, 63*(1), 29-50.
https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/fac_articles_chapters/1247

- McLeskey, J., Landers, E., Williamson, P., & Hoppey, D. (2012). Are we moving toward educating students with disabilities in less restrictive settings? *The Journal of Special Education, 46*(3), 131–140. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022466910376670>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved March 30, 2024, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>
- Miller, L. M., Dufrene, B. A., Sterling, H. E., Olmi, D. J., & Bachmayer, E. (2015). The effects of check-in/check-out on problem behavior and academic engagement in elementary school students. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 17*(1), 28-38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300713517141>
- Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia, 348 F. Supp. 866 (1972).
- Morgan, H. (2022). Conducting a qualitative document analysis. *The Qualitative Report, 27*(1), 64-77. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5044>
- Morris, N. (2021). Leadership and innovation in a special education school. *Educational Leadership and Administration: Teaching and Program Development, pp. 33, 56–69.*
- Mueller, T. G., & Vick, A. M. (2019). An investigation of facilitated individualized education program meeting practice: Promising procedures that foster family–Professional collaboration. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 42*(1), 67-81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888406417739677>
- Nagro, S.A., Hooks, S.D., & Fraser, D.W. (2019). Over a decade of practice: Are educators correctly using tertiary interventions? *Preventing School Failure, 63*(1), 52-61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2018.1491021>

National Center on Intensive Intervention. (n.d.). What is data-based individualization?

Retrieved March 29, 2024, from <https://intensiveintervention.org/data-based-individualization>

National Council on Disability. (2018). The segregation of students with disabilities IDEA series. *National Council on Disability*. www.ncd.gov

Nitz, J., Brack, F., Hertel, S., Krull, J., Stephan, H., Hennemann, T., & Hanisch, C. (2023).

Multi-tiered systems of support with focus on behavioral modification in elementary schools: A systematic review. *Heliyon*. 9(6), 1-21.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e17506>

Office of Special Education Programs. (2020, August 26). *OSEP fast facts*. Black or African American children with disabilities. Retrieved March 30, 2024, from

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/osep-fast-facts-black-or-african-american-children-with-disabilities-20/>

Office of Special Education Programs. (2020, May 6). *OSEP fast facts*. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Retrieved March 23, 2024, from

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/osep-fast-facts-children-IDed-Emotional-Disturbance-20/>

Prager, S. (2015). An "IDEA" to consider adopting a uniform test to evaluate compliance with the IDEA's least restrictive environment mandate. *New York Law School Law Review*, 59(4),653–678.

Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 343 F. Supp. 279 (E.D. Pa.1972).

Privitera, G. J. & Ahlgrim-Delzell, L. (2019). *Research Methods for Education*. Sage Publications.

- Polcyn, D. M., Levine-Donnerstein, D., Perfect, M. M., & Obrzut, J. E. (2014). Reading intervention and special education referrals. *School Psychology Forum*, 8(3), 156–167.
- Roncker v. Walter, 700 F.2d 1058 (6th Cir. 1983).
- Rosari, R. (2019). Leadership definitions applications for lecturers' leadership development. *Journal of Leadership in Organizations*, 1(1), 17-28. <https://doi.org/10.22146/jlo.42965>
- Rost, J. C. (1993). *Leadership for the twenty-first century*. Praeger.
- RTI Action Network. (2024). *Distinguishing between tier 2 and tier 3 instruction in order to support implementation of RTI*. Include Essential Components. Retrieved April 10, 2024 from <https://www.rtinetwork.org/essential/tieredinstruction/tier3/distinguishing-between-tier-2-and-tier-3-instruction-in-order-to-support-implementation-of-rti>
- Ruppar, A. L., & Gaffney, J. S. (2011). Individualized education program team decisions: A preliminary study of conversations, negotiations, and power. *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 36(1-2), 11–22. <https://doi.org/10.2511/rpsd.36.1-2.11>
- *Saeki, E., Jimerson, S. R., Earhart, J., Hart, S. R., Renshaw, T., Singh, R. D., & Stewart, K. (2011). Response to intervention (RTI) in the social, emotional, and behavioral domains: Current challenges and emerging possibilities. *Contemporary School Psychology: Formerly "The California School Psychologist"*, 15(1), 43-52. [10.1007/BF03340962](https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03340962)
- Salmons, J., (2014). *How to use cases in research methods teaching: An author and editor's view*. In Sage Research Methods Cases Part 1. SAGE Publications, Ltd.
- Simonsen, B., Robbie, K., Meyer, K., Freeman, J., Everett, S., & Feinberg, A. (2021). Multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) in the classroom. *Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports*. University of Oregon. www.pbis.org.

- Sottolare, A. L., & Blair, K. S. (2023). Implementation of check-in/check-out to improve classroom behavior of at-risk elementary school students. *Behavioral Sciences, 13*(3), 2-16. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13030257>
- Sugai, G., & Horner, R. H. (2020). Sustaining and scaling positive behavioral interventions and supports: Implementation drivers, outcomes, and considerations. *Exceptional Children, 86*(2), 120-136. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0014402919855331>
- Sullivan, A. L., & Bal, A. (2013). Disproportionality in special education: Effects of individual and school variables on disability risk. *Council for Exceptional Children, 79*(4), 473–494. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001440291307900406>
- Templeton, R. R. (2017). Special education leadership at the elementary school level: How does knowledge influence leadership? *Journal of Special Education Leadership, 30*(1) 19-30. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1275376>
- Texas Administrative Code, 89.1005 C.F.R. § (2021). https://fw.escapps.net/Display_Portal/publications
- Texas Education Agency (2023). *Student Information*. <https://tea.texas.gov/>
- Thomas, R. M. (2011). Present- Status perspectives qualitative. In Sage Research Methods (Eds.), *Blending qualitative & quantitative research methods in theses and dissertations* (pp.33-40). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Trichas, P. C, & Avdimiotis, S. (2020). Leadership styles in special education. *Journal of Contemporary Education Theory & Research, 4*(1),3-7. <https://doi.org/10.25656/01:19288>
- United States Census Bureau. (2023, August 2). *Quick Facts*. <https://www.census.gov>

- United States Department of Education (2024). *About IDEA*. Individuals With Disabilities Education Act. <https://idea.ed.gov>
- United States Department of Education (2024). *IEP Team*. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/d/300.321>
- United States Department of Education (2024). *Least restrictive environment*. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statute-chapter-33/subchapter-ii/1412/a/5>
- Weeden, M., Wills, H. P., Kottwitz, E., & Kamps, D. (2016). The effects of a class-wide behavior intervention for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders, 42*(1), 285-283.
https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A470560378/AONE?u=anderson_cl&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=5d8407b3
- Weingarten, Z., Zumeta Edmonds, R., & Arden, S. (2020). Better together: Using MTSS as a structure for building school–Family partnerships. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 53*(2), 122-130. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059920937733>
- Williamson, P., Hoppey, D., McLeskey, J., Bergmann, E., & Moore, H. (2020). Trends in LRE placement rates over the past 25 years. *The Journal of Special Education, 53*(4), 236-244.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022466919855052>
- Woodson, L., & Harris, S. M. (2018). Teacher and student demographic variables predict teacher referrals of males for special education evaluation. *Journal of At-Risk Issues, 21*(1), 32–43. [EJ1187271.pdf \(ed.gov\)](#)
- Yang, C.X., Liu, H.M., & Wang, X.X. (2013). Organization theories: From classical to modern. *Journal of Applied Sciences, 13*(21), 4470-4476. DOI: [10.3923/jas.2013.4470.4476](https://doi.org/10.3923/jas.2013.4470.4476)

- Yell, M. (2022). *Brown v. Board of Education* and the development of special education. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 57(3), 198–200.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/10534512211014874>
- Yell, M.L., Crockett, J.B., Shriner, J.G., & Rozalaski, M. (2017). *Free appropriate public education*. In *Handbook of Special Education* (2nd ed, pp.71-86). Routledge.
- Yell, M. L., Katsiyannis, A. & Bradley, M.R. (2017). *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: The evolution of special education law*. In *Handbook of Special Education* (2nd ed., pp.55- 71). Routledge.
- Yell, M. L., Katsiyannis, A., Ennis, R. P., Losinski, M., & Bateman, D. (2020). Making legally sound placement decisions. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 52(5), 291–303.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059920906537>
- Yin, R. (2018). *Case study research and applications design and methods* (6th ed). SAGE Publications.

APPENDIX A. PHONE SCRIPT

Phone Script to potential parent participants

Hello, are you the parent of (student's name),

You are being asked to participate in a research study by Wernsetta Session from Anderson University. This study investigates how the Individualized Education Program (IEP) committee members determine Special Education placements for African-American male students in the elementary grades who meet the eligibility criteria for Emotional Disturbance (ED). This study will contribute to the Wernsetta Session's completion of her dissertation study.

Research Procedures

This study consists of interviews and content analysis, including a review of academic and special education records in a North Texas School District. You will be asked to answer questions about how the Individualized Education Program (IEP) committee members determine Special Education placements for African-American male elementary school students who meet the Emotional Disturbance (ED) eligibility criteria.

The time required for the study is listed below.

- a. Individual interviews will last for 60 minutes.

Risks

The investigator only perceives minimal risks from your involvement in this study beyond the risks associated with everyday life.

Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this study include spotlighting the results of interventions provided to students before making a special education placement. It will delve into the IEP team members' reasons for placing students with EBD in the self-contained setting. This study will focus on the activities before making the referral for special education evaluation. The study's results would contribute information regarding evidenced-based interventions used to support students in the referral process for special education.

The findings would demonstrate how long the interventions were tried and the results of the interventions. The research would also provide the parental perspective on the special education referral process. As participants, they could be contributing members of findings that will contribute to special education research.

Incentives

For incentive purposes, participants will be offered six \$10.00 Gift cards.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented to the dissertation committee. While individual responses are obtained and recorded anonymously and kept in the strictest confidence, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses. No

identifiable information will be collected from the participant, and no identifiable responses will be presented in the final form of this study. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. The researcher retains the right to use and publish nonidentifiable data. At the end of the study, all records will be destroyed.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw without consequences. However, once your responses have been submitted and anonymously recorded, you cannot withdraw from the study.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Researcher's Name:

Department:

University:

Telephone:

Email Address:

Advisor's Name:

Department:

University:

Telephone:

Email Address:

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Giving of Consent

I have read this cover letter and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

Name of Researcher (Printed)

Name of Participant (Printed)

Name of Researcher (Signed) and date

Name of Participant (Signed) and date

The IRB, protocol # AU202406IRB, has approved this study

APPENDIX B. EMAIL LETTER CONSENT

Email Invitation to potential participants

Greetings Members of (School Name),

You are being asked to participate in a research study by Wernsetta Session from Anderson University. This study investigates how the Individualized Education Program (IEP) committee members determine Special Education placements for African-American male students in the elementary grades who meet the eligibility criteria of Emotional Disturbance. (ED). This study will contribute to the Wernsetta Session's completion of her dissertation study.

Research Procedures

This study includes interviews and content analysis in a North Texas School District. You will be asked to answer a series of questions about how the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team members determine Special Education placements for African-American male elementary school students who meet the eligibility criteria for Emotional Disturbance (ED).

The time required for the study is listed below.

Individual interviews will last for 60 minutes.

Risks

The investigator only perceives minimal risks from your involvement in this study beyond the risks associated with everyday life.

Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this study include spotlighting the results of interventions provided to students before making a special education placement. It will delve into the IEP team members' reasons for placing students with EBD in the self-contained setting. This study will focus on the activities before making the referral for special education evaluation. The study's results would contribute information regarding evidenced-based interventions used to support students in the referral process for special education.

The findings would demonstrate how long the interventions were tried and the results of the interventions. The research would also provide the parental perspective on the special education referral process. As participants, they could be contributing members of findings that will contribute to special education research.

Incentives

For incentive purposes, participants will be offered a \$10.00 Gift card.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented to the dissertation committee. While individual responses are obtained and recorded anonymously and kept in the strictest confidence, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses. No identifiable information will be collected from the participant, and no identifiable responses will be presented in the final form of this study. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. The researcher retains the right to use and publish nonidentifiable data. At the end of the study, all records will be destroyed.

be collected from the participant, and no identifiable responses will be presented in the final form of this study. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. The researcher retains the right to use and publish nonidentifiable data. At the end of the study, all records will be destroyed.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw without consequences. However, once your responses have been submitted and anonymously recorded, you cannot withdraw from the study.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study or after its completion, or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Researcher's Name:

Department:

University:

Telephone:

Email Address:

Advisor's Name:

Department:

University:

Telephone:

Email Address:

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Giving of Consent

I have read this cover letter, and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

Name of Researcher (Printed)

Name of Participant (Printed)

Name of Researcher (Signed) and date

Name of Participant (Signed) and date

The IRB, protocol # AU202406IRB, has approved this study

APPENDIX C. CONSENT LETTER

CONSENT LETTER

Hello, are you the parent of (student's name),

You are being asked to participate in a research study by Wernsetta Session from Anderson University. This study investigates how the Individualized Education Program (IEP) committee members determine Special Education placements for African-American male students in the elementary grades who meet the eligibility criteria for Emotional Disturbance (ED). This study will contribute to the Wernsetta Session's completion of her dissertation study.

Research Procedures

This study consists of interviews and content analysis, including a review of academic and special education records in a North Texas School District. You will be asked to answer questions about how the Individualized Education Program (IEP) committee members determine Special Education placements for African-American male elementary school students who meet the Emotional Disturbance (ED) eligibility criteria.

The time required for the study is listed below.

- a. Individual interviews will last for 60 minutes.

Risks

The investigator only perceives minimal risks from your involvement in this study beyond the risks associated with everyday life.

Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this study include spotlighting the results of interventions provided to students before making a special education placement. It will delve into the IEP team members' reasons for placing students with EBD in the self-contained setting. This study will focus on the activities before making the referral for special education evaluation. The study's results would contribute information regarding evidenced-based interventions used to support students in the referral process for special education.

The findings would demonstrate how long the interventions were tried and the results of the interventions. The research would also provide the parental perspective on the special education referral process. As participants, they could be contributing members of findings that will contribute to special education research.

Incentives

For incentive purposes, participants will be offered six \$10.00 Gift cards.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented to the dissertation committee. While individual responses are obtained and recorded anonymously and kept in the strictest confidence, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses. No

identifiable information will be collected from the participant, and no identifiable responses will be presented in the final form of this study. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. The researcher retains the right to use and publish nonidentifiable data. At the end of the study, all records will be destroyed.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw without consequences. However, once your responses have been submitted and anonymously recorded, you cannot withdraw from the study.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Researcher's Name:

Department:

University:

Telephone:

Email Address:

Advisor's Name:

Department:

University:

Telephone:

Email Address:

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Giving of Consent

I have read this cover letter and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

Name of Researcher (Printed)

Name of Participant (Printed)

Name of Researcher (Signed) and date

Name of Participant (Signed) and date

The IRB, protocol # AU202406IRB, has approved this study

APPENDIX D. REVIEW OF STUDENT RECORDS

IRB Consent Letter

(To review student academic and special education records)

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Wernsetta Session from Anderson University. The purpose of this study is to investigate how the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team members determine Special Education placements for African American and other students of color in the elementary grades who meet the eligibility criteria of Emotional Disturbance (ED). This study will contribute to the Wernsetta Session's completion of her dissertation study.

Research Procedures

This study consists of interviews and content analysis, including a review of academic and special education records in a North Texas School District. You will be asked to answer questions about how the Individualized Education Program (IEP) committee members determine Special Education placements for African American male elementary school students who meet the Emotional Disturbance (ED) eligibility criteria.

The time required for the study is listed below.

- a. One week is needed to review the student's academic and special education records.

Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life.

Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this study include spotlighting the results of interventions provided to students before making a special education placement. It will delve into the IEP team members' reasons for placing students with EBD in the self-contained setting. This study will focus on the activities before making the referral for special education evaluation. The study's results would contribute information regarding evidenced-based interventions used to support students in the referral process for special education.

The findings would demonstrate how long the interventions were tried and the results of the interventions. The research would also provide the parental perspective on the special education referral process. As participants, they could be contributing members of findings that will contribute to special education research.

Incentives

For incentive purposes, participants will be offered a \$10.00 Gift card.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented to the dissertation committee. While individual responses are obtained and recorded anonymously and kept in the strictest confidence, aggregate

data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. No identifiable information will be collected from the participant and no identifiable responses will be presented in the final form of this study. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. The researcher retains the right to use and publish nonidentifiable data. At the end of the study, all records will be destroyed.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. However, once your responses have been submitted and anonymously recorded you will not be able to withdraw from the study.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study or after its completion, or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Researcher's Name:

Department:

University:

Telephone:

Email Address:

Advisor's Name:

Department:

University:

Telephone:

Email Address:

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Giving of Consent

I have read this cover letter and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

Name of Researcher (Printed)

Name of Participant (Printed)

Name of Researcher (Signed) and date

Name of Participant (Signed) and date

The IRB, protocol # AU202406IRB, has approved this study

APPENDIX E. DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Demographics Survey

What is your First and Last Name? _____

What is your title?

- Campus Administrator
- Diagnostician
- General Education Teacher
- Special Education Teacher
- Parent

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other _____

What is your ethnicity, origin, or race?

- Asian
- Black/African-American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Middle Eastern
- Native American/American Indian
- Pacific Islander
- White/Caucasian
- Other _____

What is your age group?

- 18-24 years
- 25-34 years
- 35-44 years
- 45-54 years
- 55-64 years
- 65 or older

How many years have you been in education?

- 0-4 years
- 5-10 years
- 11-14 years
- 15-20 years
- 21-25 years
- 26-30 years
- 31 or more years

APPENDIX F. CAMPUS STAFF INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Participant Title _____
 Start Time: _____

Date of Interview: _____
 End Time _____

Campus Staff Interview Protocol

(RQ1) What academic and behavioral evidence-based interventions were provided to the student before being referred to special education testing, and what were the responses to those interventions?

Questions

MTSS/RtI
1. Does MWISD have an MTSS/ RTI process? If so, can you explain it?
2. What is your experience with implementing a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) or RtI?
3. What type of professional development is provided to teachers and administrators over the MTSS/ RTI process?
4. What type of evidence-based interventions are given to students who are struggling academically and behaviorally before making a special education referral?
5. How is data collected on the interventions that are provided to students who are being referred to special education evaluation?
6. Is there a timeframe given to implement the interventions before making a special education referral?
7. Is there a committee or review team that makes the final decision to recommend special education evaluation if the student continues not to have success with the interventions?
8. Does the parent have a role in the MTSS or RtI process? If so, what is the parent's role?
Special Education Referral Process
(RQ2) How does the teacher and evaluator's perception of the student affect the IEP team's decision to place a student with ED in a self-contained classroom?
1. What is the special education referral process in MWISD?
2. Who's involved in the special education referral process?
3. How long does the special education referral process take?
4. What data is collected when submitting a special education referral packet?
5. What factors are considered in determining the most appropriate educational setting for a student with ED?
6. Can you explain your role in the process for determining the special education self-contained program for this student?
7. Were you in agreement to place the student in a special education self-contained classroom? If yes, please explain?

8. How does your biases and perceptions towards students with ED affect where they will receive special education services?
9. Are there any MWISD practices for making special education placement decisions? If so, what are they?
10. In what ways does the student's disability impact where they will receive services?
11. What characteristics regarding academics and behavior would make it necessary for a student to be recommended for a self-contained behavior classroom?

APPENDIX G. ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Participant Title _____
 Start Time: _____

Date of Interview: _____
 End Time _____

Campus Administrator Interview Protocol

RQ 3: How does the campus administrator perceive her role as the leader of the IEP team when determining placement for students with emotional disturbance?

Questions
1. Does MWISD have a MTSS/ RTI process? If so, can you explain it?
2. What is your experience with implementing a Multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) OR RtI?
3. What type of professional development is provided to teachers and administrators over the MTSS/ RTI process?
4. What type of professional development did you receive on special education placement decisions for students with ED?
5. What is your campus's policy for making a referral to special education?
6. Is there a timeframe that teachers follow before making a referral to special education?
7. What documentation is needed when making a referral to special education?
8. Talk about your role as an IEP Team member in determining special education placements.
9. As the campus principal, do you think your role may affect the IEP team's decision to place a student with ED in a self-contained program?
10. What special education programs are offered to students with disabilities on your campus
11. To what extent does a student's behavior impact your decision about where they should receive instruction? (What does it look like?)
12. What academic skills would a student need to remain in the least restrictive environment?
13. What academic skills and behavior concerns were observed when determining a special education self-contained program?
14. What other criteria do you consider when deciding whether a student with a disability should be removed from the regular education classroom for part of their school day?
15. Are there any outside factors and influences that the IEP team members should consider when making educational placements for students with ED?

APPENDIX H. PARENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Date of Interview: _____ Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

Parent Interview Protocol

RQ4 - What was the parent's perception of the special education referral process for their child who was referred for special education testing and identified as emotionally disturbed?

Questions

1. Tell me about your child?
2. Why do you think your child was referred to special education?
3. Who initiated the referral to special education?
4. How does your child's school meet the needs of your student?
5. What is your role as the parent on the IEP committee?
6. Do you feel like you have a voice in the IEP meetings?
7. What part do you play in determining where your child will be educated?
8. How did the IEP Team members decide on the location of services for your child?
9. Do you know what specialized programs and services are available at your child's school?
10. In what ways does your child's disability impact their education?
11. Do you think behavior makes an impact on where a student with a disability is educated? If so, how?
12. To what extent do IEP Teams consider the availability of resources (funding, number of teachers, space, etc.)
13. Is there anything else you would like to add or share?

APPENDIX I. COLOR CODING

Behavior Interventions	Color Code	Academic Interventions	Color Code
Behavior chart	Orange	Chunking assignments	Pink
Behavior Management plan	Orange	Extra time for completing assessments	Pink
Flexible seating	Orange	Graphic organizers	Pink
Check-ins	Orange	Oral tests	Pink
Choices	Orange	Shorten assignments	Pink
Frequent breaks	Orange	Spell checker	Pink
Non-verbal countdown	Orange	Tutoring	Pink
Physical activity	Orange		
Tutoring	Orange		



Human Subjects Committee (HSC) Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Dear Wernsetta E Session,

Proposal Title: Special Education Placement Decisions for African American Males
Identified as Emotional Disturbed

Submission date: Thursday, January 18, 2024, 4:05 PM

The Human Subjects Committee (HSC) has received and reviewed the submitted above-titled research proposal. I am happy to inform you that AU's IRB has voted to **APPROVE** your proposal as submitted. Your approval number is **AU202406IRB**.

Please be reminded that if at any point during the research, the risk level to any human subjects involved changes, either physical harm or loss of anonymity, or should you find it necessary to make any adjustments to the study as approved, please contact the HSC/IRB Chair in advance of implementing such changes. This may require that you submit an IRB Modification form.

We wish you well in your research.

If you need clarification regarding the committee's decision, please contact the IRB Chair.

Sincerely,

01/26/2024